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Socio-Economic Study of Village

Mithapur

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Field Investigations, First &
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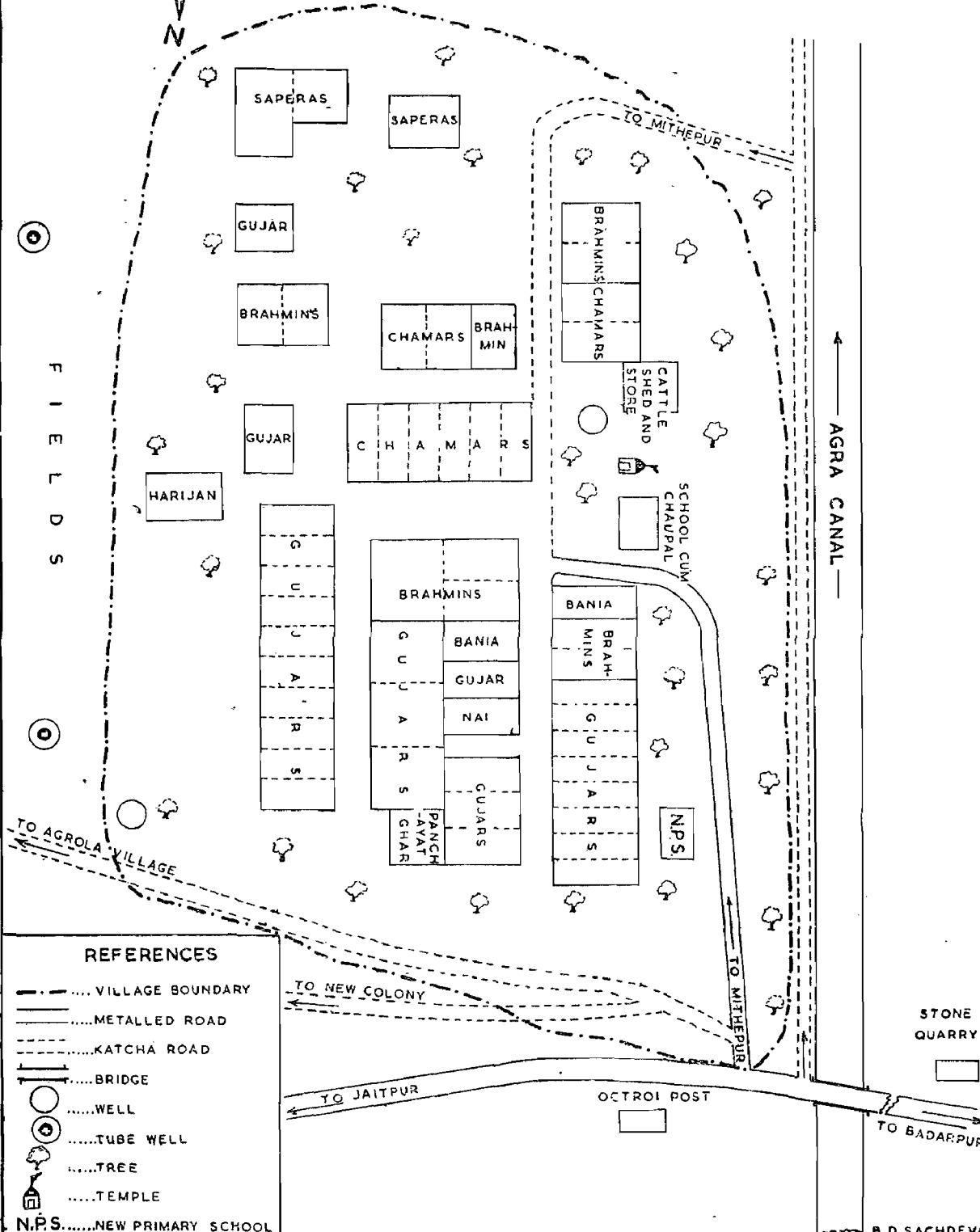
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NOTIONAL MAP OF VILLAGE MITHEPUR



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Foreword

A PART from laying the foundations of demography in this subcontinent, a hundred years of the Indian Census has produced elaborate and scholarly accounts of the variegated phenomena of Indian life—sometimes with no statistics attached, but usually with just enough statistics to give empirical under-pinning to their conclusions. In a country, largely illiterate, where statistical or numerical comprehension of even such a simple thing as age was liable to be inaccurate, an understanding of the social structure was essential. It was more necessary to attain a broad understanding of what was happening around oneself than to wrap oneself up in 'statistical ingenuity, or 'mathematical manipulation'. This explains why the Indian Census came to be interested in 'many by-paths' and 'nearly every branch of scholarship, from anthropology and sociology to geography and religion'.

In the last few decades the Census has increasingly turned its efforts to the presentation of village statistics. This suits the temper of the times as well as our political and economic structure. For even as we have a great deal of centralization on the one hand and decentralisation on the other, my colleagues thought it would be a welcome continuation of the Census tradition to try to invest the dry bones of village statistics with flesh-and-blood accounts of social structure and social change.

It was accordingly decided to select a few villages in every state for special study, where personal observation would be brought to bear on the interpretation of statistics to find out how much of a village was static and yet changing and how fast the winds of change were blowing and from where.

Randomness of selection was, therefore, eschewed. There was no intention to build up a picture for the whole State in quantitative terms on the basis of villages selected statistically at random. The selection was avowedly purposive: the object being as much to find out what was happening and how fast to those villages which had fewer reasons to choose change and more to remain lodged in the past as to discover how the more 'normal' types of villages were changing. They were to be primarily type studies which, by virtue of their number and distribution, would also give the reader a 'feel' of what was going on and some kind of a map of the country.

A brief account of the tests of selection will help to explain. A minimum of thirty-five villages was to be chosen with great care to represent adequately geographical, occupational and even ethnic diversity. Of this minimum of thirty-five, the distribution was to be as follows:

- (a) At least eight villages were to be so selected that each of them would contain one dominant community with one predominating occupation, e.g., fishermen, forest workers, jhum cultivators, potters, weavers, salt-makers, quarry workers etc. A village should have a minimum population of 400, the optimum being between 500 and 700.
- (b) At least seven villages were to be of numerically prominent Scheduled Tribes of the State. Each village could represent a particular tribe. The minimum population should be 400, the optimum being between 500 to 700.
- (c) The third group of villages should each be of fair size, of an old and settled character and contain variegated occupations and be, if possible, multiethnic in composition. By fair size was meant a population of 500—700 persons or more. The village should mainly depend on agriculture and be sufficiently away from the major sources of modern communication such as the district administrative headquarters and business centres. It should be roughly a day's journey from the above places. The villages were to be selected with an eye to variation in terms of size, proximity to city and other means of modern communication, nearness to hills, jungles and major rivers. Thus there was to be a regional distribution throughout the State of this category of villages. If, however, a particular district contained significant ecological variations within its areas, more than one village in the district might be selected to study the special adjustments to them.

It is a unique feature of these village surveys that they rapidly outgrew their original terms of reference, as my colleagues warmed up to their work. This proved for them an absorbing voyage of discovery and their infectious enthusiasm compelled me to enlarge the inquiry's scope again and again. It was just as well cautiously to feel one's way about at first and then venture further afield, and although it accounts to some extent for a certain unevenness in the quality and coverage of the monographs, it served to compensate the purely honorary and extra-mural regions

of the task. For, the Survey, along with its many ancillaries like the survey of fairs and festivals, of small and rural industry and others, was an 'extra' over and above the crushing load of the 1961 Census.

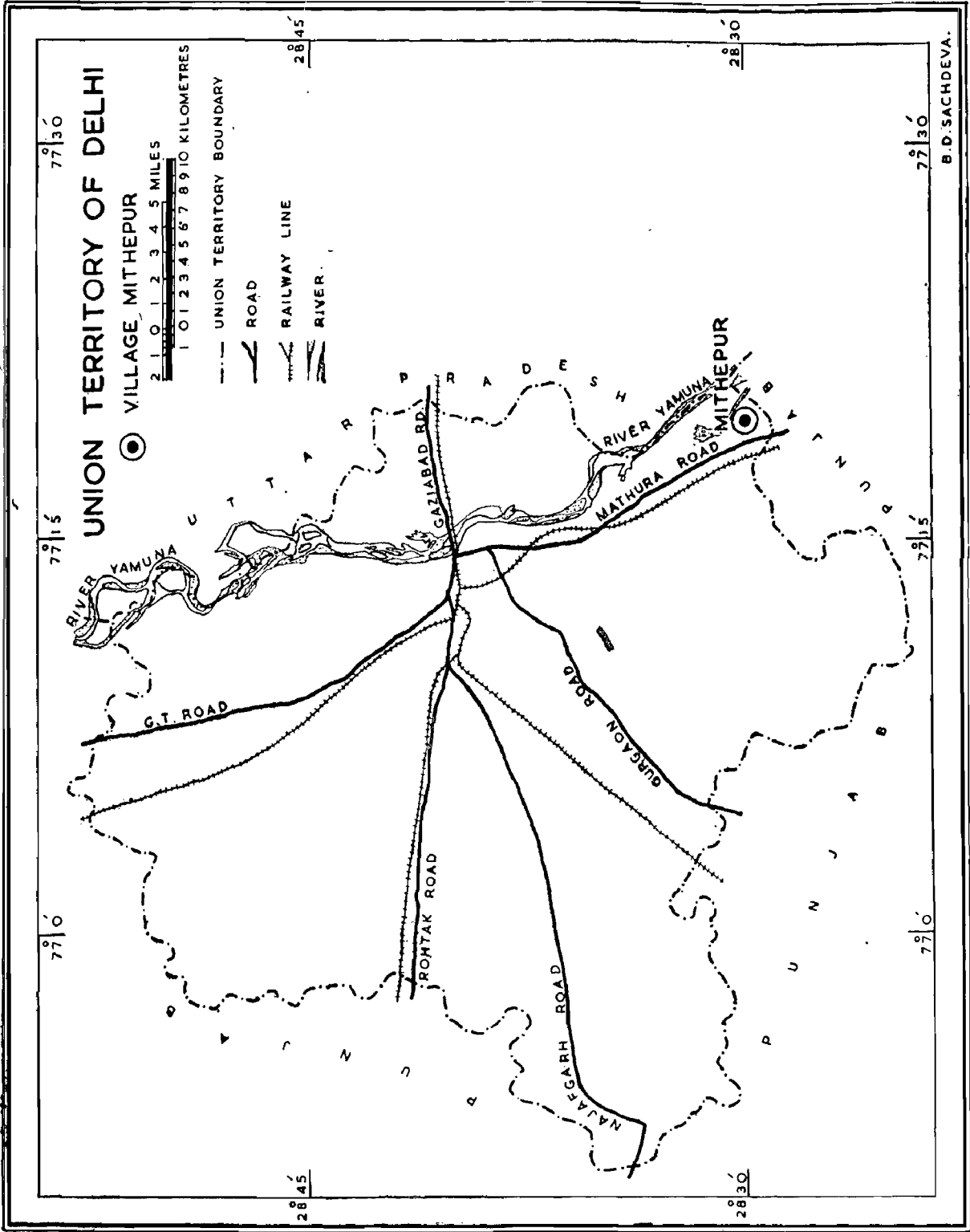
It might be of interest to recount briefly the stages by which the Survey enlarged its scope. At the first Census Conference in September 1959 the Survey set itself the task of what might be called a record *in situ* of material traits, like settlement patterns of the village; house types; diet; dress; ornaments and footwear; furniture and storing vessels; common means of transport of goods and passengers; domestication of animals and birds; markets attended; worship of deities, festivals and fairs. There were to be recordings of course, a cultural and social traits and occupational mobility. This was followed up in March 1960 by two specimen schedules, one for each household, the other for the village as a whole, which, apart from spelling out the mode of inquiry suggested in the September 1959 conference, introduced groups of questions aimed at sensing changes in attitude and behaviour in such fields as marriage, inheritance, moveable and immovable property, industry, indebtedness, education, community life and collective activity, social disabilities, forums of appeal over disputes, village leadership and organisation of cultural life. It was now plainly the intention to provide adequate statistical support to empirical 'feel', to approach qualitative change through statistical quantities. It had been difficult to give thought to the importance of 'just enough statistics, to give empirical underpinning to conclusions', at a time when my colleagues were straining themselves to the utmost for the success of the main Census Operations, but once the Census count itself was left behind in March 1961, a series of three regional seminars in Trivandrum (May 1961), Darjeeling and Srinagar (June 1961) restored their attention to this field and the importance of tacing social change through a number of well-devised statistical tables was once again recognised. This itself presupposed a fresh survey of villages already done; but it was worth the trouble in view of these possibilities that a close analysis of statistics offered, and also because the 'consanguinity' schedule remained to be canvassed. By November 1961, however, more was expected of these surveys than ever before. There was dissatisfaction on the one hand with too many general statements and a growing desire on the other to draw conclusions from statistics, to regard social and economic data as inter-related processes, and finally to examine the social and economic processes set in motion through land reforms and other laws, legislative and administrative measures, technological and cultural change. Finally, a study camp was organised in the last week of December 1961, when the whole field was carefully gone through over again and a programme worked out closely knitting the various aims of the Survey together. The social studies section of the Census Commission rendered assistance to State Superintendent by way of scrutiny and technical comment on the frame of Survey and presentation of results.

This gradual unfolding of the aims of the Survey prevented my colleagues from adopting as many villages as they had originally intended to. But I believe that what may have been lost in quantity has been more than made up for in quality. This is, perhaps, for the first time that such a Survey has been conducted in any country, and that purely as a labour of love. It has succeeded in attaining what it set out to achieve; to construct a map of village India's social structure. One hopes that the volumes of this Survey will help to retain for the Indian Census its title to 'the most fruitful single source of information about the country'. Apart

from other features, it will perhaps be conceded that the Survey has set up a new Census standard in pictorial and graphic documentation. The schedules finally adopted for this monograph have been printed as Appendices V & VI.

NEW DELHI
July 30, 1964

ASOK MITRA
Registrar General, India



Location of Mithepur in the Union Territory of Delhi



The village Scene.

1. *The Village*

BETWEEN the National Highway No. 2 and river Jamuna, about five miles short of Punjab border, are scattered half a dozen small and medium sized villages. People trace their history to the last days of the Moghul dynasty and narrate various interesting and 'uncanny' accounts about various castes and groups of people that remained plunged into long and protracted hostilities among themselves while trying to settle the political fate of this region. All these circumstances have led to the formation of a certain specific cultural pattern which is peculiar only to this region. Being closer to Delhi these villages might have remained subjected to various urbanizing influences flowing continuously from the metropolitan nerve centre. Yet, culturally speaking, these villages have derived much more from the adjoining regions and many of the cultural items such as dress, modes of colloquial communication, social celebrations and religious practices are obvious importations from these parts of Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. Mithepur is located on the tip of Delhi boundary, about three miles away from the main Delhi Mathura Road, beyond which starts the jurisdiction of Punjab.

Even though these villages are located near Badarpur, which has by now grown almost into a town, they have never figured very prominently in the social life of the region and have been considered as mere "satellites" of Badarpur. The importance of Badarpur needs to be emphasized in another sense also. It was through Badarpur that all these "satellites" were kept in touch with Delhi and Faridabad. Through Badarpur, therefore, various urban influences were siphoned on to these small rural centres over a long period. Recently, however, the status of these villages has been improving due to several favourable factors. Village Jaitpur, for example, which was previously a nonentity has increased in size because of a large number of refugees from West Pakistan who have taken permanent abode in the village. Tejpur, another village

in the neighbourhood, is also looking up because of extensive quarrying work that started a few years back. But village Mithepur which is our focus of study in the present report, cannot boast of any such achievement and so it continues to occupy a comparatively less important place among the other villages of the region.

There are a few characteristics that are associated specifically with village Mithepur. Levirate marriages are a common feature in all the villages of the Union Territory and take place amongst all the castes except Brahmins who look down upon this custom as 'improper' and even 'immoral'. In case a Levirate marriage is contracted among Brahmins, unpleasant and even disastrous consequences may follow. Mithepur presents what probably is the sole example of a *levirate marriage* among the Brahmins. What makes it all the more significant is the fact that it took place some 3 decades back when people adhered to marriage restrictions far more rigorously than they do now. Further, as recalled by the elderly members of the village community, no serious consequences resulted when this marriage took place. Another feature connected with this village is a comparatively 'liberal' attitude of the 'clean castes' towards 'untouchables' *i.e.*, Chamars and Bhangis of the village. The untouchables in other villages in the neighbourhood suffer from several restrictions which they have to observe in their interaction with the other castes of the village. For example, the untouchables are not allowed entry into the village temples. Nor can they draw water from the village well. These two restrictions do not operate in the village of Mithepur. One notices in Mithepur a significant departure from the traditional pattern of inter-caste relations in another sense also. Some Brahmins are seen conducting certain religious discourses which are organized by Chamars. Again, a Brahmin purohit may even perform marriage rites amongst Chamars, something rare, if not unheard of, in the rural regions of the Union Territory.

Stone-quarrying on quite an extensive scale has come up in the recent years near village Tejpur, providing employment to several hundred skilled and un-skilled labourers. But none of these labourers are from Mithepur or adjacent villages. Scores of persons from these villages

reported having failed to secure employment on these quarrying sites because of the unfavourable attitude of the labour contractors towards the labourers of this region.

The famous Agra Canal constructed some 100 years ago passes by just touching the village, but the village land being on an elevated plane does not benefit from its waters. Again, although all these 'satellite' villages form a part of the Union Territory, all their land which lies along the banks of this canal comes under the jurisdiction of the Irrigation Department of Uttar Pradesh. This anomaly though striking and significant is not an uncommon feature of village life in this region and examples can be multiplied elsewhere also.

Lastly no village in this whole region comprised of about 25 villages is identified with two castes. A village is termed as either of Gujars or of Brahmins. The case of Mithepur is peculiar in this sense. It is identified both with Brahmins as well as Gujars. Roughly the same status is ascribed to both these castes in the village. Both these castes vie with each other economically as well as for purposes of social prestige.

History and Nomenclature

In view of the non-availability of any written record, the history of the village cannot be sketched in clear terms. This becomes all the more difficult because of the fact that in the entire village not more than two elderly persons were available who could throw some light on the past history of the village. They narrated in broken and incoherent bits certain events which to their knowledge and understanding are connected with the origin and formation of the village. During investigations it was reported by some influential man in Badarpur that some useful information on the earlier history of the village could be had from an important document known as *Shajra-e-Nasb* (lit. Geneological chart) which is known to have been prepared by the Revenue Authorities in 1880. In spite of best efforts the document could not be traced. In sketching the history of the village, therefore, we are left with no alternative except to report briefly the narration of the two village elders. They claim that this information has been

handed down to them from their forefathers and as such it cannot be wrong. Certain historical fallacies are, however, quite apparent. Their version is like this.

During the later part of the 17th century when Shiva Ji Maratha was waging his struggle against the Moghul emperor Aurangzeb, he had a Brahmin of Kaudinya gotra by the name of Ram Dass as his aide-in-chief and as a constant companion. Ram Dass was a great scholar, an astronomer and a brave fighter. He was always consulted by Shiva Ji in all affairs of the state and led Shiva Ji's forces in many of his campaigns against Aurangzeb and captured Delhi. Since Ram Dass had played an important part in this campaign, Shiva Ji asked him to ask for anything in return of his services. On this Ram Dass asked for some land for himself and for some of his poor relatives. A large tract of land having been granted to Ram Dass, he invited several of his caste brethren from his home town to come and settle there. The latter came and set up various habitations of Chhatarpur, Gadaipur, Sathari, Sultanpur, Kilokri and Mithepur. It is mainly because of this imputed link with the Kaudinya Brahmins that the present Brahmins living in the village claim themselves to be their direct descendants.

Later on, when Aurangzeb came into power, he started avenging himself upon the Hindu populace. He not only sentenced many Hindus to death, but also launched a massive campaign for the wholesale conversion of Hindus to Islam. Through this policy of suppression many of the Brahmins living in the above mentioned villages came within the fold of Islam. At the same time those who could not forsake their religion fled away to far-off areas. Those who accepted Islam were granted lands in this area; later they founded several new villages such as Salarpur, Asalatpur, Maispur, Ismailpur, Afghanpur. At present some of these villages are deserted, while others still continue to exist.

Variou Mohammedan kings who succeeded Aurangzeb showed a much more tolerant attitude towards the Hindus residing in this region. In course of time the land around the present site of the village came under the possession of the Maharaja of Jaipur who leased away the land at 3 paise per bigha to one Mithan Lal who

was a Kaudinya Brahmin. Mithan Lal invited those Brahmins of Kaudinya 'gotra who had fled away during the terroristic days of Aurangzeb to come back and settle in the village. It is, therefore, probably from this Mithan Lal that Mithepur derived its name.

Hardly had Mithan Lal and his caste brethren settled in the village when troubles started brewing up once again. The disturbers of peace, this time, were the Gujars of Badarpur (a milk selling and cattle grazing caste) who would swoop upon Mithepur every now and then, loot and pillage the property of the Brahmin inhabitants, and carry away their cattle. Scared perpetually with this menace of the Gujars, the Brahmins of Mithepur sent a deputation to see one Chander Mal (a Gujar chief known for his generosity and bravery) in Bullandshahar. Chander Mal sent a message to the Gujar chief of Badarpur who was his own son-in-law to put an end to these plundering activities, but the latter scorned away the suggestion. Thereupon Chander Mal proceeded to Badarpur along with his men. The Gujar chief instead of apologizing behaved rudely. Swords were drawn on both the sides and Chander Mal slew his own son-in-law.

Finding their own leader slain, the Gujars begged for mercy and assured Chander Mal of their good conduct towards the Brahmins of Mithepur in future. The Brahmins, in order to stabilise peace in their village, persuaded Chander Mal to leave some of his aides who should take up permanent residence in the village. This, they thought, would dissuade the Gujars of Badarpur from plundering them any more. Since then some Gujars (of Avane gotra) also settled in the village and thus another important caste group, which later on was to have a great political power, became a part of the Mithepur village community. For quite a number of years these two castes lived on in the village. For some menial tasks and physical labour they remained dependent upon the lower castes who used to come from outside the village and render service to their patron-castes in Mithepur.

Later on, 5 households of the Chamars and one household of Bhangis were persuaded to come from the nearby village of Jaitpur and the Bhangis from village Basantpur. One Baniya

family too came from the Gurgaon District of Punjab to settle in the village around 1920. Last of all to enter the village community were the Saperas. As reported by the Saperas of the village, they had been living along the bank of river Jamuna for several generations. They had put up their tents and used to shift from place to place every now and then. The Saperas had a tradition of shifting to a new place in case a death occurred in their community. Around 1956 some Saperas who got tired of the marauders who used to operate upon the river banks approached the village elders and requested them to allot house-sites for a few households. The village elders agreed to allot them land for the said purpose on the conditions that Saperas promised to remain in the village permanently. The Saperas agreed to abandon their tradition of shifting to a new site in case of a death. It will be important to mention here that the Saperas have really done away with their tradition and have remained in the village in spite of the fact that over the last eight years some 12 deaths have taken place among them.

The present site of the village is not the same but rather a changed one. The villagers have an interesting story to tell about this. They state that some 40 years back, the entire village came under a divine curse and that no child was born in the village for full seven years. The villagers fearing an ultimate extinction of their community consulted several sooth-sayers and magical practitioners. After a lot of useless consultations they came across a man who advised the villagers to shift the village site. This and this alone, he said, could save them from extinction. Acting accordingly, the villagers shifted to a new site, *i.e.*, the present site. Without establishing any magical connection between the new village site and the prolificity of the women in the village, it may be plainly stated that at present there is not a single married woman without a child.

As has already been pointed out, several original settlers of the village were earlier converted to Islam. Evidence to support this is available even today. There are two old wells believed to have been constructed by two Muslim brothers Rafi and Shafi. The wells are intact even now and are known as Rafi Wala Kuan and Shafi Wala Kuan. The village temple and the old

Chaupal, have been constructed on the site where previously stood a mosque. Several village elders remember having seen the ruins of the mosque with their own eyes.

Demographic Characteristics

Population by Age and Sex :—For the sake of convenience of analysis, we have divided the various age groups into three broad categories *viz.*, infants and children, adults, and old. All persons below the age of 15 years have been termed as infants and children, those between the ages of 15-59 years have been termed as adults and those above 60 years of age have been termed as old.

Generally speaking, we can say that larger the proportion of adults as compared to the other two groups (of infants and children and old), the lesser will be the burden on them, so far as the question of supporting the persons in the other two age groups is concerned. Data regarding age and sex of the population is provided by Table I.1.

TABLE I.1
Distribution of population by age and sex

Age-Group	Males		Females		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0-4	18		26		44	
5-9	31		27		58	
10-14	23		9		32	
Sub Total						
(a) Infants & children	72	44.2	62	45.3	134	44.7
15-19	19		11		30	
20-24	12		12		24	
25-29	10		15		23	
30-34	4		8		12	
35-39	11		8		19	
40-44	11		3		14	
45-49	3		8		11	
50-54	6		8		14	
55-59	1		1		2	
Sub Total						
(b) Adults	77	47.2	72	52.5	149	49.6
60 & above	14		3		17	
Sub Total (c) Old	14	8.6	3	2.2	17	5.7
GRAND TOTAL	163	100.0	137	100.0	300	100.0
PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL	54.3		45.7		100.0	

The table shows that out of a total population of 300, 134 or 44.7% are infants and children, 149 or 49.6% are adults and the remaining 17 or 5.7% are old. This indicates that the population of the village is almost evenly distributed amongst the adults on one hand and infants and children and the old on the other.

The table further shows the preponderance of males over females not only for the village as a whole but also in the three broad age groups. The sex ratio *i.e.*, number of females per 100 males, for the village as a whole, works out at 84. It is lowest (21 females per 100 males) in the age groups of 60 years and above and highest (94 females per 100 males) amongst the adults. The sex ratio amongst the infants and children is nearly the same as for the village as a whole.

It will not be out of place here to compare the distribution of population of the village amongst the infants and children, adults and old, with the corresponding figures for the Rural Tract of the Union Territory as a whole.

TABLE 1.2

Proportion of Broad Age Groups for Delhi Rural Tract 1951 and village Mithepur 1962

Broad Age Group	1951			Mithepur 1962		
	Delhi Rural Tract			Mithepur 1962		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
0-14	42.0	39.6	40.9	44.2	45.3	44.7
15-59	50.6	55.7	55.7	47.2	52.5	49.6
60 & above	7.4	4.7	6.2	8.6	2.2	5.7

If we compare the figures, we find that whereas there are now proportionately more infants and children in the village as compared to the Delhi Rural Tract as a whole, the respective figures being 44.7% and 40.9% respectively, the case is just the reverse for the other two categories of adults and the old. Whereas, in the Delhi Rural tract the adults form 55.7% of the total population, the corresponding figure for the village is 49.6% and in case of the old the corresponding figures are 6.2% for the Delhi Rural Tract and 5.7% for the village.

From the point of view of economic demography, a comparatively high percentage of people in the dependent or non-productive age groups (*viz.* the infants and children and old) is of meaningful significance for investment poten-

tial of an economy. As the proportion of adults who are usually considered as the labour force in the village is lower, the saving investment potential of the village is likely to be lower than for the Delhi Rural Tract as a whole.

While collecting data pertaining to age it was felt that several villagers especially the old ones were ignorant of their exact age and were at best able to give an approximation of the same. This has to a certain extent affected the distribution of the population in various age groups, for there is a pronounced preference for ages ending in 0 or 5. For example a person will say that he is 45 or 50, 70 or 75 and so on instead of giving his exact age.

In the following paragraphs we have tried to find out the extent of such a preference, through a study of the ages of the people by single year returns.

