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NO. 15

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THE DHANAKS OF HARYANA AND PUNJAB

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CONTENTS

		Page
	Foreword	III
	Preface	V
1.	Name, identity, affinity and origin	1
2.	Distribution and population trend	3
3.	Physical characteristics	5
4.	Clan, family and kinship	5
5.	Settlement and dwellings	9
6.	Dress and ornaments	9
7.	Food and drink	10
8.	Language and literacy	11
9.	Occupation and economic life	14
10.	Life cycle	
	Birth	20
	Tonsure ceremony	23
	Sex and marriage	23
	Widow remarriage	27
	Divorce and separation	27
	Death rites	28
11.	Religion and festivals	28
12.	Inter-community relationship and social status	30
13.	Structure of social control, prestige and leadership	31
14.	Social reform and welfare	32
15.	Biographies	33
16.	References cited	35
	Annexure—Framework for ethnographic study	36

ILLUSTRATIONS

PHOTOGRAPHS

Physical characteristics :

1. Front view of a Dhanak male
2. Profile of a Dhanak male.
3. Front view of a Dhanak woman.
4. Profile of a Dhanak woman

Settlement and dwellings :

5. A distant view of a hamlet of Dhanaks
6. A view of a Dhanak locality in a town
7. A kacha house of a Dhanak in a village
8. Interior view of a Dhanak house in a village
9. A pucca house of a Dhanak in a town
10. Interior view of a Dhanak house in a town.
11. Community hall of Dhanaks in a village
12. A section of a Dhanak settlement in a town

Dress and ornaments :

13. A Dhanak male in his day-to-day dress
14. A Dhanak woman in her day-to-day dress
15. A group of Dhanak males and children in their day-to-day dress
16. Dhanak women and children in their day-to-day dress and ornaments

Occupation and economic life :

17. A Dhanak working on a handloom installed in the house
18. Musical instruments of Dhanak band party
19. Dhanaks engaged in house construction.

Life cycle :

20. 'Thapa'—palm impressions made on the wall by newly married couple

PIE-DIAGRAMS

1. Literacy by sex among the Dhanaks.
2. Rural/urban literacy among the Dhanaks
3. Industrial classification of workers among the Dhanaks

FOREWORD

The Constitution lays down that "the State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interest of the weaker sections of the people and in particular of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation."

To assist States in fulfilling their responsibility in this regard, the 1961 Census provided a series of special tabulations of the Social and Economic data on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

The Lists of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are notified by the President under the Constitution and the Parliament is empowered to include in or exclude from the lists, any caste or tribe. During the Census Operations, the enumerators frequently face the problem of identifying the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. In the President's notification, though in some cases, the names of the sub-castes and sub-tribes and synonyms are given, there are many cases where such names have not been provided in the list. The Census enumerators, therefore, require guidance about the acceptance or rejection of claims that they come across during the operations of some communities to be treated as sub-castes or sub-tribes of the notified Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes. For this purpose, the Census Organisation has thought it wise to undertake detailed ethnographic studies in respect of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of India. This is also in conformity with the past Census tradition of presenting authentic ethnographic account of Indian communities.

For conducting the ethnographic studies, a number of ancillary operations are undertaken by the Social Studies Unit of the Office of the Registrar General, India, as well as the staff of the Directors of Census Operations in the various States. These ancillary operations include : (i) compilation of available information on each Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe and preparation of bibliography in respect of them; (ii) preparation and interpretation of maps showing distribution of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes over time and space; and (iii) special studies on cultural, technological and economic changes taking place among the various tribal communities.

Dr. B. K. Roy Burman, Deputy Registrar General, India, Social Studies Unit, assisted by Shri N. G. Nag, Officer on Special Duty and Shri A. M. Kurup, Research Officer have been coordinating all these studies at the central level. I avail of this opportunity to extend my warm thanks to all my colleagues who have undertaken various studies on different aspects of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of India.

Shri H. S. Ahluwalia, Investigator of the Registrar General's Office, conducted the field investigation on the Dhanaks of Haryana and Punjab and prepared the draft. Shri N. G. Nag and Dr. B. K. Roy Burman edited the report.

NEW DELHI
February, 1971.

A. CHANDRA SEKHAR
Registrar General, India.

PREFACE

As an adjunct of 1961 Census, preparation of ethnographic monographs on a number of selected Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and ethnic groups with special status and ethnographic glossaries on all Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have been taken up by the Census Organisation.

In India, the Census Organisation has a long tradition of undertaking ethnographic studies. Besides, there are certain reasons why, for its own operational purposes, it is necessary for the Census Organisation to take up such studies. During census operation, the Census Organisation is required to make a complete enumeration of all the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the country. The ethnographic studies are required to establish the identity of the various communities including their segments. The social boundaries of various communities are not always rigid, they are in a state of flux. Ethnographic studies are required to keep track of these charges as well, otherwise comparison of consecutive census figures would give altogether wrong picture in respect of them. There is another aspect of study in respect of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in which the Census Organisation, as well as the welfare and planning agencies are interested—it is ethno-demography. In 1961 Census, separate tables were prepared in respect of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes on the following items :

(i) industrial classification of persons at work and non-workers by sex,

(ii) age and marital status,

(iii) education,

(iv) religion,

(v) persons not at work classified by sex and type of activity for Scheduled Castes.

(vi) persons not at work classified by sex and type of activity for Scheduled Tribes,

(vii) mother tongue and bilingualism for Scheduled Tribes.

The data available in these tables are to be analysed in respect of each Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe, so that the historical and cultural factors responsible for the demographic pattern can be identified and the impact of the emergent demographic pattern on the social structure can be determined.

The insight gained by the Census Organisation, through ethnographic studies of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes will be useful for interpretation of the demographic pattern for the country as a whole. Recent studies show that in India even now, it is difficult to correctly appreciate the various social and economic processes without reference to caste. On the other hand, in the interest of ultimate national goal, caste is not being recorded in Census, except in case of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The insight gained through ethno-demographic studies of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is, therefore, of invaluable help for census.

At the same time, such study is very much useful for planning of development activities among the castes or tribes concerned. For instance, if the census shows that great deal of diversification of occupation has taken place among the Parayans of Kerala, it is important for the planners to know whether the community consists of a number of disconnected segments or whether it means that a great deal of individual mobility is taking place where the main focus of community is other than traditional occupation. Again, when among the Bauris of Orissa, it is found that a very high proportion of the population is engaged in agricultural labour and next to them a high proportion is found in cultivation and also that there is considerable diversification of occupation, the following questions of sociological and practical importance arise :—

(a) What is the historical relation between the agricultural labourers and the cultivators among the Bauris of Orissa? The Census data suggest one of the two possible developments, namely, (1) bulk of the Bauris were cultivators and by a process of degeneration of their economy have become agricultural labourers, (2) on the other hand, it is also possible that the bulk of them were agricultural labourers and through a process of improvement of their economic condition, many of them have become cultivators.

(b) The fact that a considerable diversification of occupation has taken place, suggests that the economy has not remained in a stagnant condition. Here, it is to be examined whether the diversification is the result of upward mobility, or downward mobility, or even horizontal mobility, and what is the actual process by which the diversification has taken place.

(c) The social dimensions corresponding to the diversification in economic life have to be examined. It is also to be examined whether in spite of diversification of occupation, the ethos of particular occupation, for instance agriculture, continues to be dominant. In that case, diversification might have created problems of adjustment in values and attitudes.

Instance can be multiplied, but it is not necessary. What have been stated above, are enough to bring out the significance of ethnodemographic studies for planners.