TABLE 1.3
Distribution of Population According to Single Year Age Returns

Completed Age (in years)	No. of persons	Completed Age (in years)	No. of persons
Below 1	8	41	—
1	8	42	1
2	12	43	—
3	13	44	1
4	4	45	8
5	18	46	—
6	14	47	1
7	8	48	2
8	10	49	—
9	8	50	14
10	10	51	—
11	6	52	—
12	7	53	—
13	4	54	—
14	5	55	2
15	15	56	—
16	4	57	—
17	4	58	—
18	6	59	—
19	1	60	7
20	12	61	—
21	3	62	2
22	5	62	2
23	1	63	—
24	3	64	—
25	9	65	1
26	2	66	—
27	1	67	—
28	8	68	—

(contd.)

TABLE I.3—*contd.*

Completed Age (in years)	No. of persons	Completed Age (in years)	No. of persons
29	3	69	—
30	10	70	3
31	—	71	—
32	1	72	—
33	1	73	—
34	—	74	—
35	11	75	3
36	1	76	—
37	2	77	—
38	5	78	—
39	—	79	—
40	12	80	1

Even a cursory look at the table shows the strong bias or preference that the people have for reporting their ages in round number or numbers ending with five. The preference goes on increasing with age. So much so that out of 58 persons above the age of 40 or more, 51 have reported their age in years ending with 0 or 5. Although the preference is visible in the lower ages also, it is not as marked as for the people in higher age groups.

Marital Status

For purposes of analysis of marital status of the population we have adopted the same broad age groups as we did while analysing the age and sex of the population.

The classification of marital status given here is three-fold and includes the three categories of single, married and widowed persons. We have left out the other two categories of divorced and separated as none in the village was reported to be divorced or separated.

Data regarding marital status of the population is provided by table 1.4 on the next page. The table shows that out of the total population of 300, 148 or 49.3% are single, 137 or 45.7% are married and 15 or 5.0% are widowed. Thus on the whole the ever married out-number the single persons, the respective proportions being 50.7% and 49.3% of the total population respectively.

If we compare our figures with those of the Delhi Rural Tract as a whole we find that the proportion of single persons is higher in the village, the respective figures being 49.3% for the village and 48.1% for the Delhi Rural Tract as a whole.

A study of the marital status of the village population according to age reveals several interesting features.

(a) That marriage amongst infants and children is an exception more so far the boys than girls, under the age of 15 years. Only 2.3% of the total infants and children were reported to be married.

(b) That marriage amongst adults in the village is universal. Whereas all the females get married by the time they attain the age of 15 or 16 years, it may get delayed in case of some males. There is only 1 unmarried girl of 16 years of age and even she has already been engaged and her marriage is to take place some time in the month of November. There are 16 unmarried male adults in the village and most of them are either students or are commuters in service, who are also expected to get married in due course.

In view of a peculiar custom prevailing in this and all the other villages of the Union Territory it will be useful if a distinction is made between two phases of married life. The two phases may be termed as pre-gauna and post-gauna phases. Cohabitation of a couple does not start soon after their marriage but only after a lapse of some time when the gauna or nuptial ceremony has taken place. During the pre-gauna phase the bride stays with her parents and it is only after the gauna ceremony that she starts leading what can be termed as married life. Thus during pre-gauna period a person though technically married, for all practical purposes leads the life of an unmarried person.

In the village under study gauna has not taken place in case of 4 married males and 3 married females. If we leave them out, we have 64 married males and 66 married females or in other words two married females more than their male counterparts. This is due to polygamy. Two persons in the village have two living wives with them. In both the cases they got the second wife through Kareva, a ceremony described later on in the report.

Migration

As over 7% of the total population of the village is reported to have in-migrated into the village during the last decade or so, a study of

Table 1-4
Distribution of Population According to Age, Sex and Marital Status

Age-Group	Males				Females				Total						
	S		W		S		W		S		W		Total		
	S	M	Total	W	S	M	Total	W	S	M	Total	W	S	M	Total
0-4	18	..	18	..	26	..	26	..	44	..	44	..	44	..	44
5-9	31	..	31	..	27	..	27	..	58	..	58	..	58	..	58
10-14	22	1	23	..	7	2	9	..	29	3	32	..	32	3	35
Sub-Total, Infants	71	1	72	..	60	2	62	..	131	3	134	..	134	3	137
	(98.6)	(1.4)	(100.0)	..	(96.7)	(3.3)	(100.0)	..	(97.7)	(2.3)	(100.0)	..	(97.7)	(2.3)	(100.0)
15-19	11	8	19	..	1	10	11	..	12	18	30	..	30	18	48
20-24	2	8	12	2	..	12	12	..	2	20	24	..	24	20	44
25-29	3	7	10	..	..	12	13	1	3	19	22	..	22	19	41
30-34	..	4	4	..	..	8	8	..	..	12	12	..	12	12	24
35-39	..	11	11	..	..	8	8	..	..	19	19	..	19	19	38
40-44	..	10	11	1	..	3	3	..	..	13	14	..	14	13	27
45-49	..	3	3	..	..	8	8	..	..	11	11	..	11	11	22
50-54	..	5	6	1	..	6	6	2	..	11	14	..	14	11	25
55-59	..	1	1	..	..	1	1	1	..	1	2	..	2	1	3
Sub-Total, adults	16	57	77	4	..	67	72	4	..	124	149	..	149	124	273
	(20.8)	(74.0)	(100.0)	(5.2)	(1.4)	(93.0)	100.0	(5.6)	11.9	(83.2)	(100.0)	(3.4)	(83.2)	(83.2)	(100.0)
60 & above	..	10	14	4	..	..	3	3	..	10	17	..	17	10	27
	..	(71.4)	(100.0)	(28.6)	(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)	..	(58.8)	(41.2)	(41.2)	(58.8)	(41.2)	(100.0)
GRAND TOTAL	87	68	163	8	61	69	137	7	148	137	300	15	148	137	300
	(53.4)	(41.7)	(100.0)	(4.9)	(44.5)	(50.4)	(100.0)	(5.1)	(49.3)	(45.7)	(100.0)	(5.0)	(49.3)	(45.7)	(100.0)

mobility of population may reveal several interesting features. The number of out-migrants from the village is, however, negligible as compared to in-migrants.

In order to evaluate the extent of in-migration a question was put to the head of every household regarding the birth place of all members of his or her household.

According to information thus collected, out of a total population of 300, 204 persons were reported as having been born in the village itself and the rest 96 (64 females and 32 males) were reported to have been born outside the village and having immigrated into the village at various periods of time. Of these, 58 females immigrated into the village through marriage. It may be stated here that as per custom the villagers practise endogamy and exogamy and as such all married females belong to village other than Mithepur, the village under study. We have purposely excluded such cases from our study of in-migrants. Thus leaving aside these 56 females we have 40 others (32 males and 8 females) who migrated into the village for some reason or the other (except marriage).

Table I.5 gives the period-wise distribution of the immigration of these 40 persons.

TABLE 1.5
Period-wise distribution of immigrants.

Period	No. of immigrants		
	M	F	Total
Before 1931	4	1	5
1931-1941	6	1	7
1941-1951	3	—	3
1951-1962	19	6	25
Total	32	8	40

The table indicates that of the total immigrants among the present population of the village, the largest number (25) came into the village during the decade 1951-62.

A question regarding the reasons of in-migration was asked in case of all the 40 in-migrants from the respective heads of their households. The in-migrants constitute 14 households of the village. All except 6 (4 Sapera households which were allowed to settle down in the village and 2 others) stated that they immigrated to this village as they had blood rela-

tions living in this village. All of them came here with a view to improve their economic condition. Four stated that they had little land in their native place and were seeking a new place to settle down. Their relations from village Mithepur invited them to come and stay here. They sold land at their native places and purchased land here.

Another 4 stated that they were unable to find any gainful employment at their native places and hence were obliged to seek opening elsewhere. They belonged to agricultural households and hence could seek opening in agricultural occupations only. In their contacts with their relations at Mithepur they were told by the latter that if they come and settle down in the village they could find some job or the other especially as tenant cultivators. The Brahmin land owners of the village were in need of hands who could look after their land and were too willing to give it away on crop share basis. Thus these 4 households came to this village and made it their home.

Two others who came to this village had an entirely different reason for coming and settling down in this village. Both of them were quite well off, having over 50 bighas of land at their native places and were in no way thinking of leaving their ancestral villages. Both of them got married to girls from this village. But after the death of their respective fathers-in-law there was nobody to look after the latter's land and hence they felt morally bound to come and help the families of their in-laws. While one of them sold all his land at his native place to come and settle in this village, the other one continues to visit his native village each year to manage his lands there.

It is interesting to note that leaving aside the lone exception of an ex-army soldier, who came to the village from the Lyallpur Distt., of West Pakistan, all others have come to this village from the rural areas of the nearby districts of Meerut and Bulundshahr in the U.P. and Ballabgarh and Gurgaon in the Punjab. In other words none of them has come from a place more than 40 or 45 miles away from the village and all of them have come from the rural areas. The ex-soldier who immigrated into this village from a distant place, had earlier gone with his regiment

from a village in Meerut District and had to come to the village as all his people had in-migrated to Mithepur from his native place.

As stated earlier, all the in-migrants chose this village as they had some relation or the other living in this village. But for this, they might not have come here at all.

As compared to the in-migration of outsiders into the village, out-migration of the people from this village has been negligible. No household as such is reported to have out-migrated from the village, though 6 persons individually have left the village for good and settled elsewhere. Four of them belong to Chamar households and one each to Baniya and Gujar households. While three of them left the village for joining Delhi Police as constables, 2 left for joining the Armed forces as Jawans and the sixth, a Baniya, left the village as he was able to wrangle a peon's post in the Delhi Municipal Corporation. Incidentally, all of them were unmarried at the time of their out-migration and all of them left the village only during the last 6 or 7 years. No reliable data regarding the extent of out-migration prior to 1951 is available. But the village elders claim that they do not remember any particular household having left the village for good, although cases of individual out-migration were there even previously. Out-migration mostly was from non-agricultural households who after getting some jobs used to move out of the village and settle down near the place of their work.

Literacy

According to the household enumeration conducted by us in September 1962 only 69 or 23.0% of the total persons in the village were reported to be literate. As no corresponding figures for 1951 or before are available it is not possible for us to say whether the extent of literacy has gone up or down during the past few years. But oral inquiries solicited from the villagers show that the extent of literacy has gone up substantially during the last 10 or 15 years.

According to the persons interviewed, previously only very few children of the comparatively well-off households used to go in for literacy and education. People were generally con-

tent with letting their children while away their time playing in the village lanes or assisting them in their household chores. The nearest school was at Molarband, about two furlongs away from the village, and only a few persons ever felt the necessity of sending their wards for schooling. The girls, however, were never sent for any schooling.

Table I.6 presents data relating to level of literacy in the village.

The table shows that although of the total population of 300 only 69 or 23.0% are literate yet the level of literacy is much higher in case of males than females, their respective figures of literacy being 38.6% and 7.3%.

Another notable feature revealed by the table is the comparatively higher level of literacy in the lower age groups as compared to the higher ones. For example, if we divide the total population into two groups, of those below 25 years of age and those above it, we find that nearly one-third or 32.4% of the persons below the age of 25 years are literate, the corresponding figure for those above 25 years of age being only 8.8%.

Again, if we take the case of males and females separately we find that whereas 48.5% of the males below 25 years of age are literate, the corresponding percentage for those above 25 years of age is comparatively very small, it being only 15.0%. The corresponding figures for females are 10.6% and 1.9% respectively.

Incidentally, the statements of the villagers are fully endorsed by the data provided in the table. The causes of the rise in level of literacy both amongst the males and females are discussed later on in the report.

Whereas literacy indicates the ability of a person to read and write, educational standard indicate the standard that he has attained in any educational institution. As reported earlier there are in all 69 (59 males and 10 females) literates in the village. Of these 5 males and 1 female have attained literacy through the Adult Education Scheme started in the village some 5 years back. Leaving aside these 6, there are 63 others, who have attained some educational standard or the other. Table I.7 provides the relevant data.

The table shows that of the total population 31 or 49.1% are pre-primary, 18 or 28.5% are

TABLE I.6
Distribution of Population According to Age, Sex and Literacy

Age-Group	Literate			Illiterate			Total		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
0-4 . . . . .	..	..	..	18	26	44	18	26	44
5-9	12	9	21	19	18	37	31	27	58
10-14	18	..	18	5	9	14	23	9	32
	30	9	39	42	53	95	72	62	134
15-19	14	..	14	5	11	16	19	11	30
20-24	6	..	6	6	12	18	12	12	24
25-29	4	..	4	6	13	19	10	13	23
30-34	1	..	1	3	8	11	4	8	12
35-39 . . . . .	..	..	..	11	8	19	11	8	19
40-44	1	1	2	10	2	12	11	3	14
45-49	1	..	1	2	8	10	3	8	11
50-54 . . . . .	..	..	..	6	8	14	6	8	14
55-59 . . . . .	..	..	..	1	1	2	1	1	2
	27	1	28	50	71	121	77	72	149
60 & above	2	..	2	12	3	15	14	3	17
GRAND TOTAL	59	10	69	104	127	231	163	137	300

primary and 11 or 17.4% are middle pass. Only three persons in the village have attained educational standard of matriculation or above. In fact one is a Graduate, one Intermediate and the

third one is a Matriculate.

Another noticeable feature is that all the literate females of the village are in pre-primary classes and are in the age group 5-9 years.

TABLE I.7

Distribution of Literates According to Age, Sex and Educational Standard

Age Group (in years)	Males					Females					Total							
	Pre-Primary			Total		Pre-Primary			Total		Pre-Primary			Total				
	Primary	Middle	High School	F.A.	B.A.	Total	Primary	Middle	High School	F.A.	B.A.	Total	Primary	Middle	High School	F.A.	B.A.	Total
0-4	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
5-9	12	..	..	..	12	9	..	..	9	21	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	21
10-14	10	8	..	..	18	..	..	..	..	10	8	..	..	..	..	..	..	18
15-19	..	8	5	1	14	..	..	..	..	..	8	5	..	..	..	1	..	14
20-24	..	..	4	..	4	..	..	..	..	..	..	4	..	..	..	..	..	4
25-29	..	..	2	..	3	..	..	..	..	..	..	2	..	..	..	..	1	3
30-34	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
35-39	..	1	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
40-44	..	1	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
45-49	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
50-54	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
55-59	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
60 & above	..	..	1	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	1
	22	18	11	1	1	54	9	9	9	31	18	11	1	1	1	1	1	63

2. Economic Structure

IN this chapter, an attempt has been made to analyse some details regarding the acquisition, extent and manner of utilisation of land resources which are regarded as the most important of all the assets of families and individuals in the village. Although buildings and livestock constitute an important part of economic resources in the village yet it is land which is prized most by the villagers. Even the social status of a person is determined by the extent of his ownership of land. Persons holding larger pieces of cultivable land are graded higher in the village social hierarchy.

Land Utilisation :—In Mithepur, the Gujars and the Brahmins are the only land-owning castes and as such the village is invariably called a 'Gujar-Brahmin' village.

The pattern of land utilisation in the village is presented in table II.1 below :

TABLE II.1

Land Use	Area in Acres	Percentage of the total
Under Cultivation . . .	237	52.9
Cultivable Waste . . .	15	3.4
Uncultivable . . .	190	42.4
Habitation Site . . .	6	1.3
TOTAL . . .	448	100.0

The total land resources of a village consist of the entire area of land which is either cultivated or uncultivated or used by the village population for residential purposes. According to the data obtained from individual households, the total land area of the village is 448 acres out of which only 237 acres are cultivated. This clearly indicates that only 56.3 per cent of the total land is used for cultivation. The table besides highlighting the agrarian bias of land utilisation indicates that a very high proportion (43.7%) of the total land is uncultivable and lying waste. This is primarily due to the fact that the Agra Canal which runs through the village takes up as much as 132 acres of the 190 acres of land shown as 'uncultivable'. The remaining 58 acres are unfit for cultivation as the upper layers of the soil which carry various salts and other components so essential for the growth of crops have been washed away by periodic overflowing from this canal.

Distribution of Cultivated Area

An important aspect of land utilisation is the extent of fragmentation and the size of holdings of cultivated land. It clearly indicates whether the holders of land are economically rich or not. In case the holdings are of large size, it can be taken for granted that production is also more than the subsistence level, and in case the size of holdings is meagre and the plots are not compact then the economy of the village can be stated as poor.

TABLE II.2
Size and Distribution of Holdings According to Ownership

Area in Bighas	No. of House-holds	Percent- age of the total No. of house-holds	Total Area (Bighas)	Percent- age of the total Area	Average size of hold- ings (Bighas)
0—5	..	..	..	..	..
5—10	..	..	..	..	..
10—15	3	11.5	34	2.20	11.3
15—20	6	23.2	99	6.20	16.5
20—25	5	19.2	107	6.70	21.4
25—50	3	11.5	122	7.60	40.7
50—75	5	19.2	270	17.00	54.0
75—100	2	7.7	157	9.90	78.5
100+	2	7.7	800	50.40	400.0
TOTAL	26	100.0	1,589	100.0	61.1

The table shows that 26 households in the village own 1,589 bighas of cultivated land and the average size of land holding is 61.1 bighas per household. The disparity in the size of land holdings and the concentration of land in the hands of a few is clearly brought out by the fact

that 2 households whose land holdings are above 100 bighas each own 800 bighas or 50.4 per cent of the total cultivated land in the village and the rest 24 households in the village own only 789 bighas or 49.6 per cent of the cultivated land. There is a trend to sow more and more of vegetables now as these fetch very attractive returns. None amongst the land owning households owns less than 10 bighas of land which evidently is much larger as compared to the average size of land holding in the country as a whole. Although the holdings in the village are large and compact yet we will find from further analysis that the economy of the village is at a mere subsistence level.

Irrigation Facilities

The paucity of irrigation facilities is apparent from the fact that only 23 acres or 8.3 per cent of the total cultivated area is irrigated by 3 Persian-wheel wells. The rest 255 acres or 91.7 per cent of the total cultivated land depends upon rainfall.

It may be mentioned here that because of the lack of irrigation facilities the peasants cultivate only a small proportion of their land during Kharif crop. In case the rains are favourable they do concentrate on Rabi crops. Unfortunately the villagers have not been allowed to use the water of 'Agra Canal' which runs alongside the village and is looked after by U.P. Government. This strictness on the part of U.P. government has adversely affected the economy of the village. Due to lack of irrigation facilities the peasants have not been able to grow more of vegetables to meet the increasing demand in the market. Moreover, the area adjacent to the

TABLE II.3
Irrigation Facilities by Sources (1955-56)

Source of Irrigation	Area in Acres irrigated by season					
	Kharif		Rabi		Total Kharif & Rabi	
	Area (Acres)	% of total Area	Area (Acres)	% of the total	Area (Acres)	% of the total Area
Persian-wheel wells	6	8.9	17	8.1	23	8.3
Rain	61	91.1	194	91.9	255	91.7
TOTAL	67	100.0	211	100.0	278	100.0

canal is becoming sandy and it is apprehended by some experienced cultivators that the entire area would become dry and parched and absolutely unfit for cultivation if irrigational facilities are not provided by the authorities and if plantation is not done along the banks of the canal.

Cropping Pattern

In Mithepur, food crops (Kharif and Rabi) constitute the major items of agricultural production both in terms of cultivated area and value. In 1960-61, the total area under cultivation was 257 acres. As there are two major crops (Kharif and Rabi) which are sown over the entire cultivated area twice a year, it would make a total of 474 acres.

The distribution of the crops sown for the year 1960-61 as obtained from the Revenue Records, is shown by the following table.

The table shows that during the year 1960-61 out of the total gross area of 474 acres of cultivated land, 278 gross acres of 58.6 per cent was actually brought under cultivation. The rest 196 gross acres of land were left uncultivated either for lack of irrigation facilities or because the land

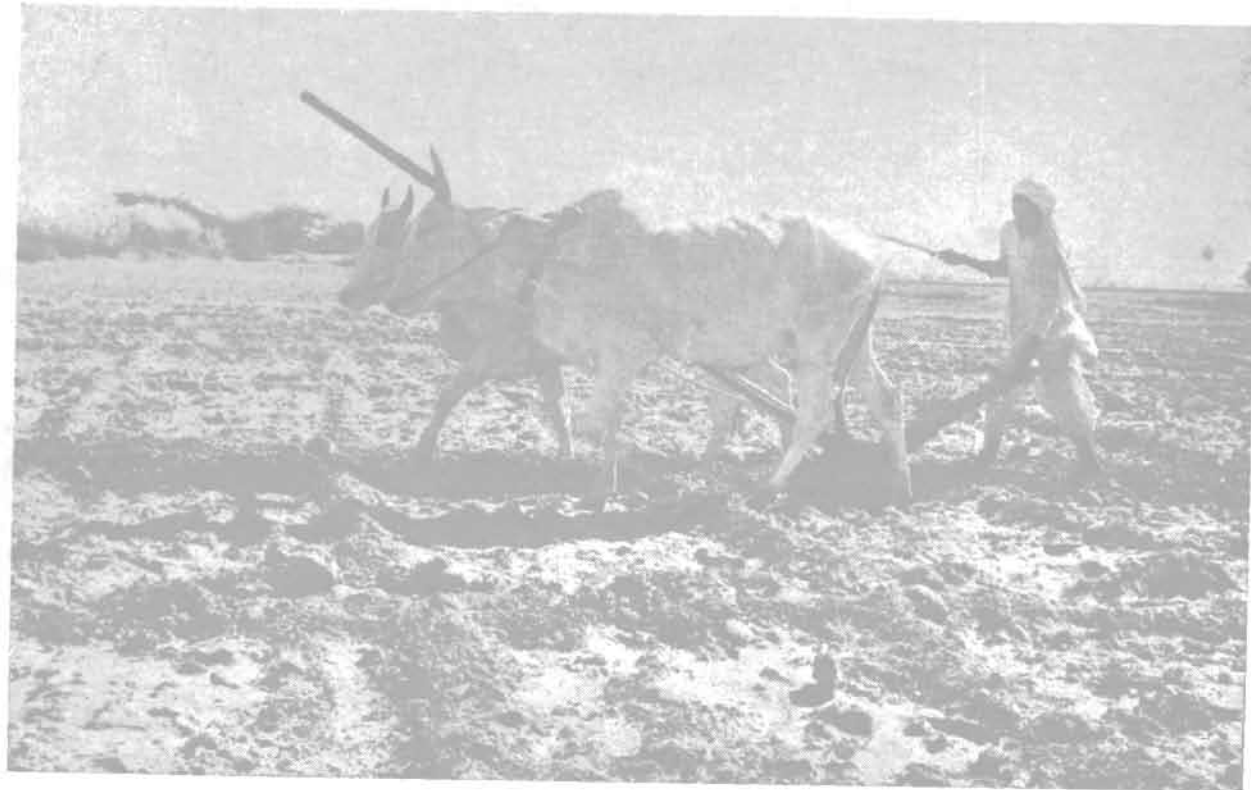
was to be left fallow so that it could regain its fertility.

Again out of the total of 278 acres, 211 acres or 75.9 per cent of the total was cultivated during the 'Rabi' season and only 67 acres or 24.1 per cent during the 'Kharif' crop season. Taken in absolute terms the land left fallow during the 'Rabi' crop season was only 26 acres whereas it was as much as 170 acres during the Kharif crop season.

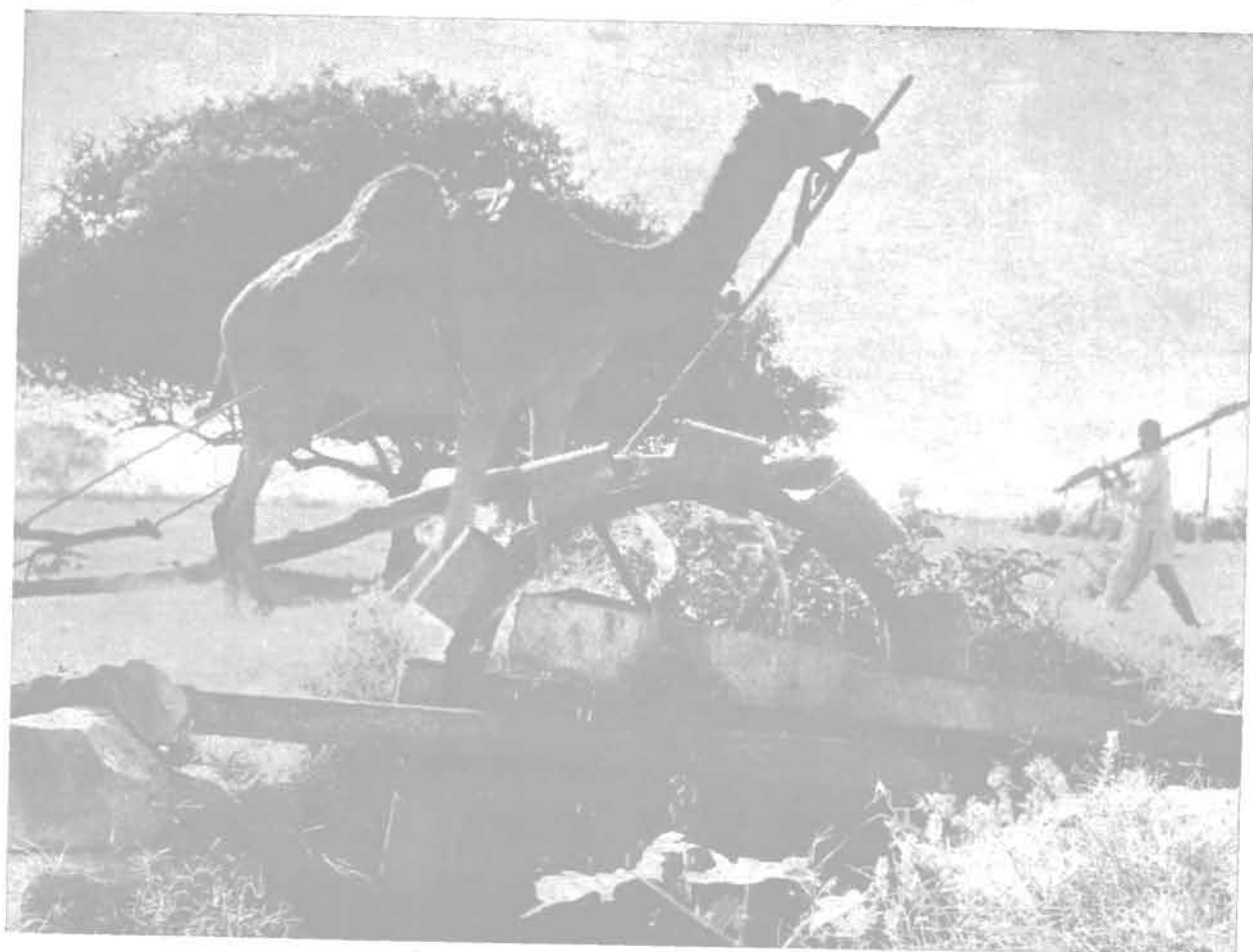
A study of the cropping pattern during the year shows the predominance of consumption crops over cash or fodder crops. The consumption crops account for an over-whelming proportion of the total cultivated land, and it marks out the subsistence or backward nature of agricultural economy in spite of the large sized land holdings in the village. The villagers state that this is due to lack of irrigational facilities on account of which they are unable to have double cropping on their holdings regularly. Similarly cash crops like sugarcane, pulses etc., account for only 6.5 per cent of the gross cultivated land. Recently the villagers have started growing vegetable in order to meet with the increasing