The above dimensions of ethno-demographic studies have evolved through stages. In 1960 at the instance of Shri Mitra, Registrar General of India, a questionnaire for collection of ethnographic data was circulated among the Census Superintendents. In October, 1961, the Handicrafts and Social Studies Unit was set up in the office of the Registrar General of India, to coordinate the ethnographic studies and a few other ancillary studies, like village surveys, handicraft surveys, *etc.* In December, 1961, a Study Camp was organised in Delhi where the personnel engaged in ethnographic studies, handicrafts studies and other social investigations in the Office of the Census Superintendents, participated. In the Study Camp, it was considered that the ethnographic notes would mainly aim at making an objective assessment of the state of development of the different Scheduled Castes and Scheduled tribes in the context of the changes taking place in technology, economy organisation and total culture pattern of the country. It was further suggested that the primary focus of the study should not be on the exotic elements of the cultures of the different castes and tribes. It should be on the efforts of the communities concerned to adjust to the modern conditions of life. In the light of the above decisions of the Study Camp rapid ethnographic studies have been carried on by the staff of the Superintendents of Census Operations as well as by the Handicrafts and Social Studies Unit of the Office of the Registrar General of India, in different parts of the country. These rapid surveys have brought out a number of methodological operational problems. In May and June, 1966, two Ethnographic Study Camps were held at Kurseong and Hyderabad, where personnel from the Office of the Registrar General of India, as well as from the Offices of the Census Superintendents participated. In the Study Camp held at Kurseong, the Secretary, Tribal Welfare, West Bengal, and Director, Tribal Welfare, West Bengal, also participated. In this Study Camp, an integrated frame for preparation of ethnographic notes was discussed and adopted. A copy of the same may be seen at 'Annexure'. In addition to the studies in respect of each Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe separately, a number of subsidiary studies were undertaken by the Handicrafts and Social Studies Unit of the Office of the Registrar General of India, for gaining insight into a number of problems of general nature, which have bearing on the different aspects of the life of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of the country. These subsidiary studies are as follows : -

1. Shifting cultivation in Santal Parganas of Bihar and Garo Hills of Assam.
2. Pattern of Rehabilitation of displaced tribals of Rourkela.
3. Socio-economic survey of the Scheduled areas of Rajasthan.
4. Socio-economic developments among the hillmen of North-East India.
5. Social structure and cultural orientation of Christians converted from Scheduled Castes
6. Traditional rights of scavenging as claimed by scavengers in urban areas.
7. Grouping of castes and tribes with reference to occupation and inter-group and intra-group comparative study on the basis of the data available in ealier censuses.
8. Social mobility movements among the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

On the basis of each of the subsidiary studies indicated above, a separate monograph is under preparation. It is also proposed to prepare separate monographs on a few Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and ethnic groups with special status in each state. Besides, ethnographic glossaries are proposed to be prepared in respect of all Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. For this purpose about one lakh references have been indexed.

The present report on Dhanaks of Haryana and Punjab is one of the monographs included in the series of ethnographic studies. The field investigation was undertaken by Shri H. S. Ahluwalia under the guidance of Shri N. G. Nag, Officer on Special Duty. In the light of the guideline provided by Shri Nag, further investigations were done by Shri Ahluwalia. The draft report prepared by Ahluwalia was revised by Shri Nag. Though the study was conducted under my general guidance, the credit for editing this particular report mainly pertains to Shri Nag.

I take this opportunity to express my thanks to all the colleagues who collaborated in this project.

Shri H. L. Harit, Investigator, who is looking after the compilation of information from published sources in respect of all Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and other special ethnic groups of India deserves mention.

Shri A. Mitra, Registrar General of India for 1961 Census, whose farsighted initiative is responsible for social investigations in a large number of fields including ethnography, deserves thanks of all students of Indology. I have been benefitted not only by his inspiration, but also by his valuable suggestions in connection with the ethnographic studies as well as the other studies, conducted by the Handicrafts and Social Studies Unit.

The tradition built by Shri Mitra, has been continued by Shri A. Chandra Sekhar, the present Registrar General of India. Under his guidance, the scope of the Social Studies by the Census Organisation has been further expanded. In spite of his other pre-occupations, he has gone through the final drafts of the ethnographic notes and given a number of valuable suggestions. I avail of this opportunity to express my gratefulness to him.

B. K. ROY BURMAN

DHANAKS OF HARYANA AND PUNJAB

Name, Identity, Affinity and Origin

The Dhanuk or Dhanak, sometimes also known as Dhanakia, is an important caste of Northern India and notified as a Scheduled Caste in Punjab, Madhya Pradesh (in Madhya Bharat region and Sagar, Raisen and Sehore districts only), Rajasthan (except in Abu Road taluka of Sirhoi district), Uttar Pradesh and the Union Territory of Delhi vide the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Lists (modification) Order, 1956. After the reorganisation of Punjab in 1966, Dhanak is also treated as a Scheduled Caste in Haryana, Chandigarh and the Territories transferred from Punjab to Himachal Pradesh.

It appears that the various authors generally agree that etymologically the word Dhanak has been derived from the word *Dhanukh,* or Sanskrit *Dhanuska,* which means an archer or bow-man. (Sherring, Vol. I, 1872: 404; Crooke, Vol. II, 1896; 271; Wilson quoted by Rose, Vol. II, 1911 : 235; Russel and Hiralal, Vol. II, 1916 : 484). It is mentioned by some of the above authors, such as Sherring (*ibid.*) and Elliot, (Elliot, Vol. I, 1869 : 78) that they were *inter alia* employed as archers and fowlers. It is further said that at some early period they engaged themselves in making bows (Turner, Vol. XVIII, 1933 : 556). Unable to locate the origin of the Dhanaks, Crooke quotes Buchanan who has opined that they are, "a pure agricultural tribe, who from their name implying archers, were probably in former times the militia of the country, ... All the Dhanuks were at one time probably slaves, and many have been recruited to fill up the military ranks." (Crooke, *op. cit.*) This led Russel and Hiralal to surmise that, "the Dhanuks were a body of servile soldiery recruited as was often the case from the subject Dravidian tribes; following the all powerful tendency of the Hindu society they became a caste, and owing to the comparatively respectable nature of their occupation obtained a rise in social position from the outcaste status of the subject Dravidians to the somewhat higher group of castes who were not unclean but from whom Brahmins would not accept water." (*op. cit.*) Before proceeding further, it would not be out of place to mention here that the earlier scholars have used the term 'Dravidian' and 'Kolarian' in a loose sense in respect of 'non-Aryan' population, including tribal groups of Proto-australoid origin.

Earlier scholars had observed that the Dhanaks were a body of servile soldiery of 'non-Aryan' origin engaged chiefly as archers. It is significant to note that during the course of the field investigations for the present study some of the informants stated that in olden times their ancestors were *Dhanushdhari* (bow-men). They used to hunt in the forests and eat the flesh of wild animals. They claimed that they fought against the Rajputs many a times. They further traced their descent from the Kols and claimed themselves as followers of Ravana who helped him against the forces of Ramachandra—a Kshatriya. At the defeat of Ravana, they have been completely subjugated and deprived of their homes. According to them, it is at this point that they left agriculture which they practised along with their military service and started weaving.

An often quoted reference about the descent of the Dhanaks is traced to Padma Purana, according to which they have descended from a Chamar husband and a *Chandal* wife. (*c.f.* Elliot, *op. cit.*) Another equally mythical pedigree makes them descendents of a Chamar mother and an outcaste Ahir father. (Risey, Vol. I, 1891 : pp: 220-222; Russel and Hiralal, *op. cit.*)

Regarding the ascription of low parentage, it will be worthwhile to quote Risley, according to whom, "Such statements, however, slight their historical value, serve to indicate in a general way the social rank held by the Dhanuks at the time when it was first thought necessary to enrol them among the mixed castes". In this point of view, he further mentioned, "the degraded parentage assigned to the caste lends some support to the conjecture that they may be an off-shoot from one of the non-Aryan tribes". (*op. cit.*) It is also said that the Aheriyas, who are also traditionally hunters and fowlers, are an off-shoot of the Dhanaks. (Elliot, *op. cit.;* Sherring, *op. cit.*) Though none of the informants admitted the above pedigrees for his community, some of them not only lent support to the view that Aheriyas are an off-shoot of Dhanaks, but even went to the extent of saying that Aheriyas and Dhanaks are sometimes synonymous, there being only territorial differences—the Dhanaks in the territory dominated by Aheriyas under their influence, having started calling themselves as Aheriyas.

Buchanan held that Dhanaks are not essentially different from the Kurmis, for any Jaiswar-Kurmi who goaded by poverty sells himself or his children is admitted among the Dhanaks. (quoted by Crooke, *op. cit.*) Though on the basis of evidence from Bihar, Risley admits that there is some evidence that Chhitalia sub-caste of Dhanaks is also known as Jaiswar-kurmi he could not find any independent evidence that the Dhanaks are a branch of Kurmis. (Risley; *op. cit.*)

The Dhanaks also appear to have some affinity with Bhangis and Chuhras. According to Rose,

.... 'they only differ from Chuhras in that they v.. ot remove nigh' soil, though they will do 'en ral scaven ing" (*op. cit.*) But though there i: o i e affinity between Dhai.aks and Chuhras or Bhan is, the former are distinct from the latter as they do not inter-marry. Besides, scavenging is a specialised occupation of the Chuhras or Balmikis and Dhanaks practised it as one of their many other occupations. During the field investigations for the present study, the Dhanaks disclaimed any ethnic relationship with the Chuhras or Bhangis. In preference to the name Dhanak, which is indicative of a low social status, they generally call themselves as Julaha, an occupational term for a weaver—being one of their traditional occupation.

During the course of field investigations the Dhanaks recounted a legend regarding the tradition of their origin and their lowly status. It is said that in *treta jug* there were two Rishis name Jharkhanda and Markanda. The former had three sons, named Tagu, Raju and Chhaju. Ta u it is said, was the ancestor of the Brahmins; Raju of the Rajputs and Chhaju of the Balmikis, Chuhras and basket makers. From Markanda sprung the Dhanaks. Markanda had only one son, named Yadi Dharash. The legend further goes that once the Almighty arranged *Bhandara* (free kitchen) and handed over the keys of the kitchen to the custody of Yadi Dharash, the Dhanak. The Almighty always used to call the Dhanak to open the *Bhandara*. With this prerogative, the Dhanak became arrogant and egoistic. Having such an air, one day he refused to open the *Bhandara*. At this the Almighty became furious and opened the *Bhandara* himself. The meals thus could be served as usual. After sometime the Dhanak felt the pangs of hunger. He went to the Almighty and asked for food. As the same had already been served, only the left-overs remained. He had to perforce satisfy his hunger with the left-overs. From that time onwards, it is said, the Dhanaks have been relegated to a low position and assigned a low social status. The above myth is an illustration of an attempt on the part of a caste of low status to use a myth as an instrument in their attempt of social climbing.

It is interesting to observe that the relationship of the Dhanaks and the basket makers mentioned in the legend is corroborated by Crooke, who opined that the Dhanaks, "belonged to a large impure caste of Basors or basket makers—who took to bow making and thence to archery; and some connection is traceable between the Dhanuks and Basors in the Narsinghpur" (quoted by Russel and Hiralal, *op. cit.*)

About the Dhanaks of Punjab, Rose (*op. cit.*), has mentioned that they are essentially of Hindustan (Gangetic valley) and not of Punjab proper and found in South-East of province. This is also corroborated by their present distribution. They are mostly found in U.P., Rajasthan and Haryana with a tendency to move into the South-West of Punjab.

In Haryana and Punjab, they returned their traditional occupation as weaving, agricultural labour and labourers in grain markets. Hesitatingly and reluctantly they also acknowledged that at one time they have also been engaged as scavengers But in any case their women-folk engage themselves as *Dais* or mid wives—an occupation which is generally taken up by the castes of lower status in the village. But there is no denying the fact that they have been engaged in weaving for a long time, justifying their claim for being called as *Julaha* (weaver). In support of their claim as traditional weavers, they referred to a custom during their marriage ceremonies. At the time of the marriage of a boy, his mother's brother brings a *tur*, a long flat stick which is a part of a handloom and is fixed on the right side of the door It is only around this *tur* that the whole kin group sit and take their meals, before the departure of the *barat* (marriage party) to the bride's house.

A survey of the existing literature on the Dhanaks indicates that they are traditionally associated with a variety of occupations, such as cultivators, agricultural labourers, weavers, village menials—musicians, watchmen and messengers—sweepers and scavengers, and their women-folk as *Dais*. Their social status is also determined by the occupation in which they primarily engage themselves. By and large the Dhanaks in central and eastern parts of the country, *viz.*, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, etc., have been engaged as agriculturists and enjoyed a better social status leading to claims for social identification with such castes as Kurmis (Crooke, *op. cit.*) and even Rajput and Kshatriya origin. (Russel & Hiralal, *op. cit.*) On the other hand, the Dhanaks in north western parts, including Haryana and Punjab, have been mostly employed as village menials, in the capacity of weavers and sweepers or scavengers and agricultural labourers. The difference in the traditional occupations and consequent social status would suggest that the Dhanaks are, perhaps, of heterogenous origin. Keeping in mind their reported 'non-Aryan' tribal origin discussed earlier, as well as their employment in militia in a servile capacity, the following two hypothesis can be offered in regard to the social processes that may have taken place among them leading to the differences in their present social and economic characteristics.

1. At one stage Dhanak was used only as a generic name for people engaged in the occupation of archery. Some persons were drawn from different ethno-cultural groups in different areas. In course of time though being conditioned to

similar interaction with the rest of the society because of similarity of occupation, the archers of diverse origin became conscious of a basic unity among themselves and it is this consciousness of a kind which brought them within the orbit of a single caste.

2. The other possibility is that from the very beginning the Dhanaks formed one homogeneous ethno-cultural group who after being conquered were required to work as archers during war but who were also required to render various menial services during the peace time. With the technological changes in the weaponary of war when archery lost its importance, the peace time occupations became more important though they were allowed to retain the erstwhile honorific appelation Dhanak. Thus no particular occupation could be associated with the caste as its traditional occupational all over the country; it differed from area to area. For instance, in Bihar where they managed to take to cultivation they came to be regarded as cultivators of inferior status. Of course, it can be safely assumed that this inferior status was higher than that of that section of the community which earned its livelihood by sweeping in western U.P. and Punjab, etc.

It is not known which of the above two processes is the more relevant one in the ethnic history of the Dhanaks. A thorough study in a cultural-ecological frame, in historical perspective, may throw some light in the matter.

It is, however, interesting to observe that the Dhanaks of Haryana and Punjab claimed oneness or total identity with their counterparts in other parts of the country even though the latter follow occupations, such as agriculture and consequently enjoy a better status. From the information gathered from the Dhanaks in Haryana and Punjab, there does not appear to be any divergent trend of social identification within the community.

But as stated earlier, the Dhanaks of Punjab and Haryana have been dependent on menial occupations and do not enjoy a social status at par with the members of their community in eastern parts of the country. It is not certain whether the Dhanaks in Bihar and Madhya Pradesh would acknowledge a complete identity with their counterparts in Haryana and Punjab, who are of lower social status than themselves.

According to some authors, such as Risley and Elliot (*op. cit.*), the Dhanaks are divided into a number of sub-divisions or sub-castes. A few important ones are Longbasta, Mathuria, Katheria, Jaiswar, Magharia or Maghaya, Dojwar, Chhilatiya, Turhutia or Chiraut, Kanaujia, Khapariya, Dudhwar or Doiwar, Sunri and Kathauties. Crooke (*op. cit.*) has mentioned 20 sub-castes among the Dhanaks of Etawah division of Uttar Pradesh. However, the Dhanaks in Punjab and Haryana form a homogeneous group without divisions into any sub-castes or any other endogamous divisions. Though they are aware of some of the names of the sub-castes mentioned above, they are vague about them. In fact, some of them associated a few of the above names with the names of the *gotras* or clans of their community found in other parts of the country. They further associated the so called clans with different traditional occupations. They gave the following information about the occupations of sub-castes (regarded as clans by them) and their distribution in different parts of the country.

Name	Occupation	Place where found
1. Longbasta	Silk worm raisers	Rajasthan
2. Mathuria	Milk seller	Mathura in U.P.
3. Kathuria	Cattle raisers & Toddy tappers	Madhya Pradesh
4. Jaiswar	Weavers	Rajasthan
5. Magharia	Watchmen	Orissa

The above mentioned groups are mostly found as sub-castes among the Dhanaks of U.P., Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. It may not be out of place to mention here that the *gotras* cannot be associated with different occupations, as stated by Dhanaks in Haryana and Punjab for the reason that as economic specialisation is not possible at the level of *gotra* or clan which is an exogamous unit of a community.

Distribution and Population Trend

As mentioned elsewhere, the Dhanak is treated as a Scheduled Caste in Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Chandigarh, Delhi and Himachal Pradesh wherein the community has been enumeratd in 1961 Census. But from the earlier Census reports and other publications it is seen that in addition to the above areas the Dhanaks are also found in Bihar and Orissa as well. (Risley, *op. cit.*; Census of India, 1931, Vol. VII, 1933 : 274-275.) During the 1961 Census, the Dhanaks returned a population of 163,619 in erstwhile Punjab, 21,524 in Madhya Pradesh, 1,885 in Rajasthan, 224,055 in Uttar Pradesh and 8,540 in Delhi. (C.I. 1961, Vol. I, Part V-A, 1965.) It will thus be seen that the Dhanaks have their largest concentration in Uttar Pradesh followed by the erstwhile Punjab State. According to the 1961 Census, the Dhanaks constituted 3.95 per cent of the total Scheduled Caste population of 4,139,106 persons in the erstwhile Punjab as a whole. As mentioned earlier, the Dhanaks prefer to call themselves as *Julahas*. It is not unlikely that their population is actually more than what has been returned as some of them who might have returned themselves as *Julaha* only would have escaped enumeration as Dhanaks.

The following table gives their population in the various districts of the pre-reorganised State of Punjab as per 1961 Census. (C.I., 1961, Vol. XIII, part V-A, 1965.)