TABLE II.4
Distribution of cultivated area according to crops shown in 1960-61

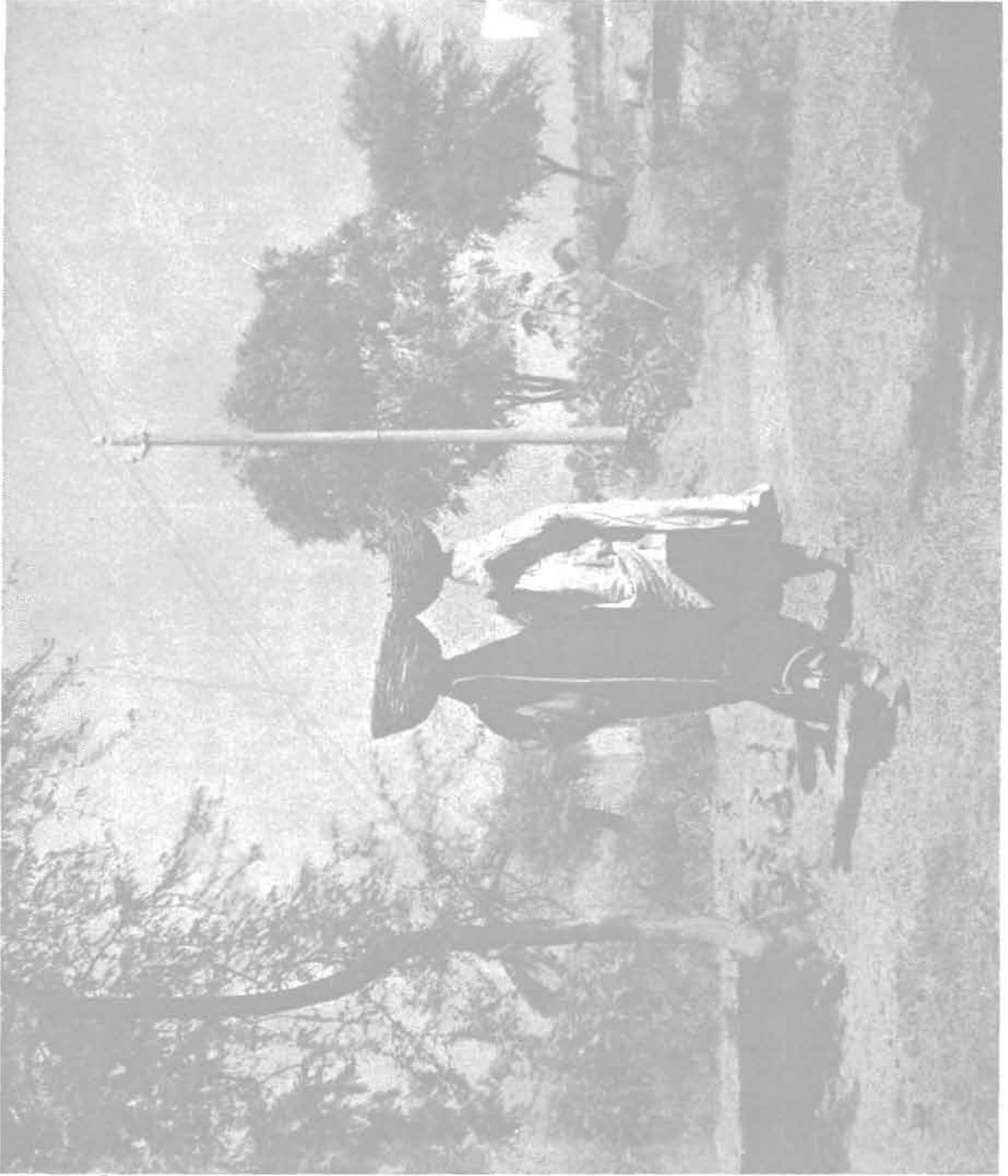
Nature of Crop	Rabi		Kharif		Total	
	Acres	Percentage	Acres	Percentage	Acres	Percentage
Wheat	47	22.4	..	..	47	16.9
Barley	27	12.8	..	..	27	9.7
Gram	116	54.9	..	..	116	41.7
Gochani	6	2.8	..	..	6	2.1
Jawar . . . . .	..	..	14	20.9	14	5.1
Bajra . . . . .	..	..	45	67.1	45	16.2
Maize . . . . .	..	..	3	4.5	3	1.1
SUB-TOTAL	196	92.9	62	92.5	258	92.8
Cash Crops . . . . .	..	..	..	..	..	..
Sugar-cane . . . . .	..	..	..	..	..	..
Spices . . . . .	..	..	..	..	..	..
Pulses	11	5.3	..	..	11	3.9
Vegetables	4	1.8	1	1.5	5	1.8
SUB-TOTAL	15	7.1	3	4.5	18	6.5
Fodder . . . . .	..	..	2	3.0	2	0.7
GRAND TOTAL	211	100.0	67	100.0	278	100.0



A Gujar Landowner ploughing his field.



Camel ploughing a persian wheel.



On way to the field.

demand of the urban people. But there is a general complaint by the villagers that inadequate irrigational facilities are at the bottom of all the ills of the village. It can be safely suggested in regard to the village economy, that more tubewells should be set up and some arrangement should be made for drawing water from the Agra canal to increase the agricultural out-put in the village. Thus adequate irrigational sources will enable the villagers to reclaim the so-called waste land in the village.

Livestock

Like land, livestock constitute one of the major economic resources of the village. For generations draught cattle like bullocks have been the only source of power in agricultural operations. Although of late a couple of households have acquired tractors for the purpose yet the role of the draught cattle can hardly be minimised and it still retains its singular position as the major source of power in agricultural operations. Besides this the role of milch cattle as a source of

subsidiary income and means of providing milk for consumption purposes for the villagers need hardly be emphasised. It may, however, be mentioned here that according to most of the villagers, the milch cattle now primarily serve more as a source of subsidiary or even primary income than a source of providing milk or its products for consumption purposes of the villagers. The position was just the opposite a couple of decades back when most of the people used to consume it at home. But due to the ever rising cost of living most of them have now been compelled to take to sell it in order to subsidise their meagre incomes.

In the following paragraph we intend to present a few empirical facts about the livestock in the village, which will make it easier for the reader to judge the importance of livestock to the villagers. For sake of clarity and analysis the ownership of livestock in the village has been tabulated according to broad occupational groups *viz.*, agricultural and non-agricultural.

TABLE II.5
Distribution of Livestock amongst the Agricultural and Non-Agricultural Households

Type of Livestock	Agr. HHs.		Non-Agr. HHs.		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
(A) Draught Cattle						
Bullock	43	23.6	1	1.0	44	15.6
Bullock young stock	5	2.7	3	3.0	8	2.8
Camel	1	0.6	..	..	1	0.3
TOTAL	49	26.9	4	4.0	53	18.7
(B) Milch Cattle						
Cow	40	22.0	7	7.1	47	16.7
Buffalo	40	22.0	14	14.1	54	19.2
Goat . . . . .	..	..	12	12.1	12	4.3
TOTAL	80	44.0	33	33.3	113	30.2
(C) Young Stock						
Cow	29	15.0	6	6.1	35	12.4
Buaffalo	24	13.1	6	6.1	30	10.7
Goat . . . . .	..	..	2	2.0	2	0.7
TOTAL	53	28.1	14	14.2	67	23.8
(D) Others						
Donkey . . . . .	..	..	19	19.2	19	6.8
Sheep . . . . .	..	..	3	3.0	3	1.2
Poultry . . . . .	..	..	26	26.3	26	9.6
TOTAL . . . . .	..	..	48	48.5	48	17.6
GRAND TOTAL	182	100.0	99	100.0	281	100.0

Out of a total of 53 households in the village 25 or 47.2% are primarily engaged in some agricultural activity or the other and as such have been termed as agricultural households and the rest who are either engaged in non-agricultural activities or for whom agricultural activities are only a source of subsidiary income have been termed as non-agricultural households.

The table shows that in all there are 281 heads of animals in the village and of these 182 or 64.8% are owned by the agricultural households and the rest 99 or 35.2% are owned by the non-agriculturists. It is not difficult here to find a sort of co-relation between the agricultural households and the ownership of livestock. For we find that 47.2% of the total households who are in agriculture own 64.8% of the total livestock in the village, the share of non-agricultural households being only 35.2%. Moreover, if we deduct the poultry heads from the total livestock the distribution tilts more towards the agricultural households. This co-relation between agricultural activities and livestock is primarily due to the fact that the agriculturists require livestock for practically all the operations in the fields as also because it is easier for them to maintain them.

A closer study of the table shows that of the total livestock in the village milch cattle *i.e.* cows, buffaloes and goats along with their youngstock account for over half or 54.0% of the whole. This clearly indicates the importance attached to milch cattle in the village. This is so primarily because milk selling has, of late, become one of the important secondary sources of income of 29 households in the village.

A study of the distribution of livestock according to broad occupational groups *viz.*, agricultural and non-agricultural, brings out clearly the type of livestock possessed by them as also the reason thereof. Amongst the agricultural households there is a great preponderance of the draught cattle as compared to the non-agricultural households. This is so because they are required in the fields for agricultural operations.

Poultry heads, donkeys, etc., are all owned by non-agricultural households. These are reared and maintained by these households as a subsidiary means of income.

On the whole, whereas amongst the agricultural households the draught livestock account for 26.9% and milch cattle including its livestock for 72.1%, the position is quite different amongst the non-agricultural households. Amongst them draught cattle account only for 4.0%, milch cattle for 47.5% and others like donkeys, sheep, poultry heads etc., 48.5%.

Livestock & Castes :—A study of the distribution of the various kinds of livestock amongst different castes in the village reveals several interesting social features.

The table on page 17 shows that leaving aside the case of 2 bullock youngstocks all the bullocks are owned by the Gujars and the Brahmins in the village. This is quite natural as only these 2 castes in the village own land or are engaged in agricultural activities, where the bullocks are utilised in various agricultural operations. The Chamar household which owns the 2 bullock youngstocks has been maintaining them with a view to sell them off when they grow up & thus make some money. It is not difficult for him to maintain these because he hardly spends anything on them. As for their fodder he just takes them out for grazing on the village common land around the Agra Canal.

Cows and buffaloes are owned by all the castes in the village except the Saperas, Nais & the Bhangis. In fact, there is one household each of the two latter castes and each household consists of only 1 person and as such they do not feel the necessity of maintaining any milch livestock. Moreover even if they keep it, their main occupation is bound to suffer as cows or buffaloes require quite a lot of time-consuming attention which they can ill afford. Poultry heads are reared only by the Saperas in the village. In fact the Saperas are mostly non-vegetarians and they maintain poultry heads not only with a view to make some extra money by selling eggs but also for enjoying an occasional chicken dish with their meals.

Donkeys, as will be noticed, are being maintained by the sole Bhangi and some Sapera households. Donkeys are primarily used as beast of burden by these households, who maintain them for earning whatever little extra money they can make by hiring them out for transportation

TABLE II.6
Distribution of Livestock According to Caste

Caste	Buffalo		Cow & Buffalo young stock		Bullock Total No.	Bullock Young No. of HHS. owning	Camel Total No.	Goat No. of HHS. owning	Goat Young Total No.	Hen No. of HHS. owning	Hen Young Total No.	Sheep No. of HHS. owning	Sheep Total No.	Donkey No. of HHS. owning	Donkey Total No.
	No. of HHS. owning	TOTAL	No. of HHS. owning	Total No.											
Gujar	25	66	14	35	17	3	1	1	1	..	..	..	..	..	..
Brahmin	9	28	8	25	7	2	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Chamar	8	6	4	5	..	2	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Sapera	7	..	..	..	..	..	..	2	7	4	5	1	3	4	17
Banlya	2	1	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Bhangi	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	5	..	..	..	..	..	..
Nai	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
TOTAL	53	391	26	65	24	8	1	3	12	4	21	5	1	3	4

purposes. They are used primarily for transporting bricks, sand, mud, wood, etc.

Thus the picture that emerges from a study of livestock according to caste has several distinctive features. For example, except for the Bhangis and the Saperas in the village none keep donkeys. In fact this also is something unusual for in most of the other villages of the union territory, the keeping of donkeys is considered a sort of social monopoly of the Kumhars, the potter caste. The Bhangis elsewhere normally rear pigs but not so in the village under study.

Again none amongst the higher castes rear poultry heads as these castes are mostly vegetarian.

Livelihood Class and Occupational Structure

The purpose of the following paragraphs is to give a detailed account of the present occupational and livelihood class structure of village Mithepur and its shifts from the past.

It will, however, not be out of place here to mention that whereas a livelihood class signifies the sector of economy from which one derives ones means of livelihood, occupation specifies the specific job that one is doing.

A study of livelihood class structure of the

village at different periods of time would reveal the various stages of development of its economy. But our comparative study of livelihood class is necessarily limited because data regarding the same is available only for 2 decades viz., the 1951 census and the data collected by us during 1962, while surveying the village. With a view to make a comparative study possible we have adopted the same classification as was adopted by the Census Commissioner in 1951. The comparison of the two will enable us to highlight the shifts of population amongst the various livelihood classes in the village during the period 1951—62.

A study of the table reveals several interesting features, the most important and certainly the most significant being the tremendous shift of the population from the agricultural to the non-agricultural sector of the economy. Whereas according to the 1951 census over three-fourths or 76.1% of the total population was deriving its means of livelihood from the agricultural sector of the economy the corresponding figure for 1962 stands at 50.7% or just half of the total population, thus indicating a shift in dependence of 25.4% of the population from agricultural to non-agricultural sector of the economy. Again this fact can be highlighted by the fact that

TABLE II.7
Distribution of Population according to their livelihood class as in 1951 and 1962

Livelihood Class	1951		1962		
	No. of persons	% of the total	No. of persons	% of the total	
Agricultural Classes	I. Cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned and their dependents	141	64.9	147	48.7
	II. Cultivators of land wholly or mainly un-owned and their dependents	—	—	—	—
	III. Cultivating labourers and their dependents	4	1.9	6	2
	IV. Non-Cultivating owners of land and their dependents	20	9.3	—	—
Non-Agricultural Classes Persons (including dependents) who derive their livelihood from	V. Production other than cultivation	2	.9	41	13.7
	VI. Commerce	13	5.9	50	16.7
	VII. Transport	2	0.9	2	0.7
	VIII. Other Services and Miscellaneous sources	35	16.2	2	18.2
TOTAL	217	100.0	300	100.0	

although the population of the village rose from 217 to 300 persons yet the number of persons depending upon the agricultural sector for their livelihood has gone down from 165 to 152. This tremendous shift is primarily due to the several owner-cultivators and non-cultivating owners having joined non-agricultural occupations especially in commerce and miscellaneous services. Amongst the various categories of agricultural classes the most significant feature is the total extinction of the class "non-cultivating owners of land" and their dependents. Whereas in 1951 9.3% of the population was deriving its means of livelihood from this category, at present there is none. The total extinction of this class can primarily be attributed to the enactment and enforcement of the Delhi Land Reforms Act of 1954, which prohibits the leasing out of land to others for cultivation except under certain conditions. Thus, either such persons took to cultivation of land themselves or lost their lands to their cultivating tenants who eventually became the cultivating owners of the land.

Again, another significant feature among the agricultural classes is the decline by 16.2% in the class "cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned & their dependants." This is due to several persons from this category from amongst the Gujars and the Brahmins having taken to non-agricultural occupation like commerce or service.

It may be pointed out here that the class of cultivators of land wholly or mainly unowned is totally absent in the village in 1962 and so was the case in 1951. But in course of our investigation we came across several cases where prior to the implementation of the Delhi Land Reforms Act of 1954 people were engaged in this occupation. But as the 1951 data does not mention anything about it, we have to assume whatever is given as correct and so it is being left un-commented upon.

So far as the non-agricultural sector is concerned the most significant is the increase in the proportion of persons dependent upon commerce for their livelihood. This rise from 5.9% in 1951 to 16.7% in 1962 is primarily due to several persons having taken to milk selling as their main occupation as also the fact that whereas previously there was no shop in the village, at

present two are functioning in it. The other important shift is the increase in the class 'other services & misc. sources'. This class has registered an increase of 8.4% over 1951. Most of the new entrants in this class are from the two cultivating castes of the Gujars and the Brahmins who have given up their agricultural occupation and have joined service occupations.

Labour Force and Working Force

Labour force is defined as the pool of manpower resources from which working force is drawn, working force being the sum total of all persons who are engaged in some economic activity or the other.

Labour force in rural areas is usually assumed to be consisting of all persons in the age group 15 to 59 years. Mithepur being a rural area we have taken all those persons between the ages of 15 to 59 years as constituting the labour force. The following table presents data regarding the labour force and working force in the village.

TABLE II.8
Labour Force and Working Force

Category	Number of Persons		
	Males %	Females %	Total %
1. Labour Force	77	70	147
2. Working Force	78	34	112
3. 2 as % of 1	101.2	48.5	76.1

Factors of Economic Change

For decades the economic life of the village had been following the same pattern year in and year out with agricultural occupations predominating. Under it the common man in the village had his own set of preferences and values. Ownership of land was considered a great qualification and the people preferred to carry on agriculture only, ignoring several other avenues altogether. All in all the village economy was more or less stagnant. Agriculture, the back-bone of the village economy being rather backward the whole of the village economy was adversely affected. But of late, especially after the independence of the country several economic forces came into being which started eroding the traditional mode of economic life and infused a sort of dynamism to it. Several people have now left their original

occupation of agriculture and taken to non-agricultural occupations. (See livelihood class pattern of the village). Even those who are in non-agricultural occupations do not mind changing from one occupation to the other, thus indicating increased mobility of occupations just for the sake of improving their economic lot. According to several village elders, the mobility of occupations in the years gone by was rather insignificant. This factor they say has come into being only during the last decade or so.

In the following paragraphs we intend to describe in detail the various factors which have led to the changes mentioned above. The single most important of such factors is, of course, the recent Delhi Land Reforms Act, the others being the improvements in transport and communications, land improvements, sources of finance etc.

Land Reforms :—With the dawn of independence several states following the directives laid down in the constitution of the country adopted several legislative measures meant to improve the lot of the landless and the small land holders, besides, of course, to abolish the system of absentee landlordship. The most important of such measures adopted in the Union Territory of Delhi is the Delhi Land Reforms Act of 1954, which came into force sometime in 1959.

The most significant feature of the Act was the abolition of what is usually termed as Zamindari. The Act declared that all such land which was let out by non-cultivating owners of land to actual tillers on cash rent or crop share basis since 1952 or before was to be taken away from the former and handed over to the actual tillers. Thus in future there would be one class of land owners viz., bhoomidars who would be the cultivating owners only. Those who received land

under the Act were to pay some compensation to the original owners, the amount and the terms of payment being decided by the authorities. Certain exceptions were however made in this with a view to safeguard the interests of widows, army personnel and the like, who were allowed to let out their land to other for cultivation. Another measure under the Act was that the proprietary rights of all the perpetual waste land in the village was to be vested in the Gaon Sabha.

For sake of clarity we have tabulated the effects of the implementation of the Act on the agriculturists in the village. The data thus tabulated is presented by the table below.

A study of the table clearly indicates that an overwhelming proportion of the land-owning households in the village were affected by the Act, adversely or otherwise. On the whole the Brahmins have been the main losers and the Gujars the main gainers. Out of a total of 19 households affected 8 (all Gujars) were reported to have gained land through the implementation of the Act. All of them were previously cultivating tenants of the Brahmins and with the implementation of the Act they became bhoomidars or the rightful proprietors of the land that they were tilling as tenant cultivators.

Seven households (3 Gujars and 4 Brahmins) have reported to have lost land due to the implementation of the Act. It is interesting to note that out of a total of 367 bighas reported to have been lost by these households 242 bighas was acquired by the Gaon Sabha, the land being perpetual waste land. The rest 125 bighas was confiscated from them and handed over to the 8 households who were cultivating that land as tenants.

Four other households reported that they have

TABLE II.9
Effects of Land Reforms Act

Caste	No. of HHs. Affected	HHs. which gained land	Amount of gained land (Bighas)	HHs. which lost land	Amount in bighas	Cannot get land on crop sharing
Gujar	15	8	125	3	35	4
Brahmin	4	—	—	4	332	—
TOTAL	19	8	125	7	367	4

been adversely affected by the Act in so far that at present they are not able to secure any land on rent or crop share basis. These are all Gujar households owning comparatively small holdings from which they are not able to earn enough for their respective families. Previously when the land owners were allowed to let out their land they could get enough land on rent but now the same has been declared illegal and so none in the village is prepared to let out any land to them.

Thus from the data presented above we can easily conclude that on the whole the Act had a favourable effect on the agriculturists in the village. For those who became owners of land from mere tenants is proved to be a very real gain. Those who lost land did not lose much for a better part of their land which they lost was perpetual waste, which by no means was of any real use to them except in name. Again so far as the case of the 4 Gujar small land holding households is concerned they have definitely been adversely affected. But our enquiries reveal that in spite of the implementation of the Act letting out of land is quite common in the village even now, though it is limited between households which are on really good terms and have complete confidence in each other. This they are able to manage by getting the *girdawri* registered in the owner's name by which the owner can claim to be cultivating the land himself. The 4 Gujar households who report that they have been adversely effected (as they do not get any more land on rental basis) would not have found it difficult to secure land on crop share or cash rent basis, if they had been on good terms with the land-owners.

Improvements in Transport & Communication :—The village until 2 years back was connected to the outside world through Badarpur, there being nothing but a kuccha path connecting it with Badarpur. But in 1962 a pucca road was constructed and a bus service operating between Delhi and village Jaitpur via Mithepur village has enabled the villagers to move out more frequently from the village. Thus whereas previously most of the cultivators used to sell their products at Badarpur now most of them take it to Bhogal Mandi at Delhi where they fetch a

higher price. Again when it comes to selling vegetables, which they were neither growing in quantity nor selling, they come down to Sabzi Mandi, Delhi and sell it here. Vegetable growing is not only more profitable but also provides ready cash to them, which of late has become a preferred commodity for the villagers. Not that villagers detested cash in the years gone by but previously they were indifferent whether they got paid in cash or in kind. But not so now; now they prefer cash.

Moreover, because of the better transport and communication facilities more and more people from the village now aspire to secure employment outside the village. It may be interesting to point out here that although the general communication of the people of the village with outside world has certainly increased due to greater transport facilities, the mobility of the Saperas has not been affected at all. Even prior to the commencement of the bus service through the village, they used to visit far flung states and cities all over northern and eastern parts of the country, just as they do now.

Another impact, the effect of which it is difficult to gauge is that due to greater communication with the outside world people have now come to realise the importance of educating their wards and have come to prefer service occupations more than anything else.

It is also interesting to note that due to certain peculiar conditions prevailing at the nearly quarrying sites none from the village has been able to find employment there. Again although lots of industries have cropped up on the Mathura Road beyond Badarpur yet only a couple of the villagers have been able to secure jobs there. Thus in spite of the great industrial activity going around near the village, it has not been able to influence the occupational structure of the village in any way.

Land Improvements :—By land improvement we mean increasing the fertility and output of land. It can be carried in many ways; reclamation of waste land, consolidation of holdings, availability of better irrigation facilities, provision of better seeds, manures, tools and equipments for cultivation. In regard to the reclamation of the cultivable waste land no substantial improvement

has been effected by the Gaon Panchayat. Consolidation of holdings was carried out in the village about seven years back. As a result of this measure, small fragments of land have been consolidated into compact ones. As reported by the cultivators this measure has reduced the cost of cultivation by saving substantial wastage of human efforts. It has given impetus to the cultivators to employ improved tools and implements, to make use of better seeds and manures thereby increasing the productivity of the land.

Four years back, the Shahdara Block Development Centre opened a supply depot in the village to supply better seeds, ammonium sulphate and better tools and implements to the villagers. As the Gram Sevak incharge of the supply depot resides in the village, majority of the agricultural households have started using better seeds and fertilizers. The B.D.O. Supply Depot also gives better tools and implements on hire which a few farmers have been making use of. One Brahmin household possesses a tractor with several accessories and some other Gujar households are thinking in terms of buying one for themselves. Also two tubewells have been installed in the village. One of these is owned by a Gujar and another by a Brahmin. Both the tubewells have not yet started functioning because they have yet to get the electric connection. All these changes taken together are going to increase the output per acre and improve the economic conditions of the agriculturists.

Impact of Industrialization

The village under study is located at a distance of five miles from the Okhla Industrial Estate and six miles from the Faridabad Industrial Township. Till about one year back no villager used to work on either of these Industrial Estates. Recently however some Chamar young boys have taken up workers' job on daily wages in Okhla Industrial Estate. As reported by some of the villagers, being unskilled workers, they have not been able to secure good jobs in the industries.

Sources of Finance

The bulk of the village population lives on subsistence level. Thus villagers need credit not

only to make investments in agriculture but also to fulfil certain social obligations and in times of extreme hardships even to meet their day-to-day requirements. The chief source from where the villagers have been getting credit for many years and still continue to get is the village money-lender. Even though the interest charged by him is exorbitant *i.e.* between 15 to 40 per cent, his monopoly has not yet been completely shattered even by the most modern source of credit *i.e.* the cooperative credit societies. The reasons are many. Money lender offers credit both for productive as well as non-productive purposes. Moreover there are no formalities involved, no series of documents to be signed before obtaining the credit.

All this explains why credit societies have not been able to make much headway in spite of the fact that they offer credit at far lower rates than the money lender.

In the past government has been generally granting taccavi loans on various critical junctures such as natural calamities in the form of floods or famines etc. yet the villagers have not derived much benefit from these loans. The reason has been that these loans were given only for specific purposes and secondly obtaining them involved long procedures and formalities which the cultivator was incapable of meeting. Thus the efforts of the government to eliminate the money lender as a source of credit have not achieved much success. Mithepur does not have any Co-operative Credit society. When asked to give reasons the villagers pointed out to all round corruption rampant in the credit societies of the neighbouring villages like Molarbund, and hence their abhorrence for them.

Residential Pattern

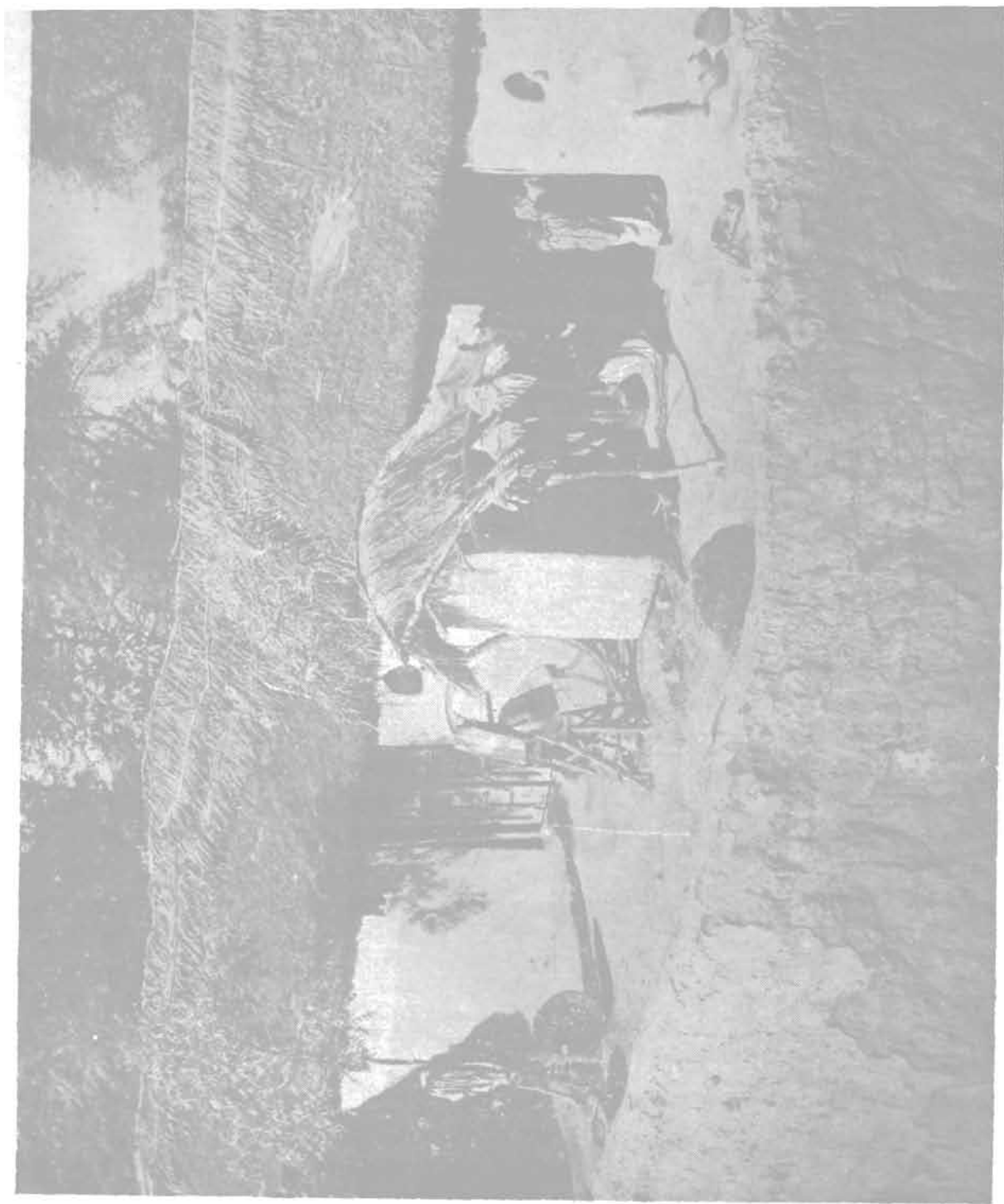
The type of dwelling-structure in a community reflects in certain essential respects, its way of life. It also reflects, though indirectly, the type of life lived within the family itself and the pattern of relations obtaining between its different members. For example, it may be possible to infer from the type of partition inside a dwelling structure, whether the mode of life is along 'Nuclear' or 'Joint family' lives. Over and above these features that are reflected by a dwelling



A view of the inner-side of the Baithak.

A Baithak belonging to the well-to-do Gujar household in the village.





A view of the kuccha house.

structure, it also signifies the degree of social change a community has undergone, and the extent and quality of difference which it maintains from the urban way of life.

The dwellings in 'Mithepur' can be classified into the following sub-structures.

- (i) Residential Structure (Ghar)
- (ii) Drawing-cum-sitting Room (Baithak)
- (iii) Separate Cattle Shed (Gher)

It should, however, be made clear that a particular structure need not be exclusive and a residential structure may also be used as a sitting room or a cattle shed.

(i) *Ghar* :—It is a private apartment, where the members of a family live. No outsiders especially the males have free access to it, except the male members of the family itself, or their very close relations. There is no separate room in such households to serve the purpose of a kitchen; a small space is partitioned inside the 'verandah' where meals are cooked. It is a place where household goods are kept and grain is stored, where gods and deities are lodged. Mostly the rooms have mud floors. Attached to these rooms, there is a 'verandah' running along the whole length of the 'Ghar'.

(ii) *Baithak* (Sitting Room) :—The sitting room is known as 'Baithak'. Generally the male members of the family sit in this room and gossip with their friends during leisure period. The friends and guests are also received and entertained only in this room. It is for this reason that most of the Gujar and Brahmin households in the village have separate 'Baithaks'. The Baithak also provides sleeping accommodation to the guests and visitors who want to stay overnight in the village. As such a structure adds to the prestige of the household, every care is taken to make it (Baithak) as presentable as possible. The sitting room is generally clean and white-washed and more properly maintained than the 'Ghar' i.e., the residential structure.

In some 'Baithaks' of the Gujars there are a few hard wooden chairs, iron stools etc. Mostly people use the small-framed 'Charpoy' or 'Khat' on which a bedding is spread for sitting purposes.

(iii) *Gher* (Cattle-shed) :—It is a structure where the livestock is kept. The cattle-sheds are generally constructed in the inner court of the

residential structures. Mostly these cattle-sheds are covered by iron sheets or wooden planks. The data collected shows that 19 households have recently constructed separate cattle-sheds away from their residential structures, for housing the cattle. In a cattle-sheds there are some pegs with which cattle are tied with the help of strings. There is also a manger, where cattle are fed fodder etc. Sometimes the ox-driven carriages are also kept in the cattle-shed.

It is not always possible to demarcate completely between the residential structure and other structures exclusively used for agricultural purposes. It has been observed during the survey that most of the households in the village store their grain and other agricultural implements at their residential structures. Moreover the same residential structure may be used as 'Ghar', 'Baithak', 'Gher' etc., particularly in case of poorer sections of the community.

There are in total 64 residential structures in the village. 19 households are having separate cattle-sheds out of whom 15 are those of Gujars and the rest 4 are of the Brahmins. No other caste living in the village has separate arrangements for cattle. It reveals that only castes belonging to the higher strata of the society (both economically and socially) can afford to have separate cattle-sheds and no one else. It is due to the fact that the above mentioned castes are primarily engaged in agriculture, with large holdings, thus making it essential for them to provide separate cattle-sheds for their livestock which are so vital for cultivation.

The dwellings and structures in 'Mithepur' can further be classified according to the material used for constructing them : viz., Kuccha, Pucca and Mixed type.

(i) *Kuccha* :—The Kuccha constructions are further classified into two types viz., mud houses and thatched or straw huts. The former is a structure the walls of which are constructed of unbaked mud bricks. As for the material of roof, it is made of mud bricks mixed with mud and straw supported by wooden lintels.

As we enter the premises of the house we find ourselves in front of an open space which constitutes the courtyard of the house. Opposite the courtyard there is a 'verandah' (small or big)

according to the size of the structure. After crossing the 'verandah' there is a door which leads to the inner portion of the residential structure (Ghar). In some houses there are more than one big room which is used for residential purposes. The doors and their frames are of crude type made by the local carpenter. The Kuccha type of construction is usually without windows and small holes are made in the wall which serve as ventilators.

(ii) *Pucca* :—Small variations have been seen in the internal arrangement of pucca type of dwellings, but the planning of the structure is more or less the same. The walls are made of burnt bricks mixed with mud or limestone. The people have wooden sleepers and stone slabs as material of the roof. The roof is supported by wooden beams in such structures. Whereas the walls are plastered with cement, the floor too, in some cases is made of bricks. Another significant difference found in such type of structures is that there are two to three rooms and roofs are also comparatively higher than in the kuccha type of structures. Some consideration is also given to the fixation of windows and ventilators in pucca structures, wooden Almirahs are also fixed in them. The pucca houses have a courtyard and backyard. The cattle-shed is generally away from the living room. But there is hardly any latrine or bathroom even in pucca residential structures. The average house of this type is fitted with electricity.

(iii) *Mixed* :—This type of structure having pucca walls and kuccha roof is quite common in

the village. There are about 13 households of mixed type.

The material used for constructing kuccha type of structures is available locally. Most of the households living in kuccha type of residential structures have the skill of constructing and repairing them too. While the material *i.e.*, burnt bricks and cement or limestone required for constructing pucca structures is secured from 'Badarpur', the labour engaged in construction is locally available in the village itself.

The first and third type of residential structures *i.e.*, kuccha, and mixed have some features in common. Firstly they are dark and low-roofed. Besides most of them are ill-ventilated and dingy, and also lack in sanitation. It has been observed that in case of pucca houses too, the amenities like latrines or bathrooms are conspicuous by their absence. As all the three types of dwellings have open space either at the front or at the back, here men generally take bath. A few pucca houses in the village have latrines but the majority of the people go out into the fields. There is hardly any pucca drain for draining out the dirty water. A pit is dug in the ground at the back side of the house for storing dirty water.

A study of residential structures with reference to the age and type of material used for construction, reveals the nature as well the changes which have been taking place in the type of construction in recent years.

The table II.10 shows that 61% of the total houses are pucca and 35.5% are kuccha and mixed type. It can be seen from the table that

TABLE II.10
Distribution of Houses Amongst Different Age Groups and Type of Construction

Age of the House	Type of Construction			Ancestral	Self constructed	Separate for Cattle
	Kuccha	Pucca	Mixed			
Less than 5 years	7	26	6	..	39	11
5—10 yrs.	3	5	3	..	11	4
10—20 yrs.	3	5	3	3	8	2
20—30 yrs.	2	1	1	..	4	1
30—40 yrs.	1	2	..	1	2	1
40—50 yrs.	1	..	..	1	..	..
50 yrs. & above	..	..	..	..	..	..
TOTAL	17	39	13	5	64	19

TABLE II, 11
Households by Number of Rooms and by Number of Persons Occupying

Total No. of HHs.	Households with 1 Room		Households with 2 Rooms		Households with 3 Rooms		Households with 4 Rooms		Households with 5 Rooms		Households with 6 Rooms			
	Total No. of Family members	No. of HHs.	Total No. of HHs.	Total No. of Family Members	Total No. of HHs.	Total No. of Family Members	Total No. of HHs.	Total No. of Family Members	Total No. of HHs.	Total No. of Family Members	Total No. of HHs.	Total No. of Family Members		
53	300	116	16	79	21	103	9	67	5	31	1	10	1	10
53	300	116	16	79	21	103	9	67	5	31	1	10	1	10

about 80% of the pucca houses have come up within the last five to ten years, but a substantial number (59%) of the kuccha houses too have been constructed during this period. It shows that although a shift towards pucca houses is taking place yet the inhabitants do construct kuccha houses for their shelter. Another significant fact regarding the construction of kuccha houses is that most of them have been built during the last twenty years or so. The life of such houses is very short and they require frequent repair to maintain their stability. After the rainy season the kuccha houses need complete repair of their mud walls and thatched roofs which involve some expenditure to save the structure from complete damage.

The table II.10 also shows that 92.19% of the residential structures have been constructed by the existing households and only 7.81% are ancestral. There has been a tendency on the part of the villagers in recent years to construct separate cattlesheds as ancillary to the main residential structure. Out of the total 19 separate cattlesheds, as many as 11 have appeared during the last five years. Thus we can say that there has been an increasing tendency on the part of the villagers to have an improved structure with a well defined division between the cattlesheds and the residence for the inhabitants of the households.

The table II.11 on page 25 shows that there are a total of 116 rooms used for living purposes

in the three types (kuccha, pucca, mixed) of residential structures and a total of 300 persons are living in them. On an average one living room provides dwelling accommodation to 2.6 per cent, and each household is possessing 2.2 rooms.

The table II.12 reveals the data regarding the average number of rooms occupied per household in case of various castes living in the village. It varies from 2.4 in case of the Gujars and the Brahmins to 3.0 for the Baniyas, 2.0 for the Bhangis, 1.5 for the Chamars, and 1.0 for the Saperas and Nai households.

The number of rooms per household does not give a clear picture of the living conditions in the village. To assess the same one must take into consideration the number of persons living in them.

There is no planned drainage system in the village. People prefer to make drains at the back side of their houses. Some of the households in the village have recently dug drains which connect the regular pucca drains constructed along the houses of the village. The lanes are pucca but not always very clean. The womenfolk may sweep and clean only that portion which lies directly in front of their own house. Similarly not much care is taken regarding the maintenance and cleanliness of a house, except in case of a few Brahmin households. The floors are neither swept nor smeared with cowdung regularly. Most of the houses present an untidy look to an outsider.

TABLE II.12

Distribution of Houses Amongst Different Castes According to Number & Rooms

Caste	No. of Households	No. of other structures	No. of Houses	Total	Ancestral	Self Constructed	No. of Living rooms	Average number of rooms per HHs.	Separate Arrangement for cattle
Gujar	25	10	25	35	...	35	66	2.4	15
Brahmin	9	5	9	14	2	12	22	2.4	4
Chamar	8	1	8	9	2	7	12	1.5	...
Sapera	7	...	7	7	1	6	7	1.0	..
Baniya	2	...	2	2	..	2	6	3.0	..
Bhangi	1	...	1	1	..	1	2	2.0	..
Nai	1	..	1	1	..	1	1	1.0	..
TOTAL	53	16	53	69	5	64	116	2.2	19

3. Family

FAMILY is by far most important and the basic unit of the social structure of the Indian villages. It is an agency through which the social and cultural norms of the village community are transferred on to its individual members. The study of this institution is, therefore, bound to reveal certain basic features of the social structure of which it is a part.

Types of Family

We begin the discussion of family in the village Mithepur by considering its size, composition and type. The typology which is made use of for the analysis of families in the village is fourfold *i.e.*, it is comprised of the following four types and is based on the number of members living in a family [especially with regard to (i) and (ii)] and the nature of relations existing among them.

- (i) Uni-member family—consisting of only one member male or female living alone.
- (ii) Nuclear family—consisting of a couple with or without their own children.
- (iii) Extended family—consisting of a couple with one or more married son/sons with their wife/wives and children.
- (iv) Collateral family—comprising of two or more married brothers with their spouses with or without children. Moreover in this context any family consisting of cousins, affined relatives or even non-relatives is also counted as a collateral family.

The above typology was adopted simply because it was found helpful in analysing the data in question rather than for purely theoretical reasons. The first two categories may be together grouped as *nuclear families* whereas the latter two may be termed as *Joint families*.

Our household enumeration indicates that there are, in all, 53 families in the village. Table III.1 given below analyses and categorizes these 53 families according to their size and type.

TABLE III. 1
Distribution of families according to size and type

Number of members	Type of Family				Total
	Uni-member	Nuclear	Extended	Collateral	
1	2	..	..	..	2
2	..	5	..	..	5
3	..	2	..	..	2
4	..	4	2	1	7
5	..	4	4	..	8
6	..	7	1	1	9
7	..	7	..	3	10
8	..	2	3	1	6
9	..	..	..	..	..
10	..	..	1	2	3
11	..	..	..	..	..
12	..	..	..	1	1
TOTAL	2	31	11	9	53
% of 53	3.8	58.5	20.7	17.0	100.0
Average size (members)	1.0	5.1	6.2	7.9	..

As shown by Table III.1 above, 33 or 62.3% of the total number of families fall under the broad classification of 'nuclear' families with the remaining 20 or 37.7% under 'joint families'. One of the two uni-member families is comprised of a 70-year-old Brahmin widow living on charity and offerings of the villagers. She accepts food and other offerings only from the Gujars and Brahmins, both of whom see to it that she does not suffer any unnecessary hardships and privations. The other uni-member household comprises of a 70-year-old Nai (barbar) who has been staying in the village for scores of years

and lives by shaving the villagers and cutting their hair.

Leaving aside these 2 uni-member families, there are 31 purely nuclear families, and the size of such families varies between 2 persons per family (in the case of 5 families) to 8 persons per family (in the case of 8 families). The average size of such families works out to 5.1 persons per family.

So far as the extended families are concerned, the range of variation is from 4 to 10 members with the average size as 6.2 persons. The corresponding figures for the collateral families are 4 to 12 for the range of membership and 7.9 for the average family size. Thus one can easily conclude by a simple look at the Table that the average size of the family increases as we move from Type I to Type IV.

A study of the Table III.2 below reveals that among the Gujars and Brahmins there is a greater proportion of families which can be categorized as joint families than among the Chamars (12 out of 25 in the case of Gujars and 3 out of 9 in the case of Brahmins). This may be considered in conjunction with the fact that these two are the only land-owning castes in the village. Thus the oft-repeated sociological generalization is borne out namely that a comparatively larger sized family is a more viable unit from the point of view of land and cattle resources that are to be looked after and utilized.

Saperas have, out of a total of 7 families, 4 joint families. This looks anomalous in view of the fact that Saperas like Chamars do not hold any land in the village. Nevertheless, there is an important reason which impels them to have large-sized families, and this is the 'migratory'

TABLE III. 2
Distribution of Households by Caste

Type of Family	No. of Households amongst the various castes							Total
	Gujar	Brahmin	Chamar	Sapera	Baniya	Nai	Bhangi	
Uni-member	..	1	..	..	..	1	..	2
Nuclear	13	5	7	3	2	..	1	31
Extended	8	..	1	2	..	..	..	11
Collateral	4	3	..	2	..	..	..	9
TOTAL	25	9	8	7	2	1	1	53

character of their profession. All able-bodied adults living in all the families have to move out from their homes on professional tours for most part of the year. Therefore, the larger the size of the family, the more will it be possible for some of the adults or old to stay back in the house in order to look after the children and the women-folk. There is another important factor that explains the large size of Sopera families. A Sopera does not earn uniformly the same amount all the times he moves out on professional tour. Further, it may not even be possible for him to move out sometimes due to illness or other reasons. In the event of any of these exigencies he can be assured of a regular supply of minimum necessities required for the maintenance of his family from the pool-fund comprising of his own income and incomes of other adults living along with him. Thus we see that the large size of Sopera families is linked on the one hand with the peculiar character of their profession and their income structure on the other. The comparatively lower incidence of joint families among the Chamars was explained by the Chamar respondents in the following way. They do not have big houses so that after an adult in a family is married it becomes difficult to provide for the privacy of the newly wed. There is, therefore, a tendency on the part of an adult to move out of his father's house immediately after marriage. Another feature, though not mentioned by them, is nevertheless importantly associated with this phenomenon and throws some more light on the earlier fission of Chamar families. Chamar adults attain economic independence from their parents far earlier than the adults of Gujars or Brahmins. This is due to the absence among them of a 'family occupation' (such as agriculture) in which all adults of the family may be profitably engaged. Thus immediately after his marriage a Chamar adult tends to move away from his parents and sets up his own household. It is important to note here that a nuclear family does develop into a joint family in the case of Chamars as it happens in the case of Gujars or Brahmins, but no sooner this happens than the fission takes place. Stating in sociological terms we might say that the two phases are coincident or coterminous.

It is worth remarking here that even among

Gujars and Brahmins the opinion is swinging in favour of nuclear families. We may still find a great number of people among these two castes who decry 'nuclear families' as 'Isolationist' and extoll 'Joint families' as 'ideal'. Nevertheless almost all of them say it quite clearly that this ideal cannot be put into practice now. Some of them also recognize that nuclear families are free from quarrels and bickerings that are so common among the wives of brothers living together.

The most appropriate illustration of the above mentioned 'Change in opinion' can be found in the family of the one Peru, a Gujar by caste. Peru was one of the most well-to-do persons of the village, owning 25 bighas of land. Besides this he had also taken 60 bighas of land from the Brahmin land-owners on share-crop basis and used to cultivate all these 85 bighas with the help of his four adult sons. Soon after Peru's death, his sons agreed to divide the land among themselves. The reason as given by the brothers for this division was that they were sure of this eventual break up of their family and they feared that if delayed certain unpleasant consequences might follow leading to a rupture among the brothers. Thus, they divided 25 bighas of land, each taking 5 bighas. They also occupied separate apartments in their house, each running his separate kitchen. So one and the same cell had split into 5 different units. In spite of all this they decided to carry on the cultivation of their land jointly and to divide the total produce equally amongst themselves. Had they taken to separate and individual cultivation they would not, they thought, be able to afford separate sets of tools, implements, bullocks and other necessary equipments.

Apart from this 'economic' impetus for their joint economic venture, there is another psychological factor involved too. Once property is partitioned off and the potentials of mutual conflict eliminated, a sufficient feeling of goodwill is generated which makes a joint economic enterprise possible. To put it in simpler words, we may say, that once people have their economic interests safe and secure, they do not mind combining with those who are already known and related especially when the economic gains of such a cooperation are apparent and visible.

The Concept of Good Family

It may once again be emphasized that family is the most fundamental unit in the social life of the village. A person is known and recognized as one belonging to a certain family rather than as an individual. Thus a person basks in the sunshine of his family's prestige and reputation which it carries in the village. Correlatively, therefore, a person from a bad family may find it difficult to establish his bonafides in the village. Further, everybody will aspire to have good relations with a family known to be a 'good family', whereas all will try to eschew any dealings with a family carrying bad and wicked reputation in the village. In order to establish the various constituents of a 'good family', as many as ten elderly persons in the village were interviewed. They stated that a family comes to be known as a 'good family' because of the good and noble behaviour of its members. Further explored, this 'noble behaviour' boiled down to 'living according to tradition', respecting the old and the seniors, behaving towards the various members of the village community according to their status and position. It was also mentioned by the respondents that all families which are held in high esteem in the village are quite well-to-do, thus implying the essential element of 'wealth' as a component of 'goodness'. When asked as to whether 'wealth' in itself was sufficient to win the title of 'goodness', people replied in a strong negative saying that 'wealth could even be acquired through evil means'. Length of time for which a family has been living in the village also adds to its prestige in the village. Thus, other things being equal, the longer a family's stay in the village, the higher will be its prestige. Still another factor which helps a family to acquire prestige in the village is its concern with the welfare of the village community.

All these elements are abundantly present in the family of one Pandit Insha Ram, a 75 years old Brahmin. Insha Ram's family was the first to come and settle in the village. Since then it

has been owning good amount of land and maintaining important links even outside the village. Pandit Ji received his education from Banaras University and later held a fairly respectable post of Assistant Station Master at Delhi Sarai Rohila Station. He has also been responsible for introducing several reform measures in the village from which the villagers have reportedly benefited. All the villagers acknowledge that Pandit Ji has meticulously kept himself aloof from the village politics. All these factors have made him a symbol of respect and regard and have also boosted up the prestige of his family as a whole. Consequently, people come to him very often for advice and guidance in several matters and show a special regard for all the members of his family.

People have also got a definite notion as to what they mean by a bad family. A family is bad because of its bad persons who might have involved themselves in stealing, fighting, dacoity, murder or illicit sexual relations at any stage. Further a bad family may be one where no regard is shown for the elders, where the young and the old smoke together, and the father and son drink in each other's company. Sons of a bad family may not be considerate about the type of language which they use before their elders and may therefore condescend to the use of abusive and filthy words even when their elders are sitting around. A family may also happen to spoil its reputation if its males beat their women-folk.

As already mentioned the prestige of a family is of crucial importance in so far as its place and importance in the total village community is concerned. While fixing a match for one's boy or girl a person will thoroughly probe into the background or history of the family with which matrimony is being considered. Negotiations are known to have broken down even with an eleventh hour revelation of some fact which is considered disparaging for the prestige of the family considered.

4. Marriage

MARRIAGE is an important social institution. One most peculiar characteristic of the Indian marriage in general is that these are arranged by the elders and parents of the prospective spouses. It is considered a vital social obligation. To marry one's daughter in one's lifetime is considered a pious act. According respondents the proposal must be made from the girl's side. When a boy or girl approaches marriageable age their parents start looking for preferential mates so that the negotiations for marriage should be initiated.

Age at Marriage

In case of the Gujars and the Chamars most of the boys are married at fifteen and have the 'gauna' at seventeen or eighteen. In case of the Brahmin boys, age at marriage is considerably high *i.e.* eighteen to twenty but the interval between marriage and 'gauna' is very short. Among the Brahmin girls the ages are fourteen at marriage and fifteen at gauna. The marriage age seems to be going up slightly in recent years among the Gujars but age at marriage remains more or less the same in case of the lower castes of the village.

Norms of Endogamy and Exogamy

The Hindu community is divided into a number of castes which are endogamous groups, and in practice the caste is again sub-divided into a number of sections called 'gotra'. These sections are again exogamous groups within the endogamous groups. The rules of endogamy and exogamy are observed in selecting mates. A Brahmin must marry a Brahmin, a Jujar a Gujar, a Chamar a Chamar and so on. These endogamous rules are maintained in Mithepur. There is no case in which an individual has married outside the caste in the village.

While making selection of spouses the gotra of boy's father, mother, and father's mother (Dadi) should be eliminated.

The villagers as a whole also practise territorial exogamy. This village (Mithepur) as a matter of actual practice obtains spouses mainly from a set of villages in Gurgaon District. Moreover the region in the immediate vicinity of the village is also

looked upon as an exogamous region. Any village in which one's own caste and clan is well represented is generally eliminated for selection of mates. Although the lower castes of Mithepur, recognizing the social superiority of the Gujars and Brahmins, try to follow their marriage regulations, yet the rules of territorial exogamy operate far more loosely in case of the Chamar and Bhangi castes in the village, because they are often seen marrying their children even in the neighbouring villages in which their own caste is well represented. They however stick to the *gotra* restriction whereby they do not marry within their own *gotra*. In case where a low caste has to marry in the neighbouring village, both the parties would meet and contract alliance outside the *sivano* (vicinity of the village). As it can be clearly seen, by doing so, they give a token recognition to the idea of territorial exogamy. Among the villagers, negotiated marriages are common. There is no evidence of any preference on the part of villagers for consanguinous marriages (*i.e.*, marriages contracted within the circle of blood relatives).

NOTE : Unlike the system of dowry as prevalent among the other castes of the village, in case of the Saperas it is the boy's family which pays the bride-price to the would-be bride's family. The amount may be paid either in lump-sum or in instalments before the marriage.

The Search for a Bridegroom and Engagement

Formerly as a convention the Nai (barber) used to act as go-between in making arrangements for Brahmin and Gujar marriages. For his services he (Nai) used to receive Rs. 7.50 and the bus-fare bothways. The Nai seems to have arranged marriages for upper-caste jajmans but not for lower caste groups whose hair he would not cut. His role as a mediator between the two parties required great skill and perfection. After three or four families had been picked up on the suggestion of the Nai, each of these cases was carefully discussed in the girl's family circle, with full consideration of such qualifications of each boy, as his appearance, status of the family, degree of education and economic prospects etc. It will be worthwhile to state here that these qualifications are considered only by the higher castes of the village. A Chamar respondent frankly stated that while

making matrimonial alliances no particular social or economic aspect is considered regarding the boy's family. Any boy who is physically fit is considered eligible for marriage. The two 'principals' in the impending marriage, the boy and the girl, are not consulted about it and are not expected to meet or see each other before marriage. The boy's male relatives may see the girl to find out the principal qualities looked for in a bride.

In order to see that the boy and girl are mutually compatible, the horoscopes of both the boy and girl are examined by the local Brahmins of their respective villages. If the horoscopes of the preferential mates appear to be compatible, the Brahmins give their consent for contracting the matrimonial alliance.

Sagai Ceremony

Reservation (Larka Rokna) :—In case all the conditions are met, and both the families of prospective bride and bridegroom are agreed, the reservation or (Larka Rokna) ceremony takes place. The ceremony marks a commitment which is seldom repudiated in the village. Although the Nais continue to perform some important functions at weddings, their role as go-between is declining day by day. It is the father of the girl or rather the head of the girl's family, who makes initial arrangements. On reservation ceremony the father of the girl give 1, 11, 51 rupees depending upon his financial condition, to the boy and thus the boy is reserved for his daughter for marriage.

The main feature of the ceremony, is a gift in terms of money from the girl's father to the boy. This money which ranges from 51 to 101 rupees (in case of the prosperous Gujars of the village) is placed in the boy's squatted lap and turmeric mark (tilak) is affixed on the boy's forehead. The girl's father also brings some sweets, copper utensils and sometimes a pair of dress for his would be son-in-law, which of course are handed over to the head of the boy's household on the occasion. Again this presentation of ceremonial gifts at the time of betrothal is confined only to the Gujars of the village. Among the lower castes of the village, this ceremony is informally completed by putting one rupee in the boy's lap. In some cases the girl's father may give one

rupee to each kin of the boy present there on the occasion. This again depends upon the financial position of a person and his out-look towards the occasion.

Information of the Wedding Day

Pili Chithi:—One or two years generally elapse before the wedding takes place. It is up to the girl's family to end this waiting period by stating that they want the marriage to be held. However, the season of the year is usually predetermined, for most of the marriages take place in *Jaith* (May-June) when the star with tale appear in the sky. Incidentally, the harvest is over and ample finances earned from the recent sale of the agricultural produce are available and can be spent on the marriage. After the specific date (Mahurat) for the marriage is selected by the family 'Purohit', the calculations are written on a piece of paper which is signed by two or three responsible members of the girl's household or other co-villagers. A turmeric mark and a few grains of rice are affixed to the letter which is known as 'Pili Chithi' or 'Biyah Ki Chithi'. The letter is tied with a yellow thread and is given by the girl's parents to the Nai for handing it over to the boy's family. On receipt of the 'Pili Chithi' the boy's father assembles four or five elders of the family, together with the family Brahmin. The latter checks the calculations in the letter, and in case he agrees with them, the date set in the letter is formally confirmed.