Table showing the district-wise population of the Dhanaks as per 1961 Census

Sl. No.	Name of the district	Population
1	2	3
1.	Ambala	149
2.	Gurgaon	9,599
3.	Hissar	50,044
4.	Karnal	6,161
5.	Mahendragarh	18,971
6.	Rohtak	46,586
7.	Sangrur	12,888
8.	Amritsar	6
9.	Bhatinda	8,120
10.	Ferozepur	9,751
11.	Gurdaspur	1
12.	Hoshiarpur	55
13.	Jullundur	145
14.	Ludhiana	323
15.	Patiala	798
16.	Kangra	13
17.	Simla	9
	Total	**163,619**

From the above table it will be seen that the Dhanaks have their major concentration in the areas transferred to the newly formed Haryana State, as out of 163,619 Dhanaks in the erstwhile Punjab State, about 85% are found in Haryana. Their largest concentration is in Rohtak and Hissar districts which together account for nearly 60% population. In Hissar district their largest population is found in Hansi tehsil (12,365) and in Rohtak district in Gohana tehsil (14,169). A negligible number of persons is found in the Kangra and Simla districts, Nalagarh tehsil of Ambala district and Una tehsil of Hoshiarpur district, which have now been transferred to Himachal Pradesh as well as the portion of the Kharar tehsil of Ambala district which now forms the Chandigarh Union Territory.

Rural-Urban Distribution.—From the 1961 Census data in respect of the erstwhile Punjab, it is seen that out of their total population 163,619—135,662 Dhanaks live in the rural areas, while 27,957 in cities and towns. In other words, their 82.91 per cent population resides in rural areas and 17.09 per cent in urban areas, (C.I. 1961, Vol. XIII, Part V-A, 1965.)

Sex-ratio by Broad age-groups.—Out of 163,619 persons enumerated in 1961, 86,176 are males and 77,443 females, thus having an overall sex-ratio of 889 only. This would suggest that the sex-ratio among the Dhanaks is rather low. But this is broadly in conformity with the sex-ratio of the general population (864) and the Scheduled Caste population of the State as a whole (874) which is markedly less than the sex-ratio of 941 among the general population and 957 in respect of the population of the Scheduled Castes in the country as a whole. (C.I. 1961, Vol. I, part II-A, 1963.) As is to be expected, the sex-ratio among the Dhanaks of the rural areas—905—is higher than in that in the urban areas—869. This does not suggest any significant migrations of Dhanak population from rural to urban areas.

The sex-wise break up of the population of Dhanaks by broad age groups is summed up in the following table :—

Table showing the sex-wise distribution of Dhanaks by broad age groups
(as per 1961 Census data)

Age-groups	Males	Females	Total	Sex-ratio
0—14	41,229 (47.84%)	37,109 (47.92%)	78,338 (47.88%)	900
15—44	32,734 (37.99%)	31,276 (40.39%)	64,010 (39.12%)	955
45 +	12,185 (14.14%)	9,048 (11.68%)	21,233 (12.98%.)	743
Unspecified	28 (0.03%)	10 (0.01%)	38 (0.01%)	357
TOTAL	86,176	77,443	163,619	899

From the above table it is seen that their largest proportion is found in 0—14 age group—in case of the males as well as the females. The next largest proportion of Dhanak population is found in the age group 15—44 and the lowest in the above 45 age group. The proportion of their population in the above three age groups is in keeping with that of the Scheduled Castes for the State as a whole. Their sex-ratio is 900 in 0—14 age group, 955 in 15—44 age group and 743 45+ age group. Thus, the sex-ratio is highest in the reproductive age-group. According to some demographers, the sex-wise distribution of population by age groups is an important aspect of the quality of the population in terms of whether it is progressive, balanced or decaying. But in the absence of information on the birth rate, death rate and migrations, *etc.*, nothing conclusive can be said in this regard. Anyhow, from the following account on population trend it is seen that the Dhanaks have shown a steady increase in their population during the last few decades.

Population Trend

The population figures of the Dhanaks are not available for all the earlier decades of the century in the earlier census reports. In 1911, however, they returned a population of 72,175 from the areas which constituted the erstwhile Punjab State, before its reorganisation in 1966 (C.I. 1911, Punjab, Vol. XIV, Part II, 1912 : 247).

The same population increased to 83,769 in 1921 (C.I. 1921, Vol. XV, Part II, 1922 : 211), registering an increase of 16.06% in the above decade. The population figures for the subsequent decades- 1931, 1941 and 1951—are not available. However, from 1921 to 1961 their population increased from 83,769 to 163,619 showing thereby an increase of 95.32% in the four decades and thus registers more or less a uniform and steady increase.

Physical Characteristics

The earlier accounts on the community hardly furnish any information on their physical features. During the survey conducted for the present study, the Dhanaks did not betray any physical characteristics distinct from those of their neighbouring communities. However, the salient features of height vertex and somatoscopic observations recorded in respect of twenty unrelated adult male Dhanaks are given below :

They are medium to tall statured, the height vertex ranging from 160 cms. to 172.5 cms. with a mean of 166 cms., which falls within the range of medium stature. As regards the skin colour on the face, a large proportion of them have brown skin colour of varying shades- six or (30%) having medium brown colour and thirteen (65%), brown colour. The remaining one person (5%) has somewhat darker colour of chocolate shade. The hair on the head are invariably wavy with generally low waves as sixteen (80%) persons have low waved hair, while only four (20%) have hair with medium waves. Their noses are quite sharp with normal alae or wings. In none of the cases the nose betrayed thickness or flaring of the alae. The depression at the root of the nose is invariably shallow. Their eye slits are always straight without any epicanthic fold. Their faces are oval to round in almost equal proportions; only one individual (5%) has somewhat broad face, which is rather exceptional. Their cheek bones are generally moderately developed, nineteen persons or (95%) having medium cheeks, while one person has prominent cheeks. Their lips are generally of medium thickness, as fifteen or (75%) have medium thick lips, while four or (20%) have somewhat thick lips; the remaining one person or (5%) has thin lips. Their chins are well developed—17 persons (85%) having medium chins and 3 (15%) prominent ones. Prognathism—the projection of jaws or face is absent.

Clan, Family and Kinship

Clan Organization—The Dhanaks in Punjab are sub-divided into numerous exogamous *gots* or clans. They claim that their caste is divided into 52 *gots* but during the course of field investigation for the present study, they could mention only the following 35 *gots* :

1. Banbata
2. Bagrecha—Bagri
3. Bathor
4. Banlia
5. Baurni
6. Bhasor
7. Bomania
8. Bumra
9. Dabla
10. Dagla
11. Dagal
12. Dhedan
13. Dheya
14. Godaya
15. Gondaya
16. Hotala
17. Indora
18. Itkal
19. Kayat
20. Khandelwal or Khanagwal
21. Khattak
22. Khundia
23. Kirar
24. Ladwal
25. Morwal
26. Nandania
27. Naguria
28. Ninania
29. Pacherwal
30. Panwar
31. Pherand
32. Saroha
33. Solanki or Selanki
34. Surlia
35. Turkia

The Dhanaks could not state whether the names of their *gots* follow any principle or procedure of nomenclature. On a deeper probe, however, it came to light that the name of some clans, such as Banlia, Pacherwal, *etc.*, are territorial and derived from the names of the villages or localities where the ancestors of the present members of these clans were residing. Similarly, some of the names of their clans seem to be derived from the primary occupation of their ancestors. Thus, Banbata—literally meaning twisting of fibre, refers to the makers of ropes. From a survey of the above clan names, it is also seen that a few *gots* or clans, such as the Solanki and the Panwar are also found among the Jats and the Rajputs. In fact, the two above mentioned clans are

among the most important ones among the Rajputs. Some of the other *gots* mentioned by Dhanaks are also found among the other castes of the area. The clan Dheya is also a name for a Scheduled Caste notified in Punjab. The Dhanaks belonging to this clan, however, denied any relationship with the above named caste. Though the Dhanak informants could not throw much light on the genesis of their clan names, they mentioned that some of these are supposed to have certain special characteristic features and beliefs associated with them. Thus about the Dheya clan, it is stated that if any child gets some boils in his mouth due to heat or indigestion, he would be cured if a person belonging to that clan blows in his mouth.

There is no hierarchy of status among the different clans and marriage may take with any other. It is, however, said that marriages between the members of Naguria and Khandelwal/Khanagwal clans are avoided. It is believed that these two clans might have split off from one mother clan. Marriage between the members of these two clans is avoided on this ground. But there is another practical aspect of the matter which also should not be overlooked. It is said that Naguria and Khandelwal are numerically the two most dominant clans of the caste and in view of the custom of the caste debarring marriage within one's mother's or father's clan, exchange of boys or girls between these two clans could not have taken place for a long time, without adjustment in the custom itself.

Family and Kinship—In order to gain some insight in the matter of the size and the nature of composition of the family among the Dhanaks the relevant data were collected from eighteen households of Johnpal, a locality situated at the outskirts of the Bhiwani town. The Dhanaks refer to a household as a *Chula*, or a hearth group, which is a unit of production as well as consumption in addition to other attributes. The family being a dynamic institution the nature and composition of a household keeps on changing with events such as birth, marriage, death and partition, *etc.*, which has a bearing on its composition and numerical strength. The dynamic aspect of family and the cyclic changes over the time scale forms an important aspect of study of family and kinship. But the present ethnographic study of rapid survey type which covered almost all the important aspects of the life of the community, does not provide any scope for going into these aspects. The size and the composition of the family among the Dhanaks has been, therefore, studied in a static model at a particular point of time; without going into the cyclic changes over the time scale.

Size of the Family—In 18 households where the composition was studied, the number of members per household was found to be 4.9. A statement giving the distribution of the households by number of members is furnished below :

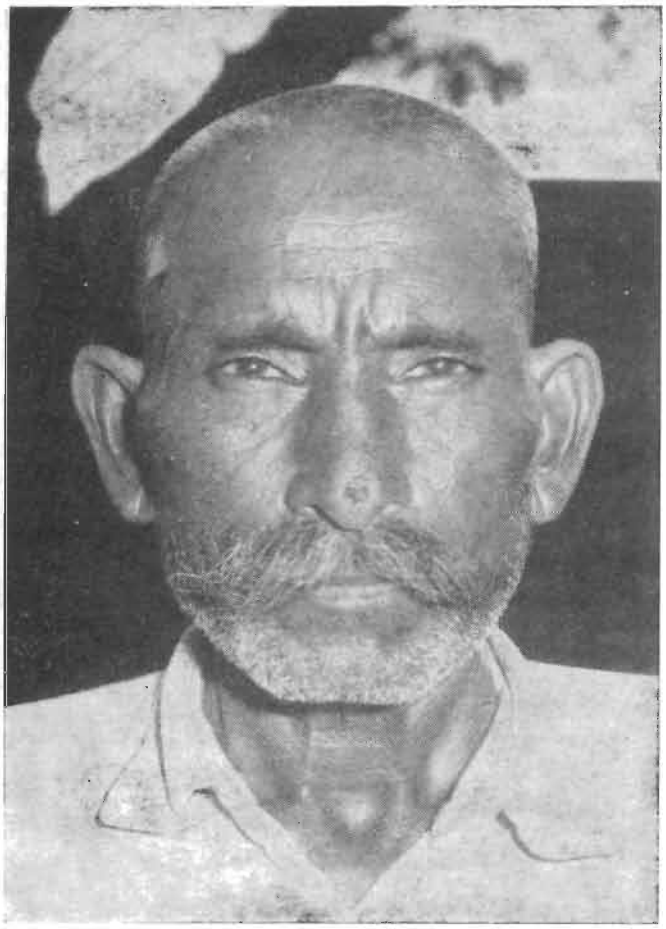
Numerical strength of the households

Number of persons	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Total
Frequency of households	2	1	3	3	4	1	1	—	1	—	2	18
Total No. of persons	2	2	9	12	20	6	7	—	9		22	89

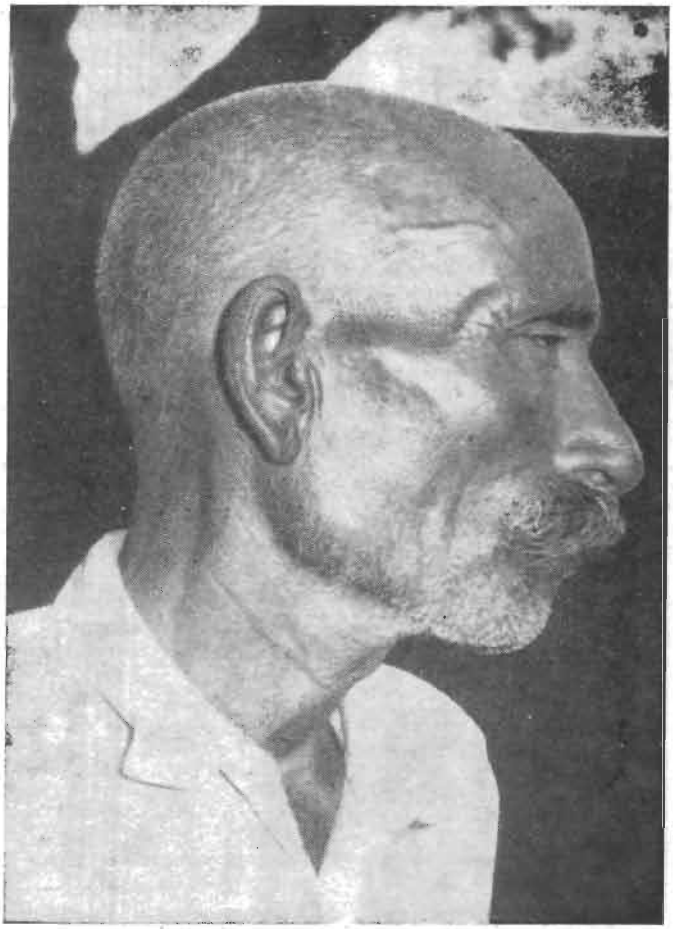
It is seen from the above table that the number of persons per household varies from one to eleven; two households have only one person each; one has two members and there are three households which are having 6, 7 and 9 members each. The largest number of households, *viz.*, 10, or in other words 55.5%, have 3 to 5 persons each. There are two households having the largest number of persons, *viz.*, 11 each. One of these comprised the ego, his wife and their unmarried children—numbering seven, widowed father of the former and the father's brother's son. The other household having 11 persons consisted of the ego, his wife and their three sons, including two married ones with their wives and unmarried children. Thus, as expected, the largest number of persons was found in households of extended type.

The actual composition of the above eighteen households is given in the table below :

Sl. No.	Composition of the household	No. of household	Typology
1	2	3	4
1.	Husband and wife and their unmarried children	6	Nuclear
2.	Widower and his unmarried children	3	Broken nuclear
3.	Widow and her unmarried children	2	Broken nuclear
4.	Widower only . .	2	Broken nuclear
5.	Widower, his widowed mother and his unmarried children	1	Broken nuclear with adhesion
6.	Husband and wife and their unmarried children and the widowed mother of the husband	2	Nuclear with adhesion
7.	Husband and wife and their unmarried children, widowed father of the husband and his father's brother's son	1	Nuclear with adhesion
8.	Husband, wife and their five sons and one daughter, including two married sons and their wives and unmarried son of one of the married brothers	1	Extended (Linear-*cum*-collateral)
	TOTAL . .	18	



1. Front view of a Dhanak male



2. Profile of a Dhanak male



3. *Front view of a Dhanak woman*



4. *Profile of a Dhanak woman*

It is seen that out of the 18 households as many as 13 (72%), are either of nuclear or broken nuclear type, the latter having different configurations. There is one household which can be classified as broken nuclear with adhesion, wherein a widow lived with her widowed son and his unmarried children. There are three households which can be termed as nuclear with adhesion. In two such households a widow is living with her married son, his wife and their unmarried children. Sometimes, somewhat distant relations are found in such a household. Thus in the remaining case of nuclear with adhesion type the husband, wife and their unmarried children are staying with the husband's father and his father's brother's son. There is only one household which is of extended type and that too of linear-cum-collateral. Though, the above data are not adequate enough to hazard any conclusion about the nature of composition of the Dhanak households, it gives some idea about the normative familial institution among them. In fact, as discussed in the following account, the Dhanak informants mentioned that it is their usual custom that soon after his marriage a man sets up a household of his own, though generally in the vicinity of his father's house. It is, however, expected that a married son should maintain his widowed father or widowed mother in his household.

The above synoptic data present only one or two aspects, *viz.*, the size, the composition and typology of the families among the Dhanaks. It would also be interesting to know the spatial kinship relations *inter-se* among the eighteen households. During the present study, therefore, an attempt was made to find out the number of households which were having agnatic or similar relationship with other households in the same locality. It came to light that out of eighteen households as many as ten were having agnatic relations living in the same locality. The heads of the households were related to one another as follows :

(i) Brothers	7 households
(ii) Brother's son or father's brother	1 household
(iii) Brother and father's brother's son	1 household
(iv) Son	1 household

A few case studies relating to the above households are discussed below :

1. Two brothers, named Chandar Dutt, aged 50, and Parbati, aged 60, are living in separate households for the last 30 years. While the former was married at the age of twenty two years, the latter married at the age of twenty. The former is staying with his wife, two minor sons and a daughter, aged 6. On the other hand, the other brother—a widower—is living in a separate household all alone by himself. Asked about the cause of the split, Chandar explained that his father had a very large family of 7 children and the latter himself suggested that his sons should establish separate households for themselves after their marriage, so as to manage their own affairs with their own separate resources.