Lagan Patrika

'Lagan' is a reminder about the wedding drawn up by a Brahmin after the mutual agreement of both the parties and is sent by the girl's side to the boy's family. It includes the number of ceremonial oil baths to be taken by the bride and groom. Presents are also sent to the boy's family with the letter containing the notice of 'Lagan'. The ceremonial gifts include such items as a dress for the boy's mother, a pair of shoes, a coconut and some sugar-candies.

On receipt of the 'Lagan', the elders of the family gather in the house of the boy's father, and the boy is made to sit in front of a 'chauk' while the 'Lagan' is read out. The presents are placed in his 'Jholi' (squatting lap). Then the

boy goes to his mother and hands over the gifts to her. The Nai messenger in return receives 'Leek-Rasta' (passage money *i.e.* bus-fare etc.) and sometimes a piece of shirt and a 'Khes' (bed sheet) for his services from the boy's father.

THE BANS (Ceremonial Oil Baths)

The marriage ceremonies commence with the 'ban-tel', (the ceremonial oil baths) taken by the prospective bride and groom in their respective villages. The number of ceremonial oil baths to be taken is determined by the Brahmin of the girl's family and is specified in the 'Lagan Patrika'. In case of the village under study the number must be seven, nine or eleven and the girl must have two less than the boy. The baths are so timed that the boy will finish the bath on the night before the wedding procession starts and the girl on the night before the wedding.

During the period of the ceremonial oil baths the boy and girl are not expected to attend to their routine work but are confined to their homes where they rest and relax. At night they are bathed and massaged with 'Ubtan' (a lubricant paste made up of turmeric and oil, which is supposed to give luster to the skin). The boy is bathed and massaged by women chosen from amongst his married sisters, brothers' wives, or mother's sisters. He is made to sit on a 'patra' (a low level wooden stool). The earthenware saucers containing 'turmeric', barley, oil, henna stain and milk are placed at his feet. The first step is the anointing with oil (tel chadhna), then apply the Ubtan (paste) to the boy's arms, legs and shoulders, rubbing it into the skin. Milk is poured over the boy's head from a pitcher (Garva), and water is poured on his body. Among the Bhangis and Chamars of the village, the occasion of anointing is attended by rough and lively jokes that are cracked between the boy and the women-folk standing around. During the entire period of the oil baths, the groom wears the same clothes which being stained with oil emit a strong oily odour. These are removed on the wedding procession day after the groom has had his final bath. At the conclusion, the boy's hands are dyed with henna-stain and the party breaks up.

Immediately after the 'ban-tel' ceremony is over, the boy goes to the women's quarter and

asks for a ceremonious begging (which is locally known as 'Bhikh Mangana') from his mother. He receives from her five 'Ladoos' and some money as alms. Half of the money is made over to the 'Purohit' (the Brahmin in-charge of the marriage ceremonies) and the rest half is given to the boy's eldest sister, who also retains the five 'Ladoos' which the boy has received from his mother.

Ghur Charhi

Now comes the day of marriage procession. The groom is attired in his wedding clothes and crown (Maur-mukut) provided by his maternal uncle on the occasion of 'bhat'. He then mounts and thus performs the ceremony of 'ghur charhi', which includes the ride around the village on a mare (Parikarma of the village) and offering worship to village 'chabutras' (the shrines of local goddesses). The groom's face is veiled by silvery threads hanging from his head-dress (sehra). On this occasion the groom's bhabi (elder brother's wife) puts some collyrium (surma) around his eyes and in return she is given Re. 1/- or Rs. 11/-, again depending upon one's economic position. His brother-in-law (sister's husband) ties the crown on his head and receives Rs. 11/- to 21/- for that. The boy is accompanied by a group of women, as the men do not usually go along the procession which moves about in the village.

As soon as the 'ghur charhi' ceremony is performed, the wedding procession (barat) mainly composed of the groom's male kins and other fellow caste-members, sets towards the girl's village. In case of the higher castes of the village, buses are hired for the occasion.

The Wedding (Milni)

On reaching the girl's village, a messenger, traditionally a Nai, is sent in advance to the girl's house to inform about the arrival of the groom and the wedding party. Some elder members of the household usually wait on the out-skirts of the village even before the information is delivered and formally receive the wedding party. The girl's father and her uncles (maternal as well as paternal) exchange greetings, with boy's father and his uncles, on this occasion the former gives the latter some money

ranging from Rs. 11/- to Rs. 51/-. Sometimes the other near-kins of the groom (boy) are also given one rupee each as a token of respect shown to them. The welcoming of the wedding party at girl's village by the girl's family is called 'milni'.

The wedding party is then conducted to the village 'panchayat ghar' or the village temple, where special arrangements have been made for the stay of the Barat. After sometime the wedding party is served with sweets, tea and cold drinks, while those who want to take bath are given water, soap, oil, etc.

Barat Lena (Agvani)

At the hour of sun-set, when cattle come back to the village after day's grazing, some responsible members of the girl's family, accompanied by a Nai and the family 'purohit', approach the groom's place where the wedding party is staying, to perform the ceremony of 'barat lena' or 'Agvani'. The groom is made to sit on a ceremonial board and a 'tika' of turmeric and rice is affixed on his forehead by the 'purohit'. Then the 'purohit' puts a coconut, some sweets and a coin of one rupee into a red cloth which the groom is carrying.

Barauthi

The groom is now directed to wear his ceremonial dress. The crown is also tied on his head. Then he mounts on a horseback and approaches the bride's home with his near-kins (which may include his uncles, his sister's husband, brothers etc.). As he reaches the bride's house, he is welcomed on the front door by the womenfolk from the girl's side who stand there singing songs. When the singing stops, the bride is brought on the doorway with a garland which she puts around the groom's neck. As the groom stands there on the doorway the final part of the ceremony is conducted by his would-be mother-in-law. She performs the 'aarti' of the groom and gives a tika of rice and turmeric on his forehead. He also receives some money (a rupee or two) in cash. This first entry of the groom into the bride's home is locally known as 'Barauthi'. After the ceremony is over, the groom returns back with his party to his temporary abode.

In the evening a word is sent to the bridegroom's party for dinner. The marriage party is kept for two days and four pucca meals are served.

Phere

The ceremony, which marks the religious solemnization of marriage is the 'phere' ceremony. The marriage pavilion is built in the courtyard of the girl's house which is covered with a sheet of red-cloth. Beneath it is a fire hole (havan-kund) on one side of which are placed two ceremonial sitting-boards. The relatives of the prospective bride and groom sit opposite each other. The bride and bridegroom are made to sit before the fire on their respective places as directed by the family purohit (a Brahmin who is in charge of this ceremony). Then he recites some sacred verses and asks the bride and groom to repeat seven vows after him. After making the seven vows which include certain promises regarding the married life, the Brahmin asks them to walk slowly around the fire seven times. This circumambulation around the fire by the bride and groom is locally known as 'phere' (literally revolving or going round). Finally the Brahmin applies a 'tika' to both the bride and groom and this marks the end of the ceremony.

Kanyadan

After 'phere' the groom is invited to come and take meals in the bride's house. Here the bride's mother unties the groom's head-dress *i.e.*, (sehra). On the following day the father of the girl sends out of message called 'neota' to all the households of his caste and others with whom he has dealings, for participation in a kind of send-off ceremony. The persons invited donate a small sum of money to the bride's father as financial aid. Finally they bid farewell to the wedding party in which the girl's father gives his daughter's hand in that of the bridegroom.

When the bride reaches the groom's village, she is welcomed by the groom's mother and sisters on the doorway. After some time a word is sent to the various households informing them about the arrival of the wedding party. The women-folk of the village, particularly of one's own caste assemble in the boy's house to have

a view of the face of the bride by lifting her veil. This ceremony is locally known as 'Mukh-Dekhna' which literally means seeing the face. For this they may pay in return one or two rupees to her as a Shagun which may be considered as a token of affection and goodwill towards her. It may be mentioned here that the bride stays only for one or two days in the boy's village at this stage, as the consummation takes place later on, after a prescribed period.

Gauna (Consummation of the Marriage)

The period between the solemnization of marriage and actual consummation when the cohabitation of the couple starts ranges from 2 to 5 years in case of all of the castes of the village. When a married girl attains puberty and is considered mature enough to shoulder the responsibility of married life, the girl's father notifies the groom's family to that effect. The groom and his younger brother or a close friend arrive at the girl's village on the notified date and stays there for a couple of days.

A few pieces of jewellery, clothes and sweets are handed over to the girl at this stage by her mother. At the time of departure, the women sing farewell songs. Thus the marriage is entered upon in gradual stages till the bride starts living permanently in her husband's home.

Remarriage (Kareva)

Widow remarriage is a common feature among all the castes of the village. It is stated by the respondents that in the past the Brahmins used to be against widow remarriage and did not marry a widow in any case, but with the passage of time these restrictions have been relaxed. As a result, even though Brahmins continue to be a little strict about widow remarriage as among themselves, they do not so far as the other castes are concerned look upon this custom with the same disdain and contempt which they showed quite often previously.

If the husband dies in his youth and the wife is also young enough to be remarried, the negotiations for her remarriage are made by her parents. As soon as her husband dies she takes off her bangles and other auspicious ornaments. After that, she is sent to her parent's house. In case the brother or cousin of the deceased is alive

and unmarried, he voluntarily offers himself for such a match. This type of marriage is known as 'Kareva' among the villagers. In such cases no regular marriage ceremony takes place.

In case there is no male member of a marriageable age in her late husband's family or none is willing to marry her by way of 'Kareva', her father starts negotiations for her remarriage elsewhere. The party willing to take the girl in 'Kareva', normally pays one to two thousand

rupees to the girl's father. Such a marriage is not regarded as marriage in the full sense and is placed only secondary in importance to the usual type of marriage.

But 'Kareva' marriages have another social function to perform viz., they help to rehabilitate a widow and also enable a person, who because of his advanced years does not get a marriage proposal from any side, to find a partner for himself.

5. Social Structure & Inter-caste Relations

MITHEPUR is a small village with a total population of 300 people. In all there are 7 castes living there. In order of numerical preponderance these are Gujars, Brahmins, Chamars, Saperas, Bhangis, Baniyas and Nais.

On looking at the pattern of commensal relations in the village we arrive at the following hierarchy. We shall take it as a point of departure and note its various implications. Doing so we may come across certain anomalies which need to be explained and accounted for.

Caste-Hierarchy	
Level I	Brahmins Gujars Baniyas
Level II	Nais Chamars Bhangis
Level III	Saperas

The main criterion employed in the above hierarchy is that of commensal relations. The higher the position of a caste in this hierarchy, the greater is the number of castes that accept food from it; and correspondingly lesser the number of castes from which it accepts food. So that, Saperas accept food from all the castes ranging from Brahmins to Bhangis whereas Chamars accept food only from the upper four castes *i.e.*, Brahmins, Gujars, Baniyas and Nais. The extreme position of Brahmins *vis-a-vis* the Saperas on the other extreme is noteworthy. Brahmins refuse to accept kuccha food (*i.e.*, food cooked in water) from any of the castes that come below. They, however, accept pucca food (*i.e.*, food cooked in ghee) from Gujars and Baniyas. They also accept fruits from these two castes.

One point emerges automatically from this, that the Brahmins distinguish between Gujars and Baniyas on the one hand and the remaining four castes on the other. This is in spite of the fact that they regard themselves as ritually superior to all the castes including Gujars and Baniyas. One may infer from this that while making such a distinction between two groups of castes they operate tacitly upon the broader classification between the 'Clean' and 'Unclean' castes. So that, by accepting pucca food from the "ritually clean" castes they think they are not polluting themselves and degrading their caste status.

Gujars as well as the members of all the other castes accede to the Brahmins a higher ritual superiority. The 'clean' castes also ascribe another distinct attribute to the Brahmins. As remarked by some of them "Brahmins are a store-house of knowledge". Further, "why it is, you think, India has not gone down in spite of so many invasions? The invaders came to our country to loot us and even tried to destroy our civilization. We have been saved only on account of the Brahmins who have given us guidance, and knowledge about various gods and goddesses. They have also given us laws by which we can live".

Chamars do not accept food from Bhangis and this is in spite of the fact that both regard each other as coming under the same blanket category of 'Harijans'. So, the acceptance of term 'Harijans' by both these castes has not been able to forge a feeling of fellowship among them as it was aimed at by reformers like Gandhi Ji.

The position of Saperas is conspicuous. 'They are outside the village community', as it was remarked by some of the Chamars. Bhangis also speak about them in a similar way. One of their elders said, "they eat all sorts of things. They even eat beef and cats. They do not do any work, they are mere beggars". The Saperas may not agree to all that is said about them. But they do admit, even though reluctantly, that they accept food from everybody, even from Chamars and Bhangis. There is another reason for their being regarded as 'out-side the village community'. Saperas do not belong to the village in the manner other castes do. They maintain exclusiveness by virtue of their peculiar social customs, conventions, beliefs and prac-

tices. They interact more with the Saperas of other villages than with the inhabitants of Mithepur itself. Further, because they keep on moving from place to place for earning their livelihood, their mode of life requires that the whole of the Sapera community comes together periodically and maintain a very close and rapid interaction among themselves for a span of time. This happens during Bhadon (August or September) when Saperas of all the adjoining regions get together at Molarbund, a nearby village, hold their "High Court" and settle various disputes, contract and celebrate marriages and participate in various other social and religious celebrations. By doing so they fulfil most of their social needs and consequently their dependence upon the other castes is curtailed to the minimum. The Saperas, therefore, live in a world which is characteristically their own and whose boundaries are set by several social and religious peculiarities. Other castes living in the village which observe such a strong cohesiveness and solidarity among Saperas and which are never wanted by them for any social dealing, remark naturally enough that 'Saperas are not a part of the village community'. We may also make note of another fact in this connection. Even when we ignore some peculiarities of Saperas which hinder their complete incorporation in the village community, the fact remains that they were the last to enter the village and settle there and as such we cannot expect from them a complete adjustment to the social, political, religious and economic life of the village.

Ritual hierarchy is not only a theoretical model but a reality which operates in the life of the people living in village Mithepur. In their actual life people do accord a higher place to a person belonging to a ritually 'superior' caste as compared to one who belongs to a ritually 'inferior' caste. They do also determine the ritual status of a caste according to the degree or ritual 'purity' or 'impurity' which it possesses as compared to the other castes. Thus, Gujars even though a 'clean' caste are 'less clean' or 'less pure' as compared to Brahmins. The reason is that Brahmins guide their life more closely according to the ritual texts as compared to Gujars and also because they are vegetarian in their

dietary habits as against Gujars who take non-vegetarian food as well.

There is a hierarchy of prestige and power in the village on which various castes can be graded. Such a hierarchy is not exactly the same as 'ritual hierarchy' even though it roughly corresponds with it. It makes use of several other criteria besides 'ritual', such as 'economic position', 'political power', etc.

Land is the main source of wealth in the village. Of all the 7 castes only the Brahmins and Gujars hold cultivable land, owning 70.4 per cent and 29.6 per cent, respectively, of the total cultivable land in the village. Thus the chief source of economic power in the village is concentrated completely in the hands of the two castes only. In terms of households it would mean that 34 (25 Gujars and 9 Brahmins) out of 53 households in the village monopolise the ownership of cultivable land.

The economic position of the remaining 5 castes is comparatively far inferior. Chamars work as land labourers on the village lands during the busy season. A few of the young boys from this caste are employed as workers in a nearby factory. Bhangis follow their traditional occupation and 2 of them are also employed in the Delhi Municipal Corporation. There are 2 Baniya adults in the village and both of them maintain small grocery shops. As reported by these Baniyas and also as is quite apparent from the scanty stocks contained in their shops, they are not having a thriving business, the reason being that most of the villagers purchase all their required articles from Badarpur or from Delhi. Saperas, without exception, follow their traditional occupation of snake-charming and begging. Thus, on the basis of the above facts regarding land ownership we can divide off the entire caste hierarchy into two main blocks, 'the economically significant' comprised of Gujars and Brahmins and 'economically insignificant' comprised of Baniyas, Nais, Chamars, Bhangis and Saperas.

It is quite clear from the above that the ritually superior castes are economically superior as well. So that there is a complete correspondence between the ritual hierarchy and the economic hierarchy. It may be said by way of conjecture that the latter *i.e.*, the economic hierarchy

buttresses the former, so that the castes in the higher rung of the ritual ladder continue to stay there because they have economic means to maintain their social prestige and also, as it will become clear, because they wield a kind of political influence upon the other castes who have hardly any say in the day-to-day affairs of the village.

Although Brahmins are economically in a superior position (holding 70.4 per cent of the total cultivable land in the village), Gujars are numerically preponderant. As against 9 households of Brahmins, the Gujar households total up to 25. Such a demographic peculiarity reflects itself in various views and opinions that are held by the village as a whole about various issues that arise from time to time. Brahmins do not find it possible to create an opinion in the village which is not to the interests of the Gujars, precisely because the Gujar out-number them. The present panchayat in the village is headed by a Gujar and this helps to buttress their political authority in the village. On the whole there is a kind of political balance between the two castes. Such a balance is made possible also by the fact that both of these are land-owning castes and whatever steps are taken by the panchayat in connection with the advancement of agriculture in the village are bound to benefit both the castes. That is why both the Gujars as well as Brahmins, when interviewed, emphasized that water of Agra Canal which is at present inaccessible because of its raised embankments, should be made available to better irrigation facilities in the village. From this opinion, not a single deviation, whether among Brahmins or Gujars, was noticed.

A kind of political competition among these two castes is sometimes highlighted in certain minor issues that emerge quite often. The most recent case which occurred about two months back was regarding two women scavengers, one from Molarbund and one from village Mithepur itself. They were both disputing among themselves for their right to sweep the floors of the *village chaupal* which houses the village Primary School at present. This was mainly because the Government had recently announced a fixed salary for one who would sweep and clean the school building. This dispute ultimately cut into

the two castes, so that the Gujars favoured the sweepress from Mithepur, whereas Brahmins ranged themselves on the side of sweepress from

Molarband. The dispute was still raging when the village was visited for the last time.

6. *The Cultural Life of the Village*

THE main occupation of the households surveyed in the village is agriculture. Most of the persons are directly or indirectly engaged in agricultural activities. The people consume whatever they produce and with a shift in the season and growth of a new crop, the diet of the people also undergoes a corresponding change. Thus the change in food consumption is followed by the change in the season.

The common items of staple food of the villagers in the winter (kharif) are Bajra and Jawar, whereas in the summer (rabi) are gram and wheat. Most of the people take 'Gochani' (mixture of wheat and gram) during summer and a mixture of Bajra and wheat during winter. Only a few well-to-do households in the village take wheat regularly irrespective of the change in the crop pattern.

The other edibles taken along with 'Chappati' are pulses like Arhar, Channa (gram) etc. The morning meal also contains vegetables like cabbage, potato, green leaves, onions, peas etc. Generally the households with poor economic conditions never take vegetables at a meal. Most of them take onion or green leaves with their meals.

Although the common man in the village is strictly a vegetarian and never consumes meat or even an egg, yet the Gujars of the village have secretly taken to non-vegetarian food. Eating meat is associated usually with the untouchables, and most of the Chamars and the Saperas take non-vegetarian food regularly.

Pure Ghee is not now commonly used in preparing meals by the villagers as it used to be in the past. As 'Ghee' is prepared from milk and milk fetches a good market price in the city, the people (even of higher castes) prefer to sell milk rather than to consume it for themselves. More and more of vegetable oil is now being consumed for the various domestic purposes.

Thus throughout the year, the villagers eat the same food

and there is seldom any variety in their dishes. Only on festive occasions like marriage, festivals and other ceremonies celebrated in the household, delicacies like 'Halwa', 'Puris', and 'Bhats' are prepared.

There are no hard and fast rules laid down by the villagers regarding the number of meals to be taken in a day. The meal is taken depending upon the felt necessity and the availability of it.

Drinks

The consumption of liquor and other intoxicants is socially tabooed and looked down upon by the village community, unlike the consumption of non-vegetarian food which is usually associated with the upper and richer castes of the village. It is commonly believed by the people especially the lower castes that only rich persons can afford such luxuries. Though most of the Gujars and the Brahmins openly denounce consuming liquor and other intoxicants yet it is reported by some of the respondents belonging to the lower strata of the village community that people belonging to the higher strata take liquor secretly. Some of them are also in the habit of taking it regularly. The most common among the different intoxicants consumed is country liquor which some villagers get from the neighbouring villages, where it is secretly distilled.

In recent years most of the villagers have started taking tea which serves a good substitute of milk. It is stated by a large number of respondents that milk fetches a good market price in the nearby city so a little portion is kept for personal consumption. But 'seet' (butter-milk) continues to be the main beverage of the villagers.

Dress

Leaving aside the Saperas, whose dress is typical to their own caste, there is no appreciable difference in the dresses worn by the members of the other castes in the village. A variety of combination of dresses are worn by the people (both males as well as females) and it is not possible to state categorically that any particular combination is peculiar to any particular caste.

It was stated by some of the village elders that a couple of decades back one could judge one's social status by his or her wearing apparels at least in so far that they could suggest that he or she was from a socially higher or lower caste. Again, one could also suggest from one's dress whether a person was an agriculturist or non-agriculturist. But now due to the various post-independence social and economic developments, so many changes in the dressing habits of the people have occurred that it is no more possible for an investigator to judge a person's social status through his wearing apparel.

The traditional dress of the males consists of dhotis, a four to five yard piece of cloth wrapped around the waist, and a kurta, a long flowing full sleeved shirt. As for headgear it is only a very few who put on any head-gear, but those who do so generally wear a Gandhi cap. Previously pugree was worn by quite a number of people in the village but for the last couple of decades people have given it up almost altogether and now one comes across only a few stray cases of people wearing a pugree as head-gear. The apparels described above are still most commonly worn by the common man in the village. Those amongst them who are in service occupations have more or less given up the traditional dress and presently they wear shirt and pants or shirt and pyjama while on duty and kurta and pyjama at home.

The traditional dress of the youngsters consists of kurta and kuchha (a half pant sort of garment made of some cheap long cloth and tied around the waist with a string). School-going students usually wear shirt and half pants or pyjamas, the only exception being a student of Intermediate class who wears shirts and pants only. Incidentally he goes to Gurgaon every day for his studies.

The common man in the village has hardly any woollen clothings. It is only a few lucky ones who own woollen coats or pull-overs. Mostly the people put on whatever extra clothing they can lay their hands on and put them on over what they wear ordinarily. It is quite common to see a person wearing two or even three kurtas one over the other. Besides this people usually wrap themselves in thick coarse

cotton shawls while going out of the village, while in the village they prefer to wrap themselves in quilts. As has already been mentioned only a very few people in the village have woollen coats which are invariably owned by the very few well-to-do people. As for pull-overs it is interesting to note that most of these are either discarded army clothings which the people purchase from second hand cloth dealers or are just borrowed from some of their family members who are or were in the army or police and who have one to spare.

On the whole, the dress of the common man in the village is rather simple, is devoid of any appreciable variety and is usually made of cheap mill-made coarse cloth. Hand woven khadi, popular some two or three decades back, is now worn only by a very few villagers.

The traditional dress of the Saperas consists of a long flowing shirt, preferably a coloured one, chooridar pyjama and a saffron coloured pugree as headgear. The long flowing shirt (as distinguished from the long flowing kurta of the common man in the village) is invariably a gaudily coloured one and may be of some cheap imitation silk. The Saperas have by now given up the practice of wearing chooridar pyjamas and have taken to dhotis or pyjamas. They, however, continue to put on their traditional headgear, the pugree. Amongst the other changes in the dressing habits of the Sapera males, it may be mentioned that all of them do put on Mudra (sort of earrings) in their ears and they invariably have chain buttons on their shirts. Those who can afford may have these of silver or even of gold but the others will have these made of other cheap metals. For arms they use 'kara'—sort of round bangle made of silver. The other males in the village do not put on any such thing. Again, it was considered a taboo amongst the Saperas in the village to one's hair but now leaving aside a couple of elders amongst them all have their heads clean shaven. Those who do not cut their hair just tie them up in a knot and stick a small wooden comb on it so that they will not get loose easily.

Thus we can conclude that whereas the dress of a common man in the village is a simple and unostentatious one, that of the Saperas is a comparatively gaudy one.

The Saperas being comparatively poor generally go in for second hand clothings for their winter wear. Some of them are able to collect part of their woollens from their patrons, while on their professional tours. The rest they purchase from second hand cloth dealers.

There is no marked difference in the dresses worn by the womenfolk of the different castes in the village. The traditional dress of the females (including the Sapera females) consists of 'kamiz' (a long flowing collarless and button-less full sleeved shirt), 'lehnga' or 'ghagra' (a skirt) and 'dupatta' (a veil). This dress is worn by all females irrespective of their caste or economic condition, the only difference being in the quality of the cloth. Ghagra has another peculiarity also. Its quality is judged not only by the quality of cloth used but also by the yardage of the cloth used. The more the cloth used the better the 'lehnga' or 'ghagra' is considered to be. The length of cloth used for lehnga varies between 5 to 40 yards.

One very peculiar feature of the dress worn by the females was that they would never wear anything pure white as it was considered inauspicious. But now there is a lot of change in this respect and although the combinations of the females are still gaudily coloured yet one does come across several cases where females wear white 'dupatta' or 'kamiz'. The lehnga, however, continues to be a coloured one and a black coloured 'lehnga' is considered best of all. But this combination of dress is now popular only amongst the elderly females and the younger generation have now taken to other combinations like those of 'salwar-kamiz' and 'dupatta-blouse', 'dhoti and petticoat'. The combination of salwar, kamiz and dupatta has found its way into the village only during the last 10 or 15 years, although the combination of blouse, petticoat and dhoti was being worn by a few females even prior to that. In fact the combination mentioned last is popular amongst those females who have come to the village from the western districts of U.P. after marriage. The Sapera females continue to wear the traditional dress of the other females in the village. School going girls normally wear kamiz and salwar without any dupatta. Their counterparts who do not go to school are usually to be seen wearing the same

combination or the combination of a blouse and lehnga.

So far as the stitching of the clothes is concerned, most of the villagers get their clothes sewn either in the village through the Chamar tailor in the village or through tailors at Badarpur. Those who go in for pants and shirts of the city style get their clothes stitched at Delhi.

Beliefs

Beliefs and superstitions are quite prevalent in the village but the Brahmins follow them more rigidly than the other castes. The lower castes in the village viz. the Chamars and Bhangis do not give much importance to superstitions and are sometimes even critical of them. On the other hand the Gujars are just tolerant towards them.

The deviation of the Chamars from the religious beliefs and superstitions can be traced to the fact that in the past they have not been allowed to maintain the religious norms and ritual superstitions which were held by the clean caste i.e. the Brahmins. So it is only natural that they started looking down upon the rigid norms and other traditional beliefs held by the Brahmins of the village.

Moreover the Gujars are becoming more and more urbanised by their increasing contacts with the urban people of the city DELHI and thus giving up religious orthodoxy by adopting new norms which are basically non-religious.

The villagers have blind faith in fate. They guard against the bad omens by imposing certain restrictions upon their behaviour such as keeping fasts and such other practices. They believe that good or bad results of one's action rests upon one's good or bad luck. According to them, the inevitable must happen. No amount of efforts of a person can change his destiny. It would be quite interesting to mention here that even the Chamar youngmen who are sometimes seen dismissing the various superstitions held by the Brahmins as mere nonsense, do show a certain amount of belief in these fatalistic ideas. They believe that their caste status is low because of their bad luck, they are impoverished and starving because of their ill-luck. For all ills and sufferings they find escape only in fate.

Apart from staunch faith in fate, some of the

villagers do share common beliefs which are prevalent in the entire region. For example, if a black cat crosses the way from the left side when a person is going out on some mission, it is taken to be ominous. Again if a woman carrying two empty pitchers on her head crosses the way, when somebody is going out, it is considered bad. In such cases a person likes to delay his visit for a few minutes implying thereby that by delaying the particular moment, something evil which was fated to happen would pass away. The weeping of a jackal at night is considered an indication of an impending death in some nearby place.

Besides these, some of the Brahmins and Gujars believe in ghosts and supernatural beings. The females, comparatively speaking, have greater leaning towards certain religious and ritual superstitions.

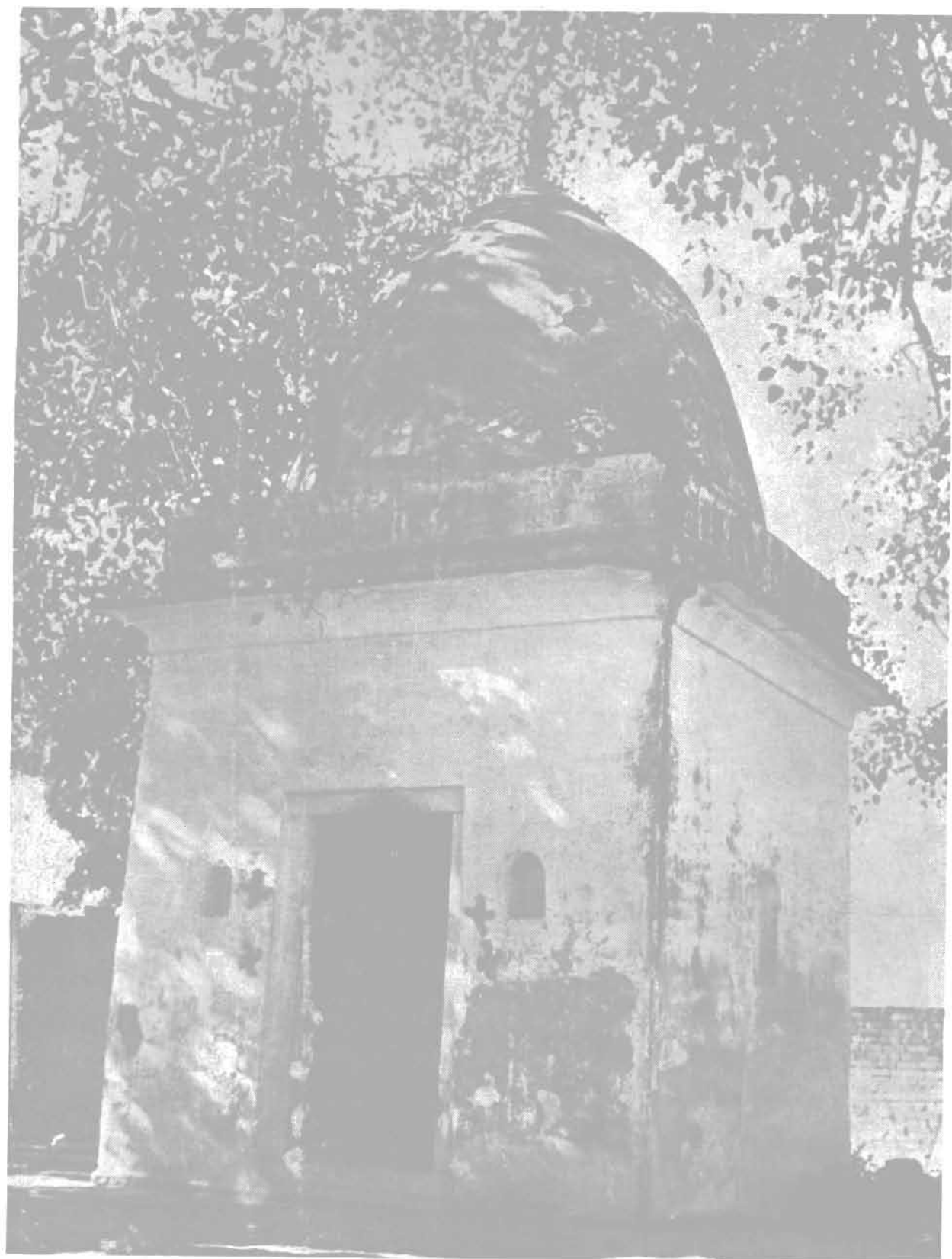
The Festival Cycle

Following paragraphs are devoted to the discussion and analysis of the yearly festival cycle in Mithepur. The various characteristics of Hinduism having spread all over India, are in evidence among the people of this village also. There is a small temple in one corner of the village. There are also images of Rama, Lord Shiva, Lord Krishna with Radha, in many houses of the higher castes. The pictures are worshipped on many occasions.

To begin with, here is a list of the festivals observed in Mithepur.

Festival	Month
<i>Navratri</i>	<i>Chaitra (March-April)</i>
<i>Basora</i>	<i>Chaitra</i>
<i>Jaith-Ka-Dasahra</i>	<i>Jaith (May-June)</i>
<i>Savan</i>	<i>Savan (July-August)</i>
<i>(Raksha-Bandhan)</i>	
<i>Teej</i>	<i>Savan (August-Sept.)</i>
<i>Janamasthami</i>	<i>Bhadon (Aug.-Sept.)</i>
<i>Diwali</i>	<i>Katik (Oct.-Nov.)</i>
<i>Makarsankrant</i>	<i>Poh (Dec.-Jan.)</i>
<i>Holi-Dulhendi</i>	<i>Phagun (Feb. -March)</i>

Navratri :—The festival is celebrated on the ninth day of the month of *Chaitra*. It is observed only by the Brahmins and a few other



The village temple.



The inner-view of village temple.

religious minded people of the village. It is also known as 'Nau-Durga Ka Brat' among the villagers. Although the higher castes like the Gujars do not participate enthusiastically in this festival yet they are aware of its significance. It is observed in honour of 'Mata Durga' for expiating all sins and attaining liberation from evil influences. Elderly people observe fast and other ritual restrictions more punctiliously than the younger ones. Adults keep a fast only on this (ninth) day whereas the elder members of the community keep it for all the nine days. In this fast it is necessary to abstain from cereals, vegetables, salt etc. On the ninth day of the month, the devotees gather together at the temple of 'Durga Mata' which is situated in 'Kalka Ji', at a distance of four miles from the village. Incense, fruits, flowers and offerings of special food cooked for the occasion are placed before the deity. Sometimes the implements used in cultivation *i.e.* plough, spade etc. are also worshipped by the agriculturists. A special sweet dish known as *Kheer* comprising of rice and milk is prepared on this day.

Basora :—In some of the villages situated in Delhi region, this festival is celebrated on the seventh day of Hindu month of *Chaitra* (March-April). But the respondents of village Mithepur reported that the festival falls in the month of *Bhadon* (Aug.-Sept.). This is the time when diseases are very common in the village. It is celebrated to get help from the 'Mata', a goddess who is supposed to be presiding over small-pox. The women visit a small shrine (Maud) dedicated to this deity situated on the outskirts of the village.

On the evening before the celebration, bread sweetened with brown sugar is cooked by the women of all the castes. Early the next morning, after taking their bath and dressed in their best clothes, the women carry the stale bread, rice, some gram and water to the goddess's shrine. The shrine is not more than a pile of mud-bricks; here the womenfolk pray, "O Mata, have mercy on our children and protect them from disease." It appears relevant to state that no offerings are made when the disease is actually rampant in the village. No worship is done, till the disease has disappeared. The reason given by the respondents is quite significant and interesting. They

state that when somebody in the village is afflicted with small-pox (*Mata Ka Baithna*), the 'Mata' can be taken to be absent from her shrine and so it is no use worshipping her there.

Jaith-Ka-Dasahra :—*Dasahra* means the tenth. On the tenth day of *Jaith* (May-June) the villagers go to the river *Jamuna* to take a holy dip in the river. The celebrations regarding the festival have undergone a significant change in recent years. Previously only the 'Kashtriyas' used to participate in the celebrations. They worshipped the weapons which they generally used during a fight or battle. Then gradually the agriculturists and others of hereditary professions such as *Kumhars*, *Carpenters* came to join in the celebrations. At present all the inhabitants of the village, of all professions, celebrate the festival by taking a holy dip in the *Jamuna* river. Even now the family weapons such as swords, daggers, knives etc. are cleaned and *puja* is performed. On this occasion a *Mela* is held at the bank of the river. At this *Mela*, colourfully attired villagers from *Mithepur* and other nearby villages gather at the bank of the holy river, exchange greetings, eat and laugh in true festive spirits. There are also a large number of stalls in the *Mela*, where shopping is done by the village-folk.

Savan (Raksha Bandhan) :—In other villages within the same region the festival of *Raksha Bandhan* which falls on the full moon day of the month of *Savan* (July-Aug.) is known as *Silono*. But the residents of *Mithepur* call it 'Savan'. The literal meaning of the term '*Raksha Bandhan*' is 'the bond of safety'. All the castes living in the village celebrate this festival, but the nature of celebration differs from person to person. It has been stated by the respondents that the rich people celebrate it more ceremonially than the poorer sections of the community. On this day the sisters (married or unmarried) come to tie a sacred coloured thread around the wrists of their brothers, thus expressing their affection and devotion for their brothers. The brothers in turn give to their sisters some money which ranges from one to fifty-one rupees (depending upon the economic status of a person). This gift from the brothers to a sister signifies the assurance of security to her on any critical juncture. The day is observed with great festivity by the girls.

Teej:—It is a festival which falls on the third day of the Hindu month of Savan (July-Aug.). It is observed only by the young and newly wedded females of the village. As stated by the respondents the married daughters of the village come to their parental homes (Peehar) for this festival. The significance or background given regarding the celebrations is that after marriage the young girls lead a life of confinement and observe purdah at their in-laws home and on this occasion they come back to their parent's home to have some free moments. They lead a carefree life at their parent's place and have frolic and fun. On the festival day, the young women dressed in their colourful garments tie ropes to the branches of trees, prepare swings and enjoy swinging. While swinging to the competitive heights the women-folk sing various songs. Many a young bride particularly those who are still living at their parent's home receive a pair of clothes from their in-laws.

Janam Ashthami (Aug.-Sept.) :—The festival falls on the eighth day of the first fortnight in 'Bhadon'. It is observed by Hindus all over India. All the castes in the village celebrate this festival. The villagers fast the whole day, taking only water or 'lassi' (butter-milk). The fast is continued till midnight, the hour at which Lord Krishna is believed to have been born. The fast is broken on the appearance of the moon. After pouring some water on the floor, some 'charnamrat' made of milk, sugar and 'tulsi' leaves, is given to the members of the household. Then the meals begin.

The festival has undergone a significant change in the last few years. With the passage of time, the participation of male members especially the younger people has been reduced to the minimum, whereas the women still show the same amount of enthusiasm. In the past all the members of the household used to fast on this occasion, but now only one or two elder members of each family fast on Janam Ashthami.

Diwali :—Or the 'festival of lights' is the most colourful festival observed throughout Hindu India. The legend told by the villagers regarding the festival is that when Rama returned after fourteen years of exile, his subjects welcomed him by lighting earthen lamps. The lamps are lit and arranged in front of each house in the village.

In the evening images of gods and goddess 'Lakshmi' are worshipped by all members of the family. An earthen lamp in which pure ghee is used, is placed before Lakshmi (goddess of wealth). There is no fasting, for Diwali is considered to be a festival for feasting.

Holi-Dulhendi (Phagun) :—Holi is one of the major festivals celebrated by almost all the Hindus of the country. The celebrations are spread over a span of five to eight days. The festival takes place on the full-moon day of the month of Phagun. Two to three days before the festival there is outburst of activity among the village youth, marking the beginning of joy and hoax plays. The festival is celebrated in the village for two days continuously. On the first day 'Holi' is played with coloured water in which all the members of the Community, old and young, participate fully and whole-heartedly. Although inter-caste hoax pays, particularly playing 'Holi' with unclean castes is socially tabooed, yet these restrictions are swept away in the boundless joy and spontaneous mirth which prevails on this occasion. People throw coloured water on each other irrespective of their social status or caste distinction. In fact this is the only festival on which different castes of the village mix together and celebrate jointly.

A week of preparations finally culminates in 'Holi'. The main pole for the 'Holi' bonfire is selected, and the youngsters start collecting wood for the fire. On the Holi day itself the villagers go to the Holi pyre in the evening. They do not wear clean clothes on the occasion. Previously the village Brahmin used to fix time for lighting the pyre, but in these days anybody may start the fire. As it begins to burn, the women sing songs and the male members throw coloured water on each other. It should be made clear that the older people do not participate so actively in the celebrations. As the bonfire cools down, people go back to their homes.

As reported by the villagers of Mithepur, the well-known myth of legend of Holika provides the main basis for this festival. The legend varies in different parts of India, but almost all the people everywhere agree that 'Prahlad' a hero of Hindu mythology, was not burnt when held by his aunt 'Holika' in her lap. Holika instead was burnt to ashes. In the Mithepur version Prahlad was a



The preparations for Holi Festival.



A dominant Gujar of the village.

devotee of Lord Krishna; the villain of the story was his father (Harnakashaypa) who tried to make Prahlad abandon the worship of Lord Krishna.

On Dulhendi, the day after Holi, the women go to the cooled pyre of Holika and pick up her ashes and throw them into a dirty pond nearby, meaning thereby to disgrace the she-demon Holika. The celebrations continue even on this day. But this time the villagers only throw mud and dust at each other. Sometimes the women use sticks to beat up the men, even of higher castes. This custom is not very popular among the women of higher castes. It is the only festival in which social distance becomes almost negligible.

Local Festivals

Chauraha Wali Mata (Gurgaon Ki Mata) :— This festival is observed on the eight day of Chaitra (March-April). Trips to Gurgaon to honour the goddess are made by the villagers. It is a common belief among the villagers that Chauraha Wali Mata has spiritual power over ghosts. The trip to Gurgaon may be made to honour a vow made to the goddess in gratitude for a child-birth or on the satisfactory completion of nuptial rites.

In the past only the Brahmin families used to visit the Devi's shrine. The children were taken by their parents to Mata's shrine at Gurgaon for their first haircut. The first lock of hair cut was buried in the premises of the temple. But now

all the castes of the village visit the holy shrine and make their offerings. It was also stated by the respondents that the worship has been limited to the female-folk (particularly of lower castes of the village). Most of the Gujars and Brahmins in the village get their childrens' first haircut at the village itself and the lock of hair is sent to Mata's shrine along with offerings. The pilgrimage to Mata's shrine is declining day by day.

In the ritual structure of the community slight variations have been found. There is decline of the Brahmin's role in ritual participation. The Brahmin is no longer called to officiate on the different festivals celebrated in the village. He is not called upon to fix the 'foundation pole' of the Holi pyre. Local Brahmins also do not accept offerings at the different ceremonies. The respondents mentioned that the influence of Arya Samaj has also adversely affected the enthusiasm of the villagers in ritual participation. But the influence of Arya Samaj has not been strong enough to make people forget such religious and ritual participations. The old cultural traditions still have a firm hold over their minds and even though when drawn in an argument and cornered to the point of discussion they may be compelled to admit the superfluity of several ritual celebrations, they are still found to be swinging in tune with the cycle of festivals that runs all around their lives and minds with a sufficient degree of regularity.

7. *Leadership Pattern in Mithepur*

DURING the course of our investigation in the rural areas, we are invariably given the names of a few selected persons who occupy a pivotal position in the day-to-day life of the village. In view of their important position it was considered worthwhile to investigate the pattern of leadership in the village.

Background

The villagers believe that the village was founded by one Pt. Ram Dass of 'Kaudinya' gotra about 250 years back. Apart from 'Mitherpur' land in some other villages like Chhattarpur, Gadaipur, Satberi, Sultanpur, Tilokri, Kilokri was also granted to him by the Moghuls. But the descendants of 'Kaudinya' established themselves in Mithepur and some of the 'Brahmin' families with 'Kaudinya' gotra are still living in the village. Thus in early days, the Brahmins were the dominant caste group in the village, but due to the non-availability of any chronological records of the village in Pre-British period, we could not ascertain the pattern of leadership in the village in those days. It is only after the year 1880 that we find some record of the leadership pattern in the village. The 'Shajra-e-Nasb' of 1880 shows that 'Lambardars' were appointed by Govt. from among the Brahmins of 'Kaudinya Gotra' to collect land Revenue in the village. The distribution of leadership among the Brahmins of 'Kaudinya' gotra follows as such Pt. Ram Dass Kaudinya, the founder of the village acted as the first Lambardar of the village. After his death the succession went over to Kushla, Ganga Sahai, Roshanlal, Bhole Ram, respectively. The succession to the office was patrilineal, passing to sons of a marriage or to adopted offspring. Children born out of re-marriage were not well-regarded. It must be made clear that the eldest son was recognized as the successor to the office.

Gujars

Among the Gujars, the Avani gotra was the first to settle in the village. These Gujars received 7 'Vishas' (about 700 bighas) of

land from the Brahmins in the village. One Dokal, an 'Avani', Gujar along with three other households settled in the village first of all. As in the case of the Brahmins there is no written record available about the past history of the Gujars in the village, but the 'Shajra-e-Nasb' reveals certain facts, namely, that along with the Brahmins, the Gujars were also deputed by the British government to collect revenue in the village. They were also recognized as 'Lambardars'. The post of the village headman was hereditary, *i.e.*, passing from father to son. Some of the prominent Gujars who succeeded to this coveted post of headmanship over the past sixty years were Dokal, Umrao, Kamla, Chetan, Paltu and Ratna.

In the traditional pattern of village leadership, 'Ratna Gujar' of 'Avani Gotra' functioned as the last 'Lambardar' of the village before the introduction of the democratic type of leadership by the enactment of the Panchayat Raj Act of 1954.

The following questions formed the basis of our study :

1. What were the contexts for leadership in the village and what special status and privileges were enjoyed by them ?
2. How they came to be recognised as leaders ?
 - (a) On the basis of Economic Factors.
 - (b) On the basis of Social Factors.
 - (c) Purely on the basis of their belonging to the representative caste group in the village.
3. Their role as representative of the village in so far as their relation with other villages or the state authorities was concerned.
4. What were the major functions of the village leader ?

Our plan was to make an intensive study of the village leadership while keeping the questions mentioned above as our frame of reference.

Until recently the foremost amongst the village leaders were the 'Lambardars' or the village headmen. It is stated that whenever a village was established the revenue authorities used to appoint one or more persons as Lambardar of the village. He was entrusted with several duties and was given various privileges (discussed under the official duties of the headman).

The post was hereditary and once a family got the distinction of having their head as a 'Lambardar' of the village, it was usually retained in

the family for generations to come. It was Pt. Ram Dass Kaudinya who first of all came and settled in the village some 40 or 50 years before 1880 which was the year of 'Permanent Settlement' and when various records were prepared by the Revenue Authorities. As he was the original settler and owner of all the land in the village he was automatically made 'Lambardar' or headman of the village by the Revenue Authorities. Similarly the Gujars, who came immediately after the Brahmins were also honoured with the title due to their ownership of land. Thus two headmen, one each from both the castes were appointed as the 'Lambardars' of the village.

The caste composition determines the character of the village. Caste as a factor of social differentiation is significant in the hierarchy of village social structure. The social status of a person is largely determined by his caste. The mere fact of being born in a particular caste gives a good initial start to some and deprives others of it.

The Brahmins in the village were the original settlers and were graded topmost in the village caste hierarchy. Moreover they were numerically preponderant and had maximum hold on the land, so it is not surprising that they remained in power and exercised tremendous influence on the rest of the community for numerous years. Even the coming of the Gujars who became economically as well numerically powerful within a short period, could not disintegrate their authority in the village. However, the Gujars due to their relatively liberal commensal habits and because of their position as major land holders in farming community managed to keep a hold on the rest of the village community. We must take all these aspects of inter-caste relations into account in our picture of the Gujar's dominance in the village.

The Headman

Official Duties.—In past years the village headman was the pivot of authority in the village. He was a hereditary office-holder, the chief representative of Government in the village, and until recently the leader of the village in its daily dealings with the Government. It is rare to find more than one headman in the villages of India. Mithepur may, therefore, be

included as coming under the exceptional category of villages having more than one headman.

Before entering into an elaborate discussion of the official as well as unofficial duties of the village headman, we take up the consideration of criteria that guide the selection of the headmen in the village. As far as the leadership pattern in 'Mithepur' is concerned, the village leaders were appointed by the Government on the basis of both economic as well as social factors. They were supposed to be rich landlords who would be in a position to collect land revenue from the land-holders conveniently. They should have sufficient land and substantial property to pay for the peasant-holders who were not in a position to pay land revenue by an appointed time. In that case the headman was supposed to pay from his own pocket to run the official machinery smoothly. Thus economic factors used to play a dominant role in determining the headmanship of the village in the former type of leadership.

It was however not exclusively on economic considerations that a man was recognized as leader of the village, social factors were also considered. It was essential that the person selected should belong to the representative caste group in the village. This was necessary because the person was to represent his village outside as an influential person and in the village itself he was responsible for maintaining law and order. For these purposes he should have the full co-operation of his castemates and have a stronghold on the other lower castes in the village caste-hierarchy.

Thus we find that in former days, the Brahmins and the Gujars were fulfilling both the above mentioned qualifications and it is therefore not surprising that they were recognised as the leaders of the village. As both caste groups were economically and socially important in the village, so they exercised and held positions of authority in the village. Undoubtedly all the headman had equal authority and performed the same duties, although differences in the personalities of the office-bearers made them less or more influential. It is also relevant to mention here that the caste-members and other kins of the headmen also used to share this authority and exercise a tremendous influence on the rest of

the community in the village. The criteria cited for a successful headman was that he should have sufficient wealth to carry out essential work and entertain the visiting officials in the village besides the wisdom and experience to exercise his authority.

The major official duty of the headman was the collection of the revenue on land holdings in the village. It was collected after each harvest. In 'Mithepur' there were two 'Headmen' one each from the Brahmin and Gujar castes, so they used to collect the land revenue from their own respective caste peasants. After collecting the tax on land holdings, it was the duty of the headman (Lambardar) to deposit the cash in the Tehsil headquarters and to get the receipt for the amount. He was provided with the receipts of amount paid by the different peasants in the village which he either used to keep with him or give them to the land-holders for record. Whenever the need arose, particularly when a man used to claim forged payment, he was in a position to demand or show the record to decide about his revenue. In performing this duty, he used to get five rupees as commission on every hundred rupees for his services rendered to the Government. The dealings made with the Government were absolutely fair and straight-forward and he was regularly paid after the deposit of the amount in Tehsil headquarters. It was the only income he used to get from the Government for all his services rendered to the ruling authority. Every headman was supposed to be tactful in collecting the land revenue from the land-holders and no forcible pressure was thrust upon them while making the collection. When any person was not in a position to pay his land revenue, the 'Lambardar' was generous enough to pay from his own pocket or stand a guarantee for the villagers. But in case the 'Lambardar' was not able to pay back the land revenue within the period granted to him by the authorities, he was to undergo sentence. One of the most interesting cases concerning payment of land revenue, in which the village headman had to undergo a few days' sentence happened during the headmanship of Mr. Ganga Sahay the 'Kaudinya Brahmin' Lambardar. About sixty-five years ago, the village headman was unable to deposit the land-revenue in time in

Tehsil headquarters. He could not collect the tax due to certain difficulties (which the informant has not been able to recollect) and promised the authorities to deposit the amount within a short time. But Ganga Sahay could not keep his promise and was imprisoned by the officials. After a few days however the villagers collected the amount and deposited in the Tehsil. So Ganga Sahay was released and honoured. In such cases Tehsildar used to consider about the matter and decide the case according to the rules laid by the Government. In case the crops in the village were below expectations and the land-owners were not in position to pay the land-tax, it was the duty of 'Lambardar' to plead with the revenue authorities on behalf of the villagers and ask for remission of the tax. When there was shortage of seeds or foodgrain in the village, the headman was supposed to request for help from the government to safeguard the interests of the villagers. He was the main link for communication upwards, from villagers to government and *vice versa*.

Law and Order:—The second most important duty of the headman was the maintenance of law and order in the village. The authorities had left many matters to be decided by the headmen independently. They used their influence to prevent fight, and maintain peace and order in the village. But if serious affrays occurred, they must report them to nearby police station. There was the village-watchman to assist the headman in maintaining law and order in the village. The headman used to supervise the watchman, who guarded the village at night. The village chowkidar was appointed by the government and he was considered to be a paid servant of the government. During British period, he was paid Rs. 30/- per annum for his services in the village. But later on his annual salary was increased to Rs. 50/-. Under the present regime he is drawing Rs. 130/- per annum. Like the headman of the village, his office was hereditary, passing on to the eldest son after the death of his father.

There were also 'Tolladars', of different blocks in the village, who were the acting go-between the villagers and headmen. They used to assist the 'Lambardars' in controlling immoral activities like theft, treason, murder and tensions

among the villagers. A 'Tolladar' was usually a notorious person of the village, and with his own authoritative influence he could control the out-laws of the village. His position was purely temporary and created by the headmen of the village. Whenever there used to arise any trouble in the village, 'Tolladar' was made responsible to hand over the culprit to the Lambardars. Every 'Tolladar' was supposed to keep perfect harmony and order in his own block. He was not supposed to interfere in the matters of other blocks.

Another important duty of these headmen was to assist the visiting police officials in the village and help them in making investigation regarding serious crimes. They were asked to produce the real culprit or out-law within a given period, otherwise the official authorities were in a position to inflict punishment on them. In some cases it is said that the headmen had to undergo imprisonment for not fulfilling their duties towards the government. So the headmen were quite vigilant about the prevention of serious crime in the village. In this connection we may mention here an interesting case which occurred in the village during the headmanship of Mr. Ganga Sahay in 1890.

One morning when a Gujar peasant was going to his fields for ploughing he saw a dead corpse lying on the boundary line of the village. It was completely smashed by some sharp-edged weapon. It was impossible to identify the dead man due to the deep scars imprinted on the body. The news of murder spread like wild fire in the village and the headman was informed about it. He visited the place but was afraid of reporting the matter to the police. However some one reported the matter to police headquarters. When police officials arrived in the village, the headman escaped to the fields and other inhabitants of the village refused to claim the land in which the dead corpse was lying. At that time the headman of a nearby village (Molarbund) named Shibba, came forward and took the responsibility by claiming the land as his own property. Nobody in the village is aware of the facts as to what action was taken against the headman of 'Molarbund' village. But it is a well known fact that after the incident, the portion of land which was previously the part of

this village is now being possessed by the Molarbund village.

The villagers subscribe to the statement that Ganga Sahay was bitterly criticised on his action and was looked down upon for not performing his duties.

Another case of dacoity which occurred in the time of 'Ratna Gujar' depicts the authoritative position and influence a headman used to have in getting the offenders punished.

A dacoity took place at the house of Rati Ram (now living in Badarpur) in the village in 1952. Six or seven dacoits armed with guns raided the house on three occasions. They were not successful in the first two raids but on the third attempt they succeeded in their mission. The dacoits got on to the roof by means of a wooden ladder standing in the verandah. On entering the house they took away all ornaments and many household articles. The inmates woke up and seeing the dacoits, raised cries of alarm. As the dacoits were armed with weapons they openly fired and managed to escape. Ratna with two other influential persons named Tikkam and Bhule Ram went to the police station and reported the matter. The police continued its investigation and ultimately they caught three 'Churas', schedule castes of 'Pirangarhi' in connection with the dacoity in the village. Ratna was called with Rati Ram Baniya to the police station to identify the stolen property. They went to the Police Station and picked up their stolen goods. Thus the headman was able to get the stolen things back to the Baniya. In this way the headman used to stand by the villagers whenever any difficult situation arose.

Similarly the headman used to help the visiting revenue officials in the village making investigation regarded boundary disputes, cattle lifting and other such cases happening in the village. Another of his important duties was to look after and make arrangements for the stay of officials visiting the village. He was also expected to make their order known to the people and assist them in their activities in the village.

We can say that the headman had the position of power based on state's statutory backing as well as the support of villagers themselves to carry out his official duties.