2. In another case, two brothers—Rachpal, aged 55, and Om Parkash, aged 27, are living in two adjacent houses. The former was married at the age of 16 years and the latter at the age of 20. Rachpal continued to stay in his father's house after marriage. His household now comprises his wife their 7 unmarried children—all below the age of 24 years, and his eighty years old father, as well as his father's brother's son—aged 20—who has been married recently but his marriage has not been consummated as yet. The younger brother, Om Prakash, however, established his own household, including his wife and four unmarried children, below the age of 8 years. It is said that after his marriage he continued to stay in the household of his father and elder brother for some time but later established his own household after 4 years of his marriage, "to manage his own affairs", as he puts it. There was no quarrel or other problem which motivated his separation. It was explained by both the brothers that they separated simply because it was more convenient for them to live separately and manage their own affairs, and in keeping with the general practice in their society of establishing a separate household after marriage.

3. In yet another case of two married brothers living in separate households, the elder brother, 40 years old Ramdas, was married at the age of 30 years—about 10 years ago—and the younger, 20 years old Munar only 3 years ago. The elder brother is living in his nuclear household, compromising himself, his wife and their three sons, aged 16, 14 and 12 and two daughters, aged 10 and 8. The younger brother is, however, maintaining his aged widowed mother in addition to his wife and one year old daughter. It is understood that until recently both the brothers were living in the same household. The reason for separation in this case was rather universal, *viz.*, that the wives of the brothers could not pull on together. According to Ramdas, the elder brother, for their peace of mind and for avoiding unnecessary bickerings among the women-folk, both the brothers amicably arrived at the decision that they should establish separate households of their own.

4. In another household, the son, Ravi Chandar, is living in a separate household, while his father, named Chottu, in another for the last 6 years. The father is 60 years old and supports his wife and three unmarried sons, while the

married son, who is now 30 years old and married 18 years ago, is living with his wife and two infant daughters. Thus, the father and the married son both constitute a nuclear family each. Previously, the latter was staying with the former along with his wife but later on the father and the son decided to have their own separate households, so as not to bear the burden of each other.

5. Another case of an agnatic relation living separately in the same locality relates to a man and his brother's sons. Harphool is a fifty five years old widower who lives with his unmarried son, aged 15 years. His brother's two unmarried sons, the twenty years old Lachman and the ten years old Ramkishan, live in a separate household along with their 60 years old widowed mother in another household. The establishment of the two separate households is of long standing as even Harphool and his brother used to live separately.

The above cases would throw some light on the agnatic relations who despite living in the same locality have established their own households. Usually the agnates establish their own households after marriage, though they do continue to take interest in each other's affairs specially in giving advice and help on such occasion as marriage or similar other important matters.

Having discussed the size and the composition of the Dhanak household; it will be worthwhile to recapitulate the basic attributes of their institution of family.

The Dhanaks reckon descent along the male line in keeping with the strong partilineal traditions among the communities of North India. A woman acquires her husband's *got* after marriage. They are patrilineal, patronymic and patripotestal. The residence after marriage is oriented towards patrilocality but as discussed in the preceding account it is often neolocal, though patri-vicinal, as in most cases a son sets up his own household after marriage. As per tradition, the property is equally divided among the sons,—the daughters having no share in the immovable property. But an unmarried daughter, mother or widowed woman is entitled to maintenance by the father or brothers or sons, as the case may be. There are no hard and fast rules regarding the occasion of the division of the property. The partition may occur during the lifetime of the father or after his demise. In fact, in many cases, the division of ancestral property comes about as a sequel to setting up of a separate household by a married son(s) even during the lifetime of the father. But in such cases the latter retains a share for himself and if he has other dependents, such as an unmarried daughter, he keeps a larger share to meet expenses on the latter's maintenance and marriage.

As has been discussed in details, in the subsequent account, they have strong inclination for having male children, which may perhaps be rooted in their strong patrilineal traditions, in addition to other factors. If a person is unable to beget a son he generally adopts one—usually a boy in arms belonging to his own *got*—preference being given to the nearest agnate. Therefore, a man having no son of his own usually adopts his brother's son or any other close relation. When no kin from amongst the male agnates is forthcoming, only then a somewhat more distant relation is sought for, e.g., when fifty years old Nadir lost all hopes for begetting a son, he adopted his sister's son since there was no boy of suitable age from amongst his agnates. This was, however, an exception rather than the general rule. Their society generally insists on the property being kept among the members of the same clan and its transfer to a member of another one is not cherished, as is the case in adoption of the sister's son who obviously belongs to another clan. In the past, a son was adopted in the presence of five members of the community, usually the members of the Panchayat or other respectable persons, with formal handing over and taking over. This envisaged an agreement whereby all the property of the adopter was vested with the adoptee, subject to the proviso that if subsequent to the adoption the adopter begets a son, he would have the option to grant an equal share in the property to the latter.

It is incumbent upon the adopted son to serve his foster parents in their old age. Usually, the adoption of a son results in his severing the jural relations with the natal family, but, not unexpectedly, the emotional ties persist. However, in order to save the adoptee from emotional conflicts and avoid longing for the natal parents, a boy is adopted when he has just crossed the age of breast suckling. The formal adoption of a son transfers the jural rights and kinship obligations from his natal family to the family in which he has been adopted. His full incorporation in the latter family is reflected in the regulation of matrimonial alliances in the sphere of avoidance and incest. An adopted son can not also marry in the same clan to which his foster parents belong. But at the same time the blood ties with his natal family are not ignored and he has to observe the rules of prohibited degree of relationship and avoidance as he was expected to observe in case he had continued to stay with his natal family. For an adopted person, therefore, the mating circle becomes somewhat limited and restricted.

Though in case of absence of a son, the usual practice is to adopt one, in rare cases a *gharjamain* is also sought for. But according to Dhanaks the latter practice is followed in exceptional cases as their society demands that the

property should be retained within the same clan, which would not be so, if the *ghar-jamain* comes to stay with wife's parents and acquires the property through her. This seems to be substantiated to a certain extent from the analysis of genealogies including, 62 females and 60 males, compiled during the survey which did not show even a single case of *ghar-jamain.*

The kinship system among the Dhanaks is bilateral. Though kins on father's side are more important, some of those on the mother's side, such as the mother's brother, have important ritual and social roles to play, especially during marriages. The affinal kins, however, do not appear to play any important social role.

Settlement and Dwellings

The settlement pattern of Dhanaks does not betray any distinctive feature. In the rural areas, they usually live in separate hamlets, while in the urban ones, they live in *mohallas* (congested localities). In Bhiwani and Rohtak towns, they live in separate clusters or blocks of their own which are extensions of mixed *mohallas*. In Bhiwani, they live in *mohallas* which are adjacent to those of the Brahmins, Khatri, Aroras and the Chamars, etc. But whereas the *mohallas* of the above communities are located inside the Dadri Gate, those of the Dhanaks are situated on the outskirts of the gate, to the exclusion of all other communities. In Rohtak, there are at least three different localities of the Dhanaks. The Purani Sabzi Mandi where they have their major concentration, is adjacent to a locality mostly inhabited by the refugees from West Pakistan, who include Khatris and Hindu Ahluwalia.

Thus, to sum up, in the rural areas as well as the urban areas, though their settlements do not have any distinctive features of their own, these are generally located separately. In the urban areas they have separate *Mohallas,* adjacent to the localities of other communities, though on the outskirts as is the usual practice with the castes of low social status; in the rural areas they generally form hamlets of their own on the outskirts of the village.

In the rural as well as the urban areas the houses of the Dhanaks follow the regional pattern in construction and design, though these are of poor standard and of smaller size as in case of many of the other Scheduled Castes of the region. In the rural areas, their houses are almost invariably or *kacha* type with mud walls and thatched roofs, which may be flat or sloping. In some cases, the roofs are supported with beams and covered with *Sirkis* (wattle mats). The walls and floor are plastered with a mixture of clay, cowdung and straw. In fact, after an interval of a few days, a thin coating of the above items is provided to give a 'finished' look. The houses are single storeyed and usually have only a single apartment though in most of the cases an inner open courtyard is provided. A wooden door opens in the open courtyard which has one or sometimes two hearths for cooking. The courtyard is also used for washing utensils and clothes, etc. During intense heat of summer and rainy season the cooking is, however, done in the main hut itself which serves the multiple purposes of a kitchen, bed room, store room, dining room, etc., all combined into one. There is generally no arrangement for proper ventilation except for a few holes provided in the walls.

The houses of the Dhanaks in the urban areas are mostly *pucca* and flat roofed though there are a few *kacha* houses as well. For instance, in Bhiwani town, both *kacha* as well as *pucca* houses are found. Like the houses in the rural areas, the houses owned by them in the urban areas are single storeyed and mostly having a single apartment. Many Dhanaks, however, live in rented single or double apartments in larger buildings.