The Unofficial Duties:—The headman also

had considerable unofficial powers in the village which followed from his official position. These were shown in the settlement of other caste's affairs, and in the control he exercised over almost all the affairs in the village, as will be seen from the paragraphs that follow:

Marriage:—Among the Hindus, negotiated marriages are common. The wedding takes place in the bride's house, on an auspicious day fixed by the two parties on the advice of the Brahmin priest. The headman of the village, along with the parents and other 'biraderi' members of the bride or bridegroom, played an important part in the performance of the ceremony. He was consulted by the members of all the castes in the village before settling the marriage. But it was only an informal consent. The girl's father should be able to get the 'rasad' for this marriage feast on nominal price. On the arrival of the 'Barat' it was the duty of the headman to look to the comfort of the marriage party and see that the 'Nyota' or marriage-feast was served properly and adequately. They should be provided with good and comfortable accommodation in the village etc. Sometimes tension arises between the two parties on the question of dowry. The boy's father usually expects more than the amount fixed by tradition in the 'Biraderi'. On such occasions it was the duty of the headman to intervene in the matter and settle it amicably between both the parties.

After the marriage-party (Barat) had departed from the bride's house, the total expenditure incurred by the girl's people was calculated and in case they were running into debt, the headman used to pool his own resources and help the person.

It must however be made clear here that the old and influential persons of the Biraderi were recognized more authoritative in such local affairs of the village than the headman. The marriage contract used to take place with the consent of the Biraderi members rather than the headmen of the village. But undoubtedly in case of the representative caste groups in the village *i.e.* the Brahmins and the Gujars, the headmen came to play an important role in selection and making contract of marriage between the two parties. As there was no commensal and pollution restrictions regarding food etc. among these two

castes, it was permissible on the part of the headmen to send invitations to the members of their respective caste groups in nearby villages. They were also responsible to make arrangements for the visiting marriage party in the village. Moreover they were expected to pay some cash to the bridegroom on the marriage occasion, but it was reciprocal between the two caste groups.

Death:—The influence of these headmen in 'Mithepur' belonging to two representative castes spread to the rest of the caste groups. They were consulted on happy as well as sad occasions by the different caste members living in the village. The headman used to participate in the different ceremonies involved on the death of some person in the village. Whenever some person died and there was nobody (no near kin or far off relative) in the village to cremate the dead body, it was the duty of the headman to ensure that the dead body was cremated with all the due ceremonies. In such cases the headman was required to collect some amount from the village to support the deceased's family. The headman also was kind enough to appeal, to the villagers to support the widow and her family, financially at regular intervals. Moreover if the widow had no near relative to take the responsibility to protect her from every type of moral and social degradation, the headman used to help her.

Thus in spite of the social discrimination between the various caste groups in the village, the headmen of two representative castes used to perform their unofficial duties; (which usually involved social and cultural aspects of the village life, irrespective of any caste distinction).

The 'Biraderi Leadership'

In the village community there are different caste groups and every caste has its relative position in the caste hierarchy. According to the caste composition of the village, people belonging to the particular caste had their own 'Biraderi' panchayat for settling the different domestic matters concerning that caste in the village. Every particular caste had its own leader known as the 'Biraderi' leader and he came to play an important role in dealing with the different cases of that particular caste in the village. He was recognised as the representa-

tive of the caste in the village. He used to coalesce with different living caste groups on behalf of his own caste. Although the headmen of the two representative caste groups *i.e.* the Brahmins and the Gujars were recognized as the 'Biraderi leaders' yet in case of other caste groups like 'Chamars', 'Saperas, and Jogis' the influential and wise persons of the 'Biraderi' were considered the representative leaders of the respective castes.

In some cases people belonging to one particular caste and to one 'Biraderi' or 'Jat' have their own 'Biraderi panchayat' which would include the members of the same 'Biraderi' of the entire neighbouring villages. When the 'Biraderi' panchayat of the entire block constituting the entire region held its meeting it was the 'Biraderi leaders' of the respective villages who used to represent the other members of each constituent village. But in actual practice other wealthy and influential, vocal and assertive, persons gradually come to hold an important position. The numerous cases concerning the social, cultural, economic and moral aspects of a particular 'Biraderi' were discussed in the meetings called in the village. Serious breaches of norms and traditions of the caste, as well as important intra-caste disputes etc. were decided in these 'Biraderi' panchayats.

The 'Biraderi' headman used to play an important part in the marriage ceremony. Before going into marriage contract between two parties, he was consulted for the selection of the boy or the girl. After his approval was given the marriage was finalized and all the arrangements were made with his consent. It was his duty to send invitations to the other 'Biraderi' members living in the nearby villages and inform them about the auspicious occasion. Nextly in case there was failure in fulfilling agreements made by the parties before finalizing marriage agreements, he was responsible to take the matter to the 'Biraderi' panchayat and get it settled with the help of other elderly and influential persons of the 'Biraderi'. Thus he used to exercise a tremendous influence in maintaining the traditional sanctions and norms of the caste.

Breaches of Social Norms of the Caste

Serious sexual lapses among the members of

the 'Biraderi' such as breaches of the rules of endogamy and exogamy, eating forbidden food etc., would be discussed under the jurisdiction of the 'Biraderi' panchayat. It was particularly so among the lower castes of the village such as Chamars and Bhangis. In case of the higher castes like Gujars and Brahmins, when a person was excommunicated or out-casted he was not pushed or downgraded into the lower caste. He was merely denied the privileges of equal participation in the socio-religious life of the caste. He could not share the 'Hukka' or 'Nyota' held by the caste. Thus a person who was ostracized from the caste was asked to hold a 'Nyota' or feast and call the members of his caste to purify himself from the indignation to which he had subjected himself by breaking the norms of the caste. After the feast was held he was to undergo some purification rites and regain his previous status in the caste. Thus commensal and pollution restrictions were maintained and the cases of violation of such restrictions were decided by the 'Biraderi' leader himself.

Biraderi Panchayat of Chamars

The Chamars of the village had their own 'Biraderi' panchayat which included the Chamars of other two villages *i.e.* Jaitpur and Molarbund. Their 'Biraderi' panchayat was held in Jaitpur and all the cases of marriages, death, divorce, sexual lapses, breaches of social norms of the caste, as well as domestic matters, like the distribution of property and neighbourhood tension etc. were discussed and decided by the recognized leaders of the 'Biraderi'. The most interesting fact regarding the Chamar caste was that the 'Kaj' ceremony used to be held in 'Jaitpur'. When some person of the 'Biraderi' died, his sons or nearby relatives according to the Hindu rites used to hold a feast in honour of the dead person. All the members of the 'Biraderi' were invited on the occasion from all these three villages and provided with 'Ghee Ki Katori' that is, some pure Ghee in an earthen utensil was provided to every invitee after the feast was over. In addition some money about 50P was also given to every invitee as a mark of respect. Thus all the cases concerning the Chamar caste were decided at 'Jaitpur' instead of in their own village. This was due to the fact that 'Jaitpur'

was predominantly inhabited by the Chamar caste so it was easy to hold a 'Biraderi' panchayat, in that village.

New Pattern of Leadership

Changing Authority Structure in Mithepur:—
The introduction of the Panchayat Raj Act, 1964, has brought about great changes in the pattern of village leadership.

The general elections for the Gaon-Panchayat comprising jointly of Mithepur and Tejpur, were held in Mithepur in 1959. In this election Nihal Gujar of Tajpur emerged as the 'Pradhan' of the Panchayat. In the next elections which were held in 1963, four persons contested for the post of 'Pradhan'. They were Tikkam Gujar and Bhule Ram Pandit both of Mithepur, Sood Sahib and Bedu Gujar of Tajpur. But the contestants from Tajpur could not win the favour of the inhabitants of Mithepur because of certain inter-village frictions.

Elections were held in the presence of the presiding officer, zonal officer and the supervisors. Tikkam Gujar was declared as 'Pradhan' of Gaon Panchayat. The following persons were declared elected as members of the Gaon-Panchayat.

1. Pt. Kishan Lal	Up-Pradhan	Mithepur
2. Pt. Murari Lal	Member	Do.
3. Chander Mal	Harijan Member	Do.
4. Ch. Hari Chand (Gujar)	Member	Tajpur
5. Ch. Ram Sukh (Gujar)	Member	Do.
6. Ch. Puran Chand (Gujar)	Member	Do.

The village has thus gone through the transition between a hereditary succession of village headmanship and an elective pattern of authority. The rear guard of the leading panchayat members is made up of persons possessing qualifications completely different from what the traditional headman was supposed to possess. When people were asked as to what enabled 'Tikkam' to represent the interests of the Gaon Sabha, certain revealing facts came to notice. It was clearly stated by the people that they chose 'Tikkam' not because he had a high economic standing in the village but because of certain other qualities. The new leader is expected to be a more versatile person and pro-

bably better educated. He should be an active participant in the welfare activities of the village and should win the sympathy and favour of the villagers by maintaining a close and continuous contact with them. On the other hand he should also appear to the villagers as a well-informed person so far as the current political trends in the country are concerned. He must have both time and energy to devote to the various problems of the villagers.

In spite of a marked difference between qualifications expected of a leader under the traditional system and under the modern panchayat system, caste as a factor occupies an important place in both of them. Traditionally, the Gujars and the Brahmins were recognized as leaders of the village because of their belonging to the locally dominant caste groups. The same fact is confirmed when we glance at the results of the present Gaon Panchayat elections. Out of the seven elected Panchayat members, four are Gujars, and the 'Pradhan' also belongs to the Gujar caste. This shows that even at present there is clear correlation between the political power held by certain members in the Panchayat and the dominance of their caste in the area, as it used to be in case of the traditional headmanship.

Some major changes have also been noticed in the functions of the village leaders. Previously he was the only representative of the village who had direct contacts with the officials of the state. But these contacts were on a limited scale and were confined mostly to the realisation of land revenue and settlement of land disputes. Now and then state officials visited the village. These contacts are still important but their nature has undergone a change. As mentioned earlier, in the British period the government had never interfered with the social and cultural life of the villagers and the 'Lambardar' was the only channel of communication between the villagers and the state authorities. But now several new departments of government have been created, dealing with the various aspects or rural development, welfare agencies, agricultural Extension schemes etc. Officials of these departments frequently visit the village and help them in every possible way.

As head of the Gaon Panchayat, the duties of

the Pradhan, with the consultation and assistance of other members of the Panchayat, are to see to the maintenance of public streets, opening of dispensary for medical relief, up-keep and protection of buildings belonging to the Gaon-Panchayat, establishing and maintaining primary schools, drainage, provision for drinking water, street-lighting etc. He is supposed to regulate the use of 'Deh-Shamlat' (common-land) in the village. But the allotment of 'Deh-Shamlat' often brings bad name to the 'Pradhan'. It has been seen that 'Nihal', the former 'Pradhan' of the Gaon-Panchayat was severely criticised for his dealings with the allottees. It is said that he used to demand heavy amounts from the inhabitants who had raised certain unauthorised and temporary constructions on the 'Deh-Shamlat'. The villagers also believe that as the post of 'Pradhan' is of short duration, he tries to make as much money as possible in this limited period by using unfair means. It is also believed that 'Pradhan' misuses his powers and whosoever pays him some money, is made 'Bhoomidar' or land owner of 'Deh-Shamlat'. Moreover the finances sanctioned by the government for Gaon-panchayat in connection with welfare activities in the village, are often misutilised by the panchayat. The panchayat has installed only two hand-pumps and constructed one 'Panchayat ghar' in the village. Nothing else has been done in connection with welfare, recreational, educational and developmental activities in the village. There is nothing wrong with the basic principles working behind Panchayat Raj, but the persons who are usually elected as members do not function honestly.

In former times, as a general rule, the headman used to act as the arbitrator in settling most of the disputes in the village. But his judicial powers have now been transferred to the 'circle Panchayat'. The 'Sarpanch' and other members of the 'Circle Panchayat' are made responsible for dealing with civil and judicial cases. The establishment of 'Circle Panchayat' (or Nyaya Panchayat as it is known in the village) composed of representatives from different villages has brought about a radical change in the judicial system of the village. It covers the following villages.

1. Jasola

2. Madanpur

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|------------------|--------------|
| 3. Sadabad Kotra | 4. Ali |
| 5. Harkesh Nagar | 6. Molarbund |
| 7. Mithepur | 8. Tajpur |
| 9. Jaitpur. | |

Unlike the village headman, the 'Sarpanch' is not the only person who can give his decisions arbitrarily on different cases presented to the 'Circle Panchayat'; rather his judicial authority is shared by the other members of the panchayat.

The recent 'Panchayat' legislations have brought together members from the different villages, who form a joint circle Panchayat. All of them, it may be remarked here, participate in the deliberations and then give a joint decision.

The details in respect of these members are given below:—

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|--|-----------|
| 1. Two Gujars | Mithepur |
| 2. Two Gujars (Nihal Gujar)
as 'Up-Sarpanch') | Tajpur |
| 3. One Baniya & One Sharma (Pandit) | Molarbund |
| 4. Two Gujars | Ali |
| 5. Two Raidass Sikhs | Jaitpur |
| 6. One Gujar | Jasola |
| 7. One Gujar | Madanpur |

These members form a body which is known as 'Circle Panchayat'. Members to be sent to the circle Panchayat by the village may be selected by the 'Gaon-Sabha' through formal election.

It has been seen that in olden days, the decisions were given arbitrarily by the headman and were confined to the cases of a recurring nature and about whose validity people were convinced. But here is a body of persons elected for some specific purpose or business.

The 'Circle Panchayat' meets once a month on a Saturday at the 'Pradhan's house (Baithak)'. Mostly petty civil cases are tried in the panchayat, and there is hardly any account of a criminal case having been tried in the panchayat. Maximum fine which the panchayat can impose on a culprit is Rs. 50/-.

The panchayat forms the 'Bench' consisting of three to four members for the disposal of cases and inquiries coming before it. The hearing of the case is done in the presence of the bench.

Before any case is filed by a complainant with the Circle Panchayat, it is considered in the villages and only those cases regarded as worth

forwarding are sent to the panchayat, others are disposed of on the spot by the local panchayat comprised of village elders. The cases of petty quarrels, domestic tensions, neighbourhood differences etc. are disposed of in the village.

Previously, nobody could disagree with the decision given by the headman because he had the powers even to turn a person out of the village in case he dared to defy him; now a man can disagree with the judgment of the local 'Panches' and continue to stay in the village.

The following cases have been heard in the 'Circle Panchayat'.

Pyara Baniya V/S Rugan Lambardar

Pyara Baniya of Badarpur claimed that he gave cloth worth Rs. 165/- to Rugan Chowdhry of Harinagar on credit. He demanded the money after six months, but Rugan said that he would pay after sometime. Almost two years had passed, and there was no sign of Rugan returning it. The case was taken to the 'Circle Panchayat'. The 'Sarpanch' formed the bench consisting of 'Prasadi' the 'Up-sarpanch', Chetu Pandit, and Ratan Singh Gujar. It was proved that cloth was sold to Rugan by the Baniya. But Rugan stated that the Baniya was asking for more than the actual sum as he was demanding heavy interest on the loan taken by him. The bench, taking into consideration all the details of various statements made by the plaintiff and the defendant, decided that Rugan should pay Rs. 135/- to the Baniya. Rugan accepted the decision given by the members of the Panchayat and paid the sum.

A Case of Faujdari between Molarbund and Agrola village

The Gujars of Molarbund were to get a large sum of money from some villagers of Agrola. The latter refused to pay the claims made by the Gujars. When Gujars came to know of it, they flared up and went to the village armed with 'Lathis' and beat some of the villagers. At this the villagers intimidated some 'Churas' of their village to take revenge. The Churas went to 'Molarbund' and injured two Gujars. The case was taken to the 'Nyaya Panchayat'. 'Prasadi', 'Nihali', Chetu Pandit and the Sarpanch were nominated as the members of the bench to decide the case. After hearing the statements of both

the parties, the bench considered it a case of 'Faujdari' and found both the parties as having committed an offence. But considering all the

circumstances, the bench persuaded the rival parties to come to a compromise. Thus the case ended in 'Bhai-Bandi' or compromise.

8. *The Panchayat System Among Saperas*

THE panchayat system amongst the Saperas needs a detailed and elaborate study, because such an all-inclusive and far-reaching application of the panchayat authority to the individual caste members as found among Saperas is absent elsewhere. The Gujars, Brahmins, Chamars, are all known to have caste-panchayats which have exercised a certain degree of control over their members, arbitrated among them in case of disputes and have tended to preserve the solidarity of caste group by forcing conformity among the individuals through various peremptory sanctions such as excommunication etc. But these caste panchayats have never been autonomous in settling their own disputes and have never exercised as rigorous a control over individuals as the caste panchayats of Saperas have done and are still doing. In the past, members of castes occupying lower positions in the status hierarchy have always sought the mediation of castes that stand higher in the hierarchy. The Chamars, for example, have been known to be depending upon their patron castes *i.e.* Gujars and Brahmins for their advice and guidance even in their internal matters.

But the case of Sapera panchayats has decidedly been different. The Saperas have never invited the mediation of any superior castes in their internal disputes and domestic matters. They have even managed to bye-pass state interference in certain criminal matters. Even in those cases where suits have already been filed in the court by the parties, several techniques are employed to bring the matter back to the jurisdiction of Sapera panchayats. In case it is a civil suit and one of the parties has already filed a suit in court, the panchayat elders would prevail upon him and persuade him to withdraw the suit. In case the proceedings have already started on a suit, the parties would, on persuasion from their elders, effect a compromise in the presence of the judge and thus have the case dismissed from the court. If the offence involved is a criminal one such as murder, arson etc. weak and doubtful evidences may be advanced by the parties concerned so as to get the accused acquitted on benefit of doubt or to get him the minimum possible punishment.

All this can be understood more clearly if we take account of another fact, that all cases are tried by Sapera panchayats, no matter whether they have been tried by the law-courts or not. Thus an aggrieved person may not have any scruples in withdrawing his case from the court because he is certain of meeting full justice at the hands of his own panchayat. The autonomy of Sapera panchayat needs to be emphasized in another way also. Conventional punishment (*i.e.*, the punishment imposed by panchayat) is given even though punishment has been imposed by a court of Law, so that once a culprit is out of the prison having undergone the allotted punishment, he has to reappear before his own caste-panchayat and stand trial once again. In this case, therefore, we clearly see that the modern mode of punishment has not superseded or eliminated the conventional mode of punishment. The former operates because Saperas even though living as members of their own community, live within the framework of Indian society and as such are subject to the law of the state. The latter operates because of certain other reasons. Saperas maintain a very inclusive kind of social existence interacting far more among themselves than with the outsiders. Also, they occupy a peripheral position on the caste-hierarchy so that castes standing on the lowest rung of the ritual—ladder such as Bhangis refuse to have any dealings with the Saperas. As a result, therefore, Saperas are alienated completely from the rest of the village community and are thrown entirely upon themselves to lead an independent social life. This need is fulfilled by their panchayat-system which by resolving mutual conflicts among the individual caste-members without any outside interference gives them a kind of judicial self-sufficiency. This in turn enables them to lead an independent social existence.

In Mithepur there are only 7 households of Saperas, containing in all about 38 members. Molarbund, on the other hand, is comparatively bigger and contains more members. Juridically, Mithepur comes within the competence of Molarbund itself. As it was stated by several Saperas of both Mithepur as well as Molarbund, the latter has a just claim to holding a *Sapera High Court*, regularly once or twice a year. It is to

this High Court that cases from various regions of Punjab, U.P., Rajasthan and even some southern regions are referred for decision and judgment. It is mainly an Appellant Court and only those cases are discussed that are serious and complicated and cannot be decided finally by the local elders or these regions. Somewhere in August or September, the *panches* (judges) from various regions start arriving in Molarbund along with the various disputants from these regions. The number of *panches* that come from different regions to participate in this High Court depends upon the size of each region. For example, Mithepur as well as its neighbouring villages of Tejpur and Ali send one representative each whereas Molarbund which is one of the main habitations of Saperas in North India participates with four representatives.

On being asked as to what makes a person a local elder and subsequently a *panch* two elements were emphasized by the respondents, the seniority in age and power of independent and impartial judgment. In most of the cases both these elements coincide with economic superiority. On a deeper probe another interesting feature also emerged. Almost all the elders who participate in the discussion of this Sapera High Court represent the interests of various kinship group living in the different areas.

Before the court sits on the appointed day starts the proceedings, the cases will have already reached the local elders of Molarbund through various persons who keep on visiting the place every now and then. Thus the terms of reference are already known to them before the discussion starts on them. The expenses which the elders have to incur during their stay in the village are met jointly by contributions from all the parties that come to Molarbund to seek justice.

On the appointed day the entire Sapera community along with all the disputants and the *panches* gather in the village Chaupal (village common). The court is declared open and the proceedings start. As it was stated by Saperas, a person has to plead his own case and in case he can no longer meet the argument of the opponent with a counter ar-

gument, he is taken to be in the wrong. There is a certain degree of thoroughness with which the cases are argued and there is absolutely no hurry to dispose of a case. Sometimes, a case may even go on for days.

After all the hearings connected with the case are over, the panches give their decision. It may not, however, be possible to arrive at a clear decision in certain situations because of unreliable or insufficient evidences. Or, both the parties involved may argue the case so well that 'it is not possible to sift the grain from the chaff'. Such an impasse is resolved by submitting the issue to the judgement of their unseen god, which is inferred in a queer way. Given below is a verbatim account of one such spiritual test.

Two Brahmins would fix 2 bamboo poles at some distance from each other in four, five feet deep water of a pond or some channel etc. Two persons, one each from the side of the plaintiff and the defendant would sit in the water holding the bamboo with both the hands. Another person would be made to run a measured distance of one hundred steps. The persons sitting in the water are required to keep their heads inside the water for the time taken by the runner to finish the distance. This is done repeatedly. Any of the two divers who fails to keep himself under water for the required time is taken to be on the wrong side and the judges give their decision against that side.

Another method may also be employed to decide the issue. This is known as 'Iman Rakhna' (lit. taking an oath).

The accused in a case is asked by the judges to take an oath of innocence. He swears in the name of God that he is innocent. After he has taken the oath, he is watched closely by other Saperas for three days. In case he suffers some physical harm or injury, loses some money or cattle, or is left poorer by any other kind of loss or happening, it is taken to mean that he took a false oath. Hence the decision is given against him.

While giving judgment there may not always be a complete accord among the panches. In

case there is a division between them, the issue is decided by a majority vote. In almost all the cases the parties adhere to the decision of the Sapera High Court. Before any case is submitted to the court, both the plaintiff and the defendant deposit some security (essentially in terms of money, ranging between Rupees five to Rupees twenty) with the panchayat. The party which refuses to accept the decision forfeits the security. In the case of a recalcitrant who would forfeit the security rather than agree with the decision of the panchayat, the ultimate sanction is imposed and the individual is excommunicated. Till the time he continues his refractory attitude, no member of the Sapera Community is supposed to associate with him in any way. In case an accused does not turn up on the panchayat meeting and thus tries to flout the authority of the panchayat, a Sapera elder of the region has to deposit some money with the panchayat by way of assurance that the culprit will be produced in the panchayat meeting next time. In case the culprit still does not come, the security of the elder is forfeited. The elder concerned may therefore, put pressure upon the accused directly or indirectly through the various kind and relatives of the accused and persuade him to appear before the panchayat.

The Sapera High Court receives all sorts of cases for discussion and judgment. But as reported by a few Saperas most of the cases received deal with illicit sexual relations of various types such as that between a man and another married woman, between a man and a widow. It may even be the case of rape or abduction or a dispute about the parenthood of a child.

Next to these come cases relating to monetary dealings. 'A' has borrowed from 'B' but refuses to return the borrowed amount as some pretext or the other. He may even deny plainly that he owes anything at all. Some body has borrowed somebody's donkey for carrying goods from one place to another. The donkey dies. Both the borrower and the lender put the blame for the donkey's death on each other. The duty of the panchayat in such a case may be to investigate into all the related circumstances and ultimately to fix the blame or responsibility.

As it has been hinted above already, the

panchayat sometimes discusses very chronic cases that may go on for years. The complication which initially gives rise to a case may not die out, but instead assume a new colour after every few years. Given below is the brief report of a case that remained under long protracted discussion for a period of over twenty years.

'A' was the resident of Mithepur and was a widower. He had a son 'B' from his dead wife. A few years after the death of A's wife, he came across a widow who was living in another village on the other side of river Jumuna. The woman was attractive and young enough to be married in 'Kareva'. He expressed love to her and ultimately persuaded her to live with him in Mithepur. She agreed to 'A's proposal, escaped from her in-laws' house one night and joined 'A' in Mithepur. The news of this elopement spread in the entire community and soon the matter became everybody's affair. The elders of both the villages came together and challenged 'A' on such an unlawful act.. 'A' pleaded that the woman had come of her own accord and also declared that he was going to marry her very shortly. Soon after the formal marriage took place and both started living as husband and wife. Three months after their marriage, the woman gave birth to a son (D). The situation now took a queer turn. The woman's previous in-laws now came forward to claim the child. Their plea was that as the woman's second marriage took place only three months before the birth of the child, she could not possibly have conceived that son from her new husband. After some time 'A' died and a few years later his wife also passed away. The child was brought up by his step brother 'B', who a little later started acting as an influential panch

of Sopera High Court. With his influence he hushed up the case as he never wanted that the prestige of his parents should suffer. The case remained closed for a number of years, but again opened up when the question of 'Ds' marriage came up. 'B' wanted that the marriage of his step brother 'D' should be ceremonised during his life-time as he had strong influence on the Panchayat with which he could withstand the resistance of his father's enemies. So, 'B' fixed up a girl for his brother and even paid the full amount of bride-price demanded by the girl's mother. B, however, passed away without fulfilling his cherished desire. Things changed dramatically after his death and his father's opponents were also able to put their weight against 'D'. The girl's mother also refused to honour the commitment and demanded some extra money as a kind of bribe. 'D' arranged the money somehow and greased the palm of his would-be mother-in-law. The marriage took place but the girl's uncles and brothers did not attend it. Before the Barat was taken out, the boy fearing a hostile intervention by the girl's uncles and brothers, had already informed the police. So the marriage was ceremonised under the protection of police. Soon after the marriage the matter was reported to Biraderi elders in Molarbund. Prompt decision was taken and both 'B' and his wife along with her mother were ex-communicated from Biraderi. As this decision has not yet been validated by the Sopera High Court, these 'three' still continue to live among their community. It was stated by the respondents that the matter would be presented at the forthcoming session of Sopera High Court. The respondents also hoped fervently that some final decision would be taken this time.