In the rural as well as the urban areas, the Dhanaks generally do not have bath rooms or latrines attached to their huts or houses. For defecation they go out in the open fields. The males usually take their bath near a water source—may be a well or hand pump or a tap. The females, however, take bath inside the courtyard of their house, behind a shelter of a cot over which a sheet of cloth is spread, to ensure some privacy.

Dress and Ornaments

The traditional dress of the adult Dhanak males consists of a *kurti* (shirt) on the upper part of the body and a *dhoti* on the lower part, tied around the waist and hanging up to the ankles, as well as a *safa* (headgear). They generally pronounce *dhoti* as *dhotri.* Some men also put on *angarkha* which is a vest-like short shirt

The traditional dress of the females comprises of a *kameez* (long collarless shirt) put on the upper part of the body and *ghagra,* (a sort of petticoat with many folds) made from 12 to 18 metres long cloth. Sometimes instead of the *ghagra,* a *lehnga* is put on, which is somewhat shorter in length and has less folds than the *ghagra* and, therefore, requires less cloth. An *orna,* comprising a long piece of cloth, is used as a headgear. This is put over the right shoulder and after covering the head is allowed to drop on the left shoulder, the remaining portion hanging at the back. Some old women put an *angi* or *tani* which are sort of indigenous brassiers of larger size. Most of the adult Dhanaks, specially in the rural areas, still wear the dress described above. But a certain change is perceptible in the case of the younger generation, and more so in the urban areas. Thus, the

youths and the young men often put on shirts or bushirts with trousers, without any headgear. The young girls have taken over to *shalwar* (beggy trousers), *kurti* (shirt) and *chunni*, to cover breasts, replacing the *orna*. Some fashionable women are also seen putting on *sarees* and blouses, the latter over the modern brassiers. Infants males as well as females wear shirts and underwears only.

While the young men, especially in the town, put on modern shoes, the elderly males put on *jutti* (an indigenous country-made leather shoe) as footwear, the females and infants generally go bare-footed, though the former may sometimes put on chappals while going to the market or attending any function, such as a marriage. They do not have any special dress for their important ceremonial occasions, such as a birth or marriage in the family. On these occasions, they put on their used dress but of a slightly better quality of cloth and properly washed and starched as well. They also specially put on a headgear of a bright colour, such as orange, red, green or yellow.

Ornaments. The ornaments are generally used by the females. The ornaments put on the nose are generally made of gold, while those put on the other parts of the body are of silver or some alloy. The ornaments for nose include a *koka* (nose pin), *nath* (nose ring) and *purli* (nose stud). The other ornaments, which are generally made of silver, are *boojli* (ear-ring); *hansli* (necklace); *karula, chand, bacheli* (varieties of bracelets); *tade* or *bajuband* (armlets), *anguthi* (finger-ring) and *kari, chelkari, pati, neoari, chelkara* (varieties of anklets). It is rare that all the ornaments are put on daily. The full collection of ornaments of a woman are sort of a personal prized collection which is only displayed fully on such occasions as marriage. The unmarried girls and widows are not allowed to use all the above ornaments. While the unmarried girls generally put on a *koka* or *boojli*, the widows are allowed to put on a *borla* only; which is put on the forehead.

The Dhanak males rarely put on any ornament. They, however, sometimes put on a *murki* (ear-ring) made of gold. However, even this is put on by old persons only. The young men, specially the youths in the towns, detest personal use of any ornament, as it is considered old fashioned.

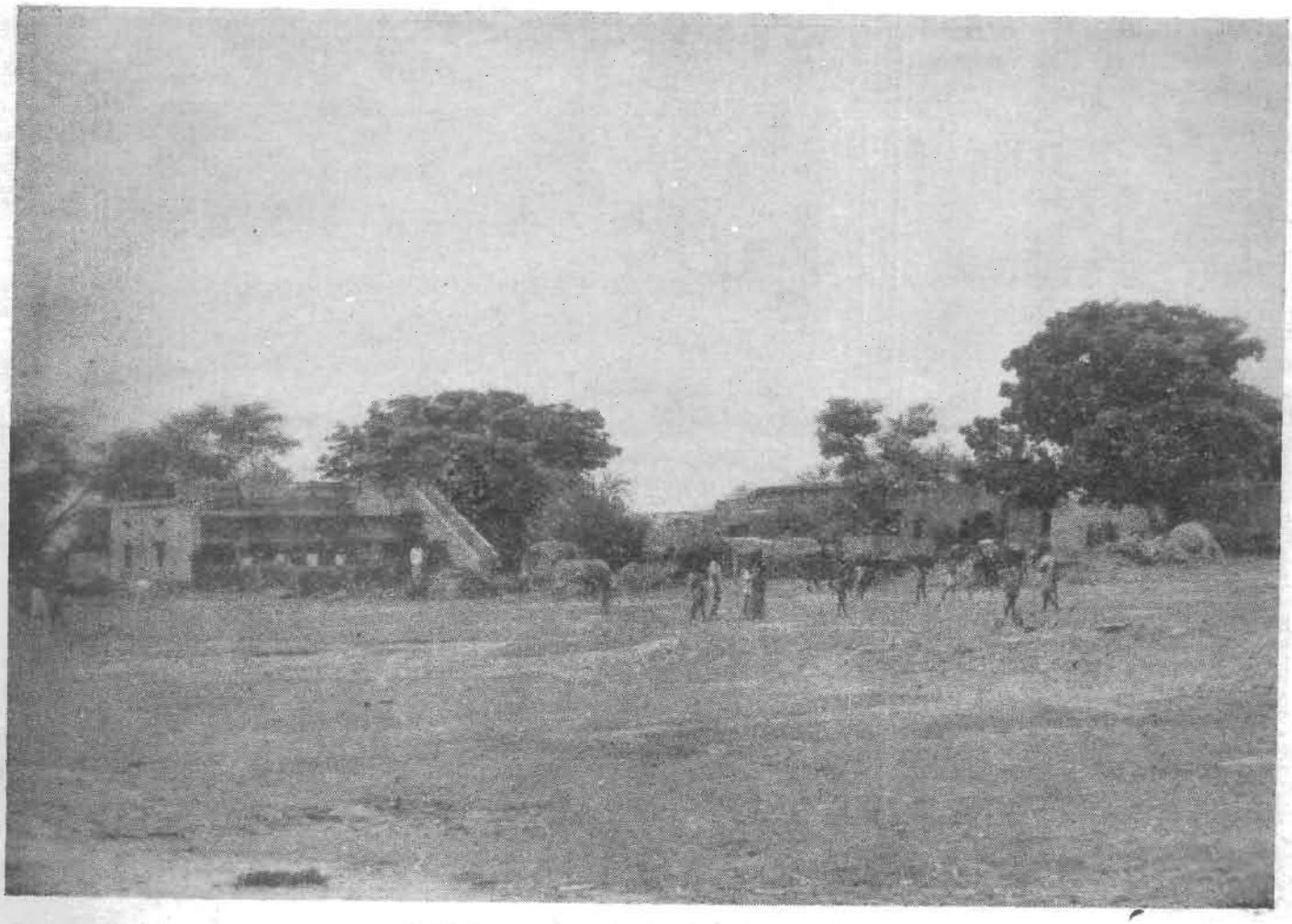
Most of the ornaments discussed above are manufactured by the jewellers and are purchased from the nearby towns or markets. The *borla*, which is put on at the parting of the hairs on the forehead, is, however, generally made by the Dhanak females themselves at home from a card-board which is cut into small pieces, circular in form, and decorated with some silken cloth and studded with cheap stones.

Food and Drink

The Dhanaks are non-vegetarians and take mutton, fish and eggs. According to Crooke, (*op. cit.*), in addition to mutton and fish, they also take pork as well as the flesh of cloven footed animals. But according to Russel, (*op. cit.*) they abstain from taking fowls and pork. However, the Dhanaks discussed in this monograph appear to have no inhibition for taking pork though they invariably denied taking beef as well as the flesh of cloven footed animals. But although they relish the non-vegetarian dish, they cannot always afford it. They have devised a special measure for occasionally enjoying such dishes. They usually do not purchase mutton, etc. from the market. Instead, when there is consensus among the neighbours or friends to take mutton on a particular day, it is reported that a few of them jointly purchase a goat and one of them slays it with a knife. The person who kills the goat is given its head and the skin, in addition to his normal share for the labour put up by him. By this procedure the dish of mutton is enjoyed by more persons at a lesser cost. But even by following this procedure, it is only occasionally that they take mutton or other non-vegetarian dishes.