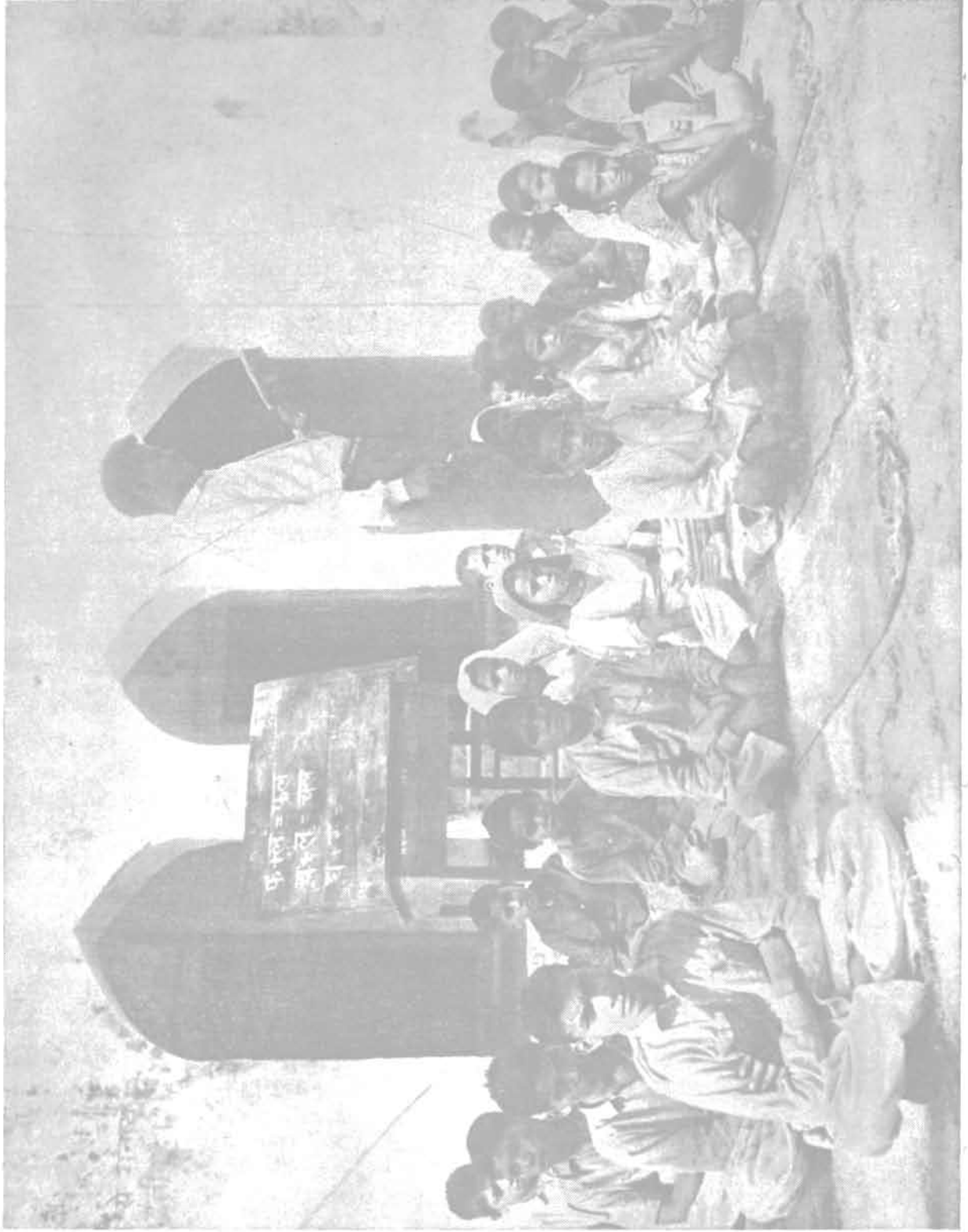
9. Conclusion

IT is always fascinating for a man of the town to go to a village and know something about the life of the people living there. Doing so, one is bound to draw a 'mental catalogue' of similarities and dissimilarities between the life in the town and that in the village. An academecian or a researcher, does precisely the same thing with the only difference that he tries to state his impression in a systematic manner, putting the data in certain theoretical cage-holes.

The most apparent feature of village Mithepur is its proximity to Badarpur which is a small town about one and half miles away and is located on one side of National Highway No. 2. This town is a big centre for various transactions that take place in connection with grains and other agricultural products. It was estimated that everyday about 50 per cent of the adults living in the village pay their visit to Badarpur or Delhi.

Both Gujar as well as Brahmin landlords visit Badarpur for any of the various purposes such as meeting a patwari, to settle certain monetary matters with various grain dealers, to sell and purchase various agricultural products etc., etc.

Two Gujars told that they have to go to the city quite often because they have business dealings with the people of the city. One Brahmin landlord who is probably the richest individual in the entire village said that he goes to the city at least once every week because he runs a truck there and has other business too. Both Brahmins as well as Gujars also go to the city courts for litigation off and on. On being asked whether the village panchayat could not settle all the disputes arising within the village, it was stated that people in general do not have faith in the impartiality of the panchayat members, so that where money and land are concerned they do not feel like depending upon the decisions of the panchayat.



A primary class of village school in session.

Baniya shop-keepers come to Badarpur and Delhi to purchase provisions and other such articles which they sell in their shops. About ten adults from Brahmin and Gujar households stated that they come to Delhi to visit their relatives at least once every three months.

Such a contact and communication with the urban centres is confined not only to the Gujars Brahmins and Baniyas. Two Harijan boys also work in Delhi in the office of the Delhi Municipal Corporation. Daily they come back to the village in the evening after performing their day's work. Two Chamar adults stated that they visit the city quite often. They may come to the city, they said, for meeting their friends and relatives, for attending a court, for attending a public fair or a celebration as well as for buying cloths and other things.

There is another channel through which the village is linked with the surrounding regions. This may be called the 'customary' or 'conventional' channel. By custom and convention no villager marries his son or daughter within the village itself, so that every new marriage brings the village into touch with another village in the same or in a different region. On a survey it was found that out of 49 marriages contracted in the village during the last 25 years, 38 connected the village with various regions of U.P. and Punjab.

The above description places the village within the focus of an all round interaction, social, economic and cultural. One would expect that such a continuous give and take with the surrounding regions would have given a liberal outlook to the people of the village and that they are no longer tied down to those rigorous caste restrictions which still have a firm hold over the lives of the people in several parts of India. But these theoretical anticipations are not borne out completely by the facts. The people of 'High Castes' are no doubt tolerant towards the Harijans, but they do not accord them an equivalent position in the day-to-day life of the village. Harijans may be allowed to draw water from the village well, but are disallowed to sit on the same 'Charpai' (cot) with the high castes and to smoke the same 'Hookah' (hubble-bubble) with them.

The point worthy of mention here is not that

Harijans suffer from various disabilities but the fact that they almost reconcile themselves to their low social position. So much so, that a Harijan will not dare to participate in a discussion even when it concerns the village in general. He may not even know what to say or may even feel shocked when his opinion is invited. Two actual situations were observed in which some Gujars and Brahmins were found discussing a case which concerned some village sweepress. Even though some Harijans were present on the spot and listened to the discussion with rapt attention, they did not dare to intrude and give their own views in the matter. From this it may be inferred that there is some deep seated inferiority in the minds of the Harijans which shows no signs of dying out even when they are favoured by several state legislations and even when the state has committed itself to avenge any humiliation which they may receive at the hands of the other castes.

It would be interesting to mention that Harijans do show their resentment against the high castes when they are met and interviewed outside the village. The caustic comments of a Harijan member as given by him in a tea stall at Badarpur, pinpointed a deep sense of sufferance which he harbours in his mind as a member of the village community. "The Gujars and Brahmins are tyrants for the small castes. Last season they spoiled my crops by letting their cattle into my fields. I was ruined but I could not do any thing. Two years ago one Gujar entered a Chamar's house with the bad intention of raping his daughter. The case was reported to the police, but later on Gujars bribed the police and the case was hushed up. It is not possible for a poor man to give a respectable life in the village."

So, the above discussion boils down to one point only, that the 'village' has kind of 'mystical' hold over the minds of the Harijans. So that, so long as they are in the village they do not express themselves openly against the humiliation experienced by them on account of their 'Low caste status'. But the moment they are outside the village they feel themselves transported to a different psychological atmosphere. As a result they become willing to share their inner feelings with anybody in a casual leisurely conversation. That this is a social fact rather than a researcher's

bias, becomes clear when we consider that no Harijan while talking about high castes dominance ever made even a formal request not to associate those facts with his personal identity or not to mention them before other castes of the village.

The Harijan youngsters are more restive than their elders in so far as their inferior caste status is concerned. They are more vocal than their elders

about various religious beliefs and practices of Brahmins. They also show a far less conviction in 'fate', 'God' or 'soul' and scorn these notions in a far more pungent language than their elders. Such a difference in their attitude, it is suggested should be understood in the light of the fact that they spend most of their time in the factory or in visiting various spots of amusements in Delhi and Badarpur.

Appendices

APPENDIX I

GLOSSARY OF NATIVE TERMS

Abadi	Village Habitation-site	Dai	An untrained midwife
Adalat	Courts	Dasauthan	Ceremony concerning the birth of a long wished child.
Amavasya	New moon day of every month	Dhoti	Full draped trouser
Arhar	A pulse	Dopatta	Scarf
Arti	Ceremony of worship or means of honouring someone by rotating before him/her a tray bearing lights and incense.	Dussehra	Tenth
Babool	Acacia	Gauna	Nuptial ceremony
Bigha	A unit of measurement of land	Ghagra	Skirt
Bahi	Family register	Ghar	House
Baithak	Sitting room	Ghee	Clarified butter
Bajra	A kind of millet	Gher	Cattle-shed
Bans	Ceremonial oil baths and massage given to both bride and groom before wedding.	Ghur Charhi	Ceremony of horse riding
Banwara	A period during marriage when boy and girl take ceremonial oil baths.	Gias	Eleventh
Barat	Wedding Party	Gilas	Tumbler
Barat Lena	A ceremony in which groom is honoured by the members of the bride's family.	Gochni	A mixture of wheat and gram
Barauthi	A ceremony in which groom is honoured by the members of the bride's family.	Gulal	Red oxide powder thrown at Holi.
Basi	Stale food	Gur	A crude brown sugar which includes molasses.
Batna	A paste made with perfumes, turmeric and flour.	Gobar	Cow-dung.
Beri	Plum bush	Gotra	Non-localised patrilinear clan.
Bhoomidars	Land holders	Gow	Cow
Batoora	A heap of dried cow-dung cakes	Hal	Plough
Byah	Marriage	Haldi	Turmeric
Byah Nikalna	Selecting the marriage date	Hali	Ploughman
Chadar	Sheet or covering	Halwa	A delicacy made of wheat-flour, syrup and ghee.
Chak	Stone wheel fixed on an axel	Hand Gandasa	Hand Chaff-cutter
Chanda	Subscription	Handia	A clay pot for boiling milk
Chapati	A thin wheat cake of unleavened flour.	Havan	Fire-hole
Charpai	A cot.	Jajman	Patron
Chauka	Cooking place	Jajmani	Patronage
Chaupal	Men's meeting house	Jamun	Blackberry
Chauth	Fourth	Jhad	A native bush
Chatti	A ceremony on the 6th day after birth.	Jhoond	A native bush
		Johari	Ritual at marriage period involving ceremonial sucking of his mother's breast by groom.
		Jowar	A kind of millet
		Juti	Laceless shoes
		Juwa	Yoke
		Kabli Kikar	A native tree
		Kajal	Lamp-black, soot
		Kamin	Menial servant
		Kamiz	Blouse, shirt

Kangna	A thread tied around the wrist, involved in the games played when a bride visits the groom's village.	Neota	Contribution to a wedding ceremony.
Kanya Dan	Part of wedding ceremony, involving bestowal of bride and dowry by father of bride.	Neem	A Native tree
Kareva	Marriage with elder brother's widow.	Nala	Nullah
Katori	A small metal cup	Pagri	Turban
Kharif	Rainy-season crop	Palauthi	First Birth
Khat	A cot.	Palta	Iron spoon
Khira	A pudding made of rice and milk.	Parat	A big vessel
Khurpa	Weeding blade	Patra	Ceremonial sitting board
Khurpi	Scraper	Pyjama	Trouser
Kuccha	Raw, uncooked, unfinished	Phawra	Spade
Kulhari	Axe	Phera	Circumambulation of fire by bride and groom.
Kurta	Collarless shirt	Pipal	A Native tree
Laddoo	A sweetmeal	Pradhan	President
Lagan	Formal reminder of wedding day.	Purohit	Priest
Lehnga	Skirt	Poori	A thin cake fried in ghee or oil.
Lota	Brass jug	Pucca	Fried food
Mandi	Market	Rabi	Wintry season crop.
Mantra	Spell, charm	Rae	Alkali
Mehra	Roller	Roti	Cake of bread.
Milni	Greetings, reception of wedding party.	Sagai	Engagement
Moodha	A settee or chair made of reeds	Salwar	Baggy trousers worn by women.
Moong	Kidney beans	Sani	Flex bush
Mukh-dikhana	Viewing of bride's face by groom's relatives.	Saviyan	Sweet burnt Macroni
Mundan	Ceremony of first hair cutting	Sehra	Crown
Nala	Coloured cotton skein	Sirki	Reeds
Namkaran-Sanskar	Ceremony concerning the naming of the child.	Seet	A kind of butter-milk
		Surma	Collyrium
		Taccavi	Governmental loans
		Thali	A big metal plate
		Darati	Sickle
		Tilak	A turmeric mark on forehead.
		Up-pradhan	Vice President.
		Vair	Seed drill
		Vida	Leave-taking (sending one's daughter to the husband's house.)

APPENDIX II

LIST OF ORNAMENTS

Bali, Bunde	Different kinds of ear-rings
Chhailkara	Gold or silver bangles
Champakali	Necklace
Chhan	Wristlet
Dana	Nose-pin
Galsari	Locket
Har	Necklace
Hasli	Necklace
Jhumki	A kind of ear stud.
Kadula	Armlet
Loung	Nose-pin
Mala	Wreath, Chaplet
Nath	Nose-ring
Poonch	Armlet
Tagri	Waist-let
Teep	Neckband

APPENDIX III

LIST OF HINDU MONTHS

Month	Month
Chait	March-April
Baisakh	April-May
Jaith	May-June
Asar	June-July
Savan	July-August
Bhadon	August-September
Asauj	September-October
Kartik	October-November
Aghain	November-December
Poh	December-January
Magh	January-February
Phagun	February-March

APPENDIX IV

GLOSSARY OF KINSHIP TERMS

Relationship	Local Terms	Relationship	Local Terms
Father's Father's father . . .	Pardada	Brother's son	Bhatija
Father's father's mother . . .	Pardadi	Elder brother's wife	Bari Bhabhi
Father's father	Dada	Younger brother's wife	Chhoti Bhabhi
Father's mother	Dadi	Elder sister's husband	Jija
Father's elder brother	Tau	Younger sister's husband	Jija
Father's younger brother	Chacha or Kaka	Wife	Gharwali or Birbani
Father's elder sister	Buwa	Husband	Gharwala or Marad
Father's younger sister	Buwa	Wife's elder brother	Sala
Father's elder brother's wife	Tai	Wife's elder brother's wife	Salaij
Father's younger brother's wife	Chachi or Kaki	Husband's elder brother	Jaith
Father's elder sister's husband	Phoopha	Husband's elder brother's wife	Jaithani
Father's younger sister's husband	Phoopha	Wife's elder sister	Sali
Father	Bapu	Wife's elder sister's husband	Sarhoo
Mother	Maan	Husband's elder sister	Nanad
Mother's father	Nana	Husband's elder sister's husband	Nandoia
Mother's mother	Nani	Wife's younger brother	Sala
Mother's elder brother	Mama	Wife's younger brother's wife	Salaij
Mother's younger brother	Mama	Husband's younger brother	Devar
Mother's elder sister	Mausi	Husband's younger brother's wife	Devrani
Mother's younger sister	Mausi	Wife's younger sister	Sali
Mother's elder brother's wife	Mami	Wife's younger sister's husband	Sarhoo
Mother's younger brother's wife	Mami	Husband's younger sister	Nanad
Elder brother	Bara Bhai	Husband's younger sister's husband	Nandoia
Younger brother	Chhota Bhai	Brother's daughter	Bhatiji
Elder sister	Bari Behan	Son's wife	Bahoo
Younger sister	Chhoti Behan	Daughter's husband	Jamai
Wife's father	Susra	Son's son	Pota
Wife's mother	Sasoo	Son's daughter	Poti
Husband's father	Susra	Daughter's son	Dheota
Husbands' mother	Sasoo	Daughter's daughter	Dheoti
Son	Beta		
Daughter	Beti		

APPENDIX V
MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS
SOCIO-ECONOMIC SURVEY OF VILLAGES
(HOUSEHOLD SCHEDULE)

BLOCK I

IDENTIFICATION

1. VILLAGE
2. HOUSEHOLD No.
3. Name of the head.....
4. Father's/Husband's name.....
5. Occupation
6. Religion
7. Caste
8. Whether born in the village Yes/No.
9. If no, state from which migrated.....
10. Reasons for migration.
.....
.....
.....
.....
11. The year of migration.....

BLOCK II

COMPOSITION OF THE HOUSEHOLD

Sl. No.	Name	Relation	Sex	Age	Marital Status	Age at Marriage	Edu- cation	Econo- mic Status	Main Occu- pation	Subsidiary occupation	Place of work	Means of Transport	Remarks

BLOCK III

OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY

S. No.	Present occupation	Father's occupation

What are the reasons for change if any ?

BLOCK IV

LAND

1. Do you own land ?
2. How much of it is under cultivation ?
3. Have you given any on crop share ?
4. Have you taken any on crop share ?

Yes/No _____
(If yes, bighas)

(Bighas)

(If yes, bighas)

(If yes, bighas)

How did you acquire the land owned ?

1. Ancestral,
2. Purchased,
- or
3. Secured under Bhoomidari.

BLOCK V

LIVESTOCK

1. Do you own milch cattle.

Yes/No, If yes

Kind	No.	Kind	No.
Cow		Cow youngstock	
Buffalo		Buffalo	
Goat		Goat	
Others		Others	
Total		Total	

Do you sell milk ? Yes/No, If yes, the Agency to whom the milk is sold _____

2. Details of the dry cattle owned by the household.

Kind	No.	Kind	No.
Bullocks		Bullocks Youngstock	
Camels		Camels	
Horses		Horses	
Donkeys		Donkeys	
Pigs		Pigs	
Others		Others	
Total		Total	

BLOCK VI

HOUSE

1. Do you own the house you are living in ? Yes/No.....
2. Type of house Kuccha/Pucca/Mixed.....
3. Year of construction.....
4. Is there a separate arrangement for cattle ? Yes/No.....
5. No of Rooms in the house.....
6. Ground Plan-rectangular, square, oval, or circle.....
7. Whether built on : stilts/platforms.....
8. Whether built on high plinths Yes/No.....
9. Building material for the wall.....
10. Building materials for the roof.....

BLOCK VII

INDUSTRY

1. Do you conduct any industry. Yes/No.
If Yes :-
 - (a) What are the products.
 - (b) (i) Sold in the village.....
(ii) Sold in the Market.....
 - (c) When did you start it ?.....
 - (d) Have you adopted any new tools or implements during last 5 years. If so give details.....
 - (e) Do you get raw materials in the village ? Yes/No.
If no, mention the source.....

BLOCK VIII

INDEBTEDNESS

Purpose	Source	Amount	T—s —
(1) Purchase of cattle			
(2) Purchase of land			
(3) Purchase of seeds & Implements etc.			
(4) Social observances			
(5) Domestic expenses			
(6) Construction of house			
(7) Litigation			
(8) Business			
(9) Repayment of loans			
(10) Others specified			
TOTAL			

2—By how much has it gone up or down during the last year ?

3—What steps have been taken to repay the debt ?

BLOCK IX

MISCELLANEOUS

1. Is there a co-operative society in your village ? Yes/No.
 2. Are you a member of the same ? Yes/No.
 3. If no, give reasons.....
 4. If there a Panchayat in your village ? Yes/No.
 - (a) If yes, how long has the Present Panchayat been in your village ?.....
 - (b) What are the main functions of the Panchayat ?
.....
 - (c) Has there been any improvement in your village since the establishment of this Panchayat ?.....
 - (d) Have you in any way, benefited from its activities ?
.....
 5. Is there a N. E. S. Block in your area ? Yes/No.
 - (a) If yes, what has it done in your village.....
 6. Do you know the Gram Sewak of your village ? Yes/No.
 - (a) If yes, describe his functions.....
 - (b) What has he been advising you and have you been following them.....
 - (c) How often does he come to your village ?.....
 7. What sort of manures do you use ?.....
 - (a) Source from which you procure it ?.....
- Do you use any pesticides ? Yes/No.
- (a) The source from where you get it ?.....

BLOCK X

FURNITURE AND CONSUMER GOODS

- (a) Does the household possess Moodha/Chair/Table/Mirror/Bench/Stool? (Cross out those not found)
- (b) Does the household possess Hurricane Lantern/Battery torch light/Kerosene Store/Bicycle/Gramophone Radio Set/Camera/Sewing Machine ?
- (c) Has any of these items been acquired for the first time during the last five years ? If yes, which are these articles ?.....

SUPPLEMENTARY SCHEDULE

SOCIO-ECONOMIC SURVEY

RELIGION

- 1. (a) Is there a deity or object of worship or a sacred plant in the house ? Yes/No
- (b) If yes, give name of the deity or object of worship and what is the form of worship.
- 2. (a) Do you know that untouchability in any form has been prohibited under law ? Yes/No
- (b) Whether it is practised in the village ? Yes/No
- (c) If yes, in which form, describe

MARRIAGE

- (a) Has any marriage in contravention of caste law taken place in this household ? Yes/No
If yes, give details
- (b) With what castes other than the caste of the household is marriage permissible.
- (c) With which caste such marriage would be desirable.
- (d) Have you any objection to contract marriages for persons of your household with persons of same social and economic status as your but belonging to the other communities
- (e) Was dowry given on the occasion of the marriage of the daughter ? Yes/No
If yes, mention the amount Rs.

INHERITENCE

- (a) Do you know that there have been changes in recent years in Hindu Adoption Act ? Yes/No

- If yes, what are its salient features
- (b) Do you think that there has been changes in recent years in Hindu Succession Act ? Yes/No
 If yes, what are its salient features ?
- (c) Which relatives, including male members and widows and daughters, married and unmarried, inherit property on the death of a married male person belonging to the same caste as your household ?
- (d) What is the share of each such member ?
- (e) Are you in favour of inheritance of property by daughters equally with sons ?

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

Name of Crop	Qty. obtained last year	Value (Rs.)	Qty. Sold	Value (Rs.)
1	2	3	4	5
A—Cereals				
1. Wheat				
2. Gram				
3. Wheat & Gram				
4. Barley				
5. Bajra				
6. Rice				
7. Pulses				
8. Others (Specify)				
B—Cash Crop				
1. Cotton				
2. Sugar-cane				
3. Oil Seeds				
4. Others (Specify)				
C—Vegetable & Fruits				
D—Fodder				
TOTAL				

- Average monthly income of the household.....
- Sources :
- (a)Average Income.....(per year)
- (b)Average Income.....(per year)
- (c)Average Income.....(per year)
- (d)Average Income.....(per year)

RECIPROCAL AID IN AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

- (a) Do you borrow agricultural implements from others at the time of cultivation ? Yes/No
- (b) Do you take help of neighbourers at the time of sowing or harvesting ? Yes/No
- (c) Do you assist your neighbourer and receive help at times of cultivation in the shape of manual labour. ? Yes/No
- (d) How much land did your father own at the time of his death ?

INDUSTRY

- (a) Have you taken up this industry for the first time in the course of last five years ?
- (b) Have you adopted any new tools or instruments for running this industry ? If so, name the details of the tools and instruments.
- (c) Name the art or craft in which you have earned proficiency.
- (d) When and how did you learn the art or craft concern ?
- (e) Do you consider further training necessary ? (Answer Yes/No)
- (f) If yes, describe the type of training you desire

COMMUNITY

- (a) Does the head of the household know name of the Union Board/Anchal Panchayat/Thana or Taluk/District in which his village is situated ?
- (b) Does the head of the household know name of the principal rivers flowing through the district ?

ABOLITION OF ZAMINDARI

- (a) Do you think that abolition of zamindari and intermediary rights has resulted in any good do you ? (Answer Yes/No)
- (b) If yes, indicate how you have benefited
- (c) If no, why have you not been benefited ?
- (d) Have you benefited from any scheme of land reclamation or land development ? (Answer Yes/No)
- (e) Could you get yourself recorded as a share-cropper in the revisionary settlement ? (Answer Yes/No).
- (f) Have you been evicted from your land as a result of recent land legislation ? (Answer Yes/No). If yes, give particulars.
- (g) If yes, explain how have you benefited

PANCHAYAT

- (a) What are the main parties in your panchayat and which caste is leading the Panchayat ?
- (b) Has there been any improvement in your village since the panchayat was established ? (Answer Yes/No).

FAMILY PLANNING

- (a) Is there a Family Planning Centre in your area ?
(Answer Yes/No).
- (b) Do you know that husband and wife can prevent
conception of a child by deliberate means, if they
wish to do so ?
- (c) Does the head of the household wish that no more
children were born to him ?

DIET

- (a) How many times a day do the members of the house-
hold take their meals ?
- (b) What are the usual items of diet at each meal ?
- (c) What are the foods or drinks prohibited ?

UTENSILS

- (a) What utensils are used for preparing food and for
storage of drinking water ?
- (b) Of what materials are important utensils made ?

APPENDIX V
MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS
SOCIO-ECONOMIC SURVEY OF VILLAGES
(VILLAGE SCHEDULE)

I. General Features

(a) Name of the Village.

Local legends, if any, about its origin. Is the origin of the village known ? If so, give the approximate date of its origin.

Village calendar if any.

(b) Location

Distance from :—

1. Delhi
2. Main Road
3. Railway Station
4. Mandi
5. Police Station
6. Post Office
7. The Jamuna River
8. Irrigation Canal.

(c) Type of soil.

Give area-wise distribution of the types of soil available in the village.

Land Use :—

1. Village Abadi
2. Cultivated Area (a) Irrigated
(b) Non-irrigated
3. Fallow land
4. Cultivable waste
5. Common Land
6. Non-cultivable land
7. Others (specify).

(d) The pattern of grouping settlements in the village—reason for such grouping—whether social or topographical.

(e) Internal Roads (kuccha or pucca).

(f) Misc. : Source of drinking water. Tanks, ponds etc., the provision for bathing and drinking water for the cattle.

II. Religion and Caste Structure of the Village

Give some general observations regarding inter-caste relations, their deities and festivals. What is the extent of observation of untouchability or other social disadvantages suffered by the Harijans.

III. Family

Are the families of the village generally joint families or otherwise ?

Is there any tendency for the breaking up of joint families ?

What are rights, duties and obligations of different members in a family ?

IV. Social Customs

A brief account of the social customs and ceremonies amongst the different communities from birth to death :
e.g. birth, mundan, marriage, gauna, death, Sharadhs etc.

Are there any auspicious days or months for these ?

Belief and superstitions regarding:

Sowing, ploughing, reaping, thrashing and other agricultural operations.

Starting of a new business venture,

Beginning of a journey ;

Regarding travel abroad;

Constructions of a new house;

Completion of a new house;

Legends, if any, connected with some local objects.

V. Educational facilities

Are they adequate—if they are adequate, are the people satisfied with it ?

Are there any incentives for the children to study or for the parents to send their children to school ?

Is there any social welfare centre ? What has it been doing ?

How do the people utilise its services ?

Was there any adult literacy drive in the village ?

If there was one, how did the people respond to it ?

VI. Housing

Type of house in different settlements—their material—whether locally manufactured or imported from other villages.

The labour engaged in construction, whether local or imported from outside.

What is the provision for shelter of cattle ?

Are the house sanitary and well ventilated. Provision for storage of foodgrain ?

VII. Agriculture

Fertility of the soil. Total average under cultivation crop-wise distribution.

Irrigational facilities available.

Type of manures used.

System of cultivation.

Double cropping or not.

Tools and implements used, whether local or imported from outside.

Does any one family or a group of families own a Tractor and its accessories in the village.

Main crops grown and their corresponding period.

VIII. Industry

Is there any cottage or small scale industry in the village.

What are the goods produced. How are the goods marketed.

What tools or implements are used in manufacturing. From where are they procured.

IX. Others

Are there any families engaged in shop-keeping only.

What are the goods traded. Do the shops provide almost all daily needs of the Village. How many people go out of the village to earn their livelihood. Where are they employed. Is the work seasonal temporary or permanent.

Are there some persons who are employed in police or army ? What is the influence of their ideas on the general village.

X. Panchayats

Is there a village panchayat. Who are the members ? Which community they belong to ? How were they elected ? What sort of work has the Panchayat been doing ? Are the people satisfied with it ?

Are there any community or caste panchayats ? Give a brief account of their working ?

XI. Co-operative Societies

Is there any co-operative society in the village ? What is the purpose ? What are its functions ? Is it functioning properly ?

XII. What are the types of clothes, footwear, ornaments, food-utensils and furniture etc., generally used by the villagers.

XIII. Some attitudes towards developmental work, co-operative movement, joint farming, family planning, birth control etc.