Their staple diet is a dish of the pulse which is usually taken with *chappatis* (bread of unleavened flour), prepared from wheat or gram flour. Sometimes, the flour is prepared from maize, specially in winter. For the sake of variety, however, they take different varieties of pulses, such as *urad, moong, arhar,* and *malika masur etc.* Occasionally, they prepare a dry vegetable—usually potato, curry or a seasonal leafy vegetable. Non-vegetarian food is prepared on special occasions or while entertaining guests. They generally take three meals a day. The first meal or breakfast, locally known as *kalwala,* is taken earlier in the morning. This consists of *chappatis,* pickle and raw onion, taken along with tea. Excepting the tea these items are actually the left overs from the dinner prepared the day before, and that is why it is referred to as *kalwala* (of yesterday) The second meal, which is their principal meal, is prepared during the morning and taken at noon. The third meal, which is taken rather early between, 7.30 to 8 p.m., is prepared in the after-noon or in the evening and more or less comprises the same items as the lunch. There may be slight change for the sake of variety in the sense that the dinner may include a different variety of pulse from the one taken at lunch.

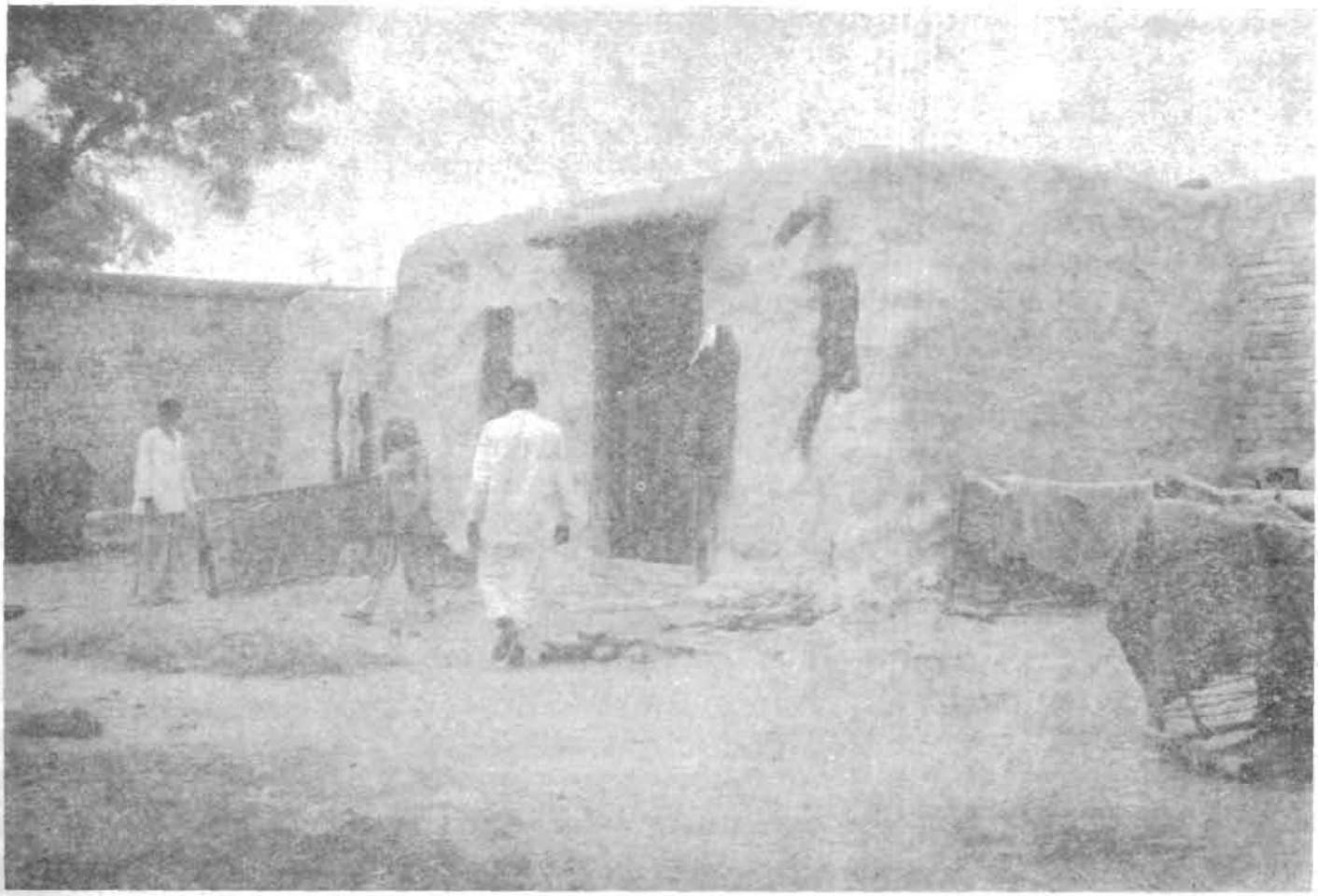
The meals are prepared on a *chullah* (hearth) for which they use cowdung cakes and dry grass as fuel. They believe that the dishes cooked over the fuel of cowdung cakes taste better than those cooked on the fuel of coal or firewood. The meals are generally prepared by women, specially the



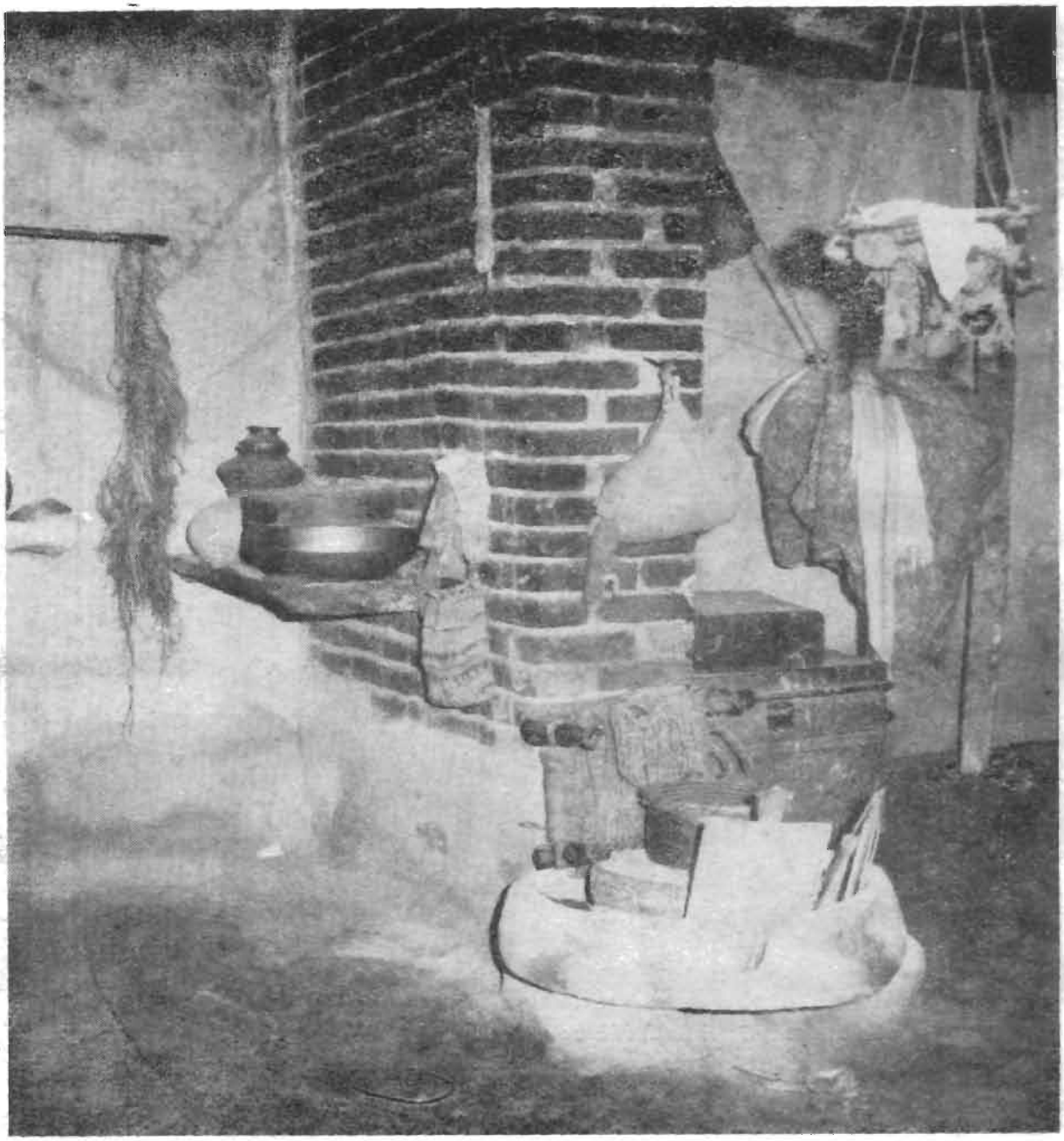
5. A distant view of a hamlet of Dhanaks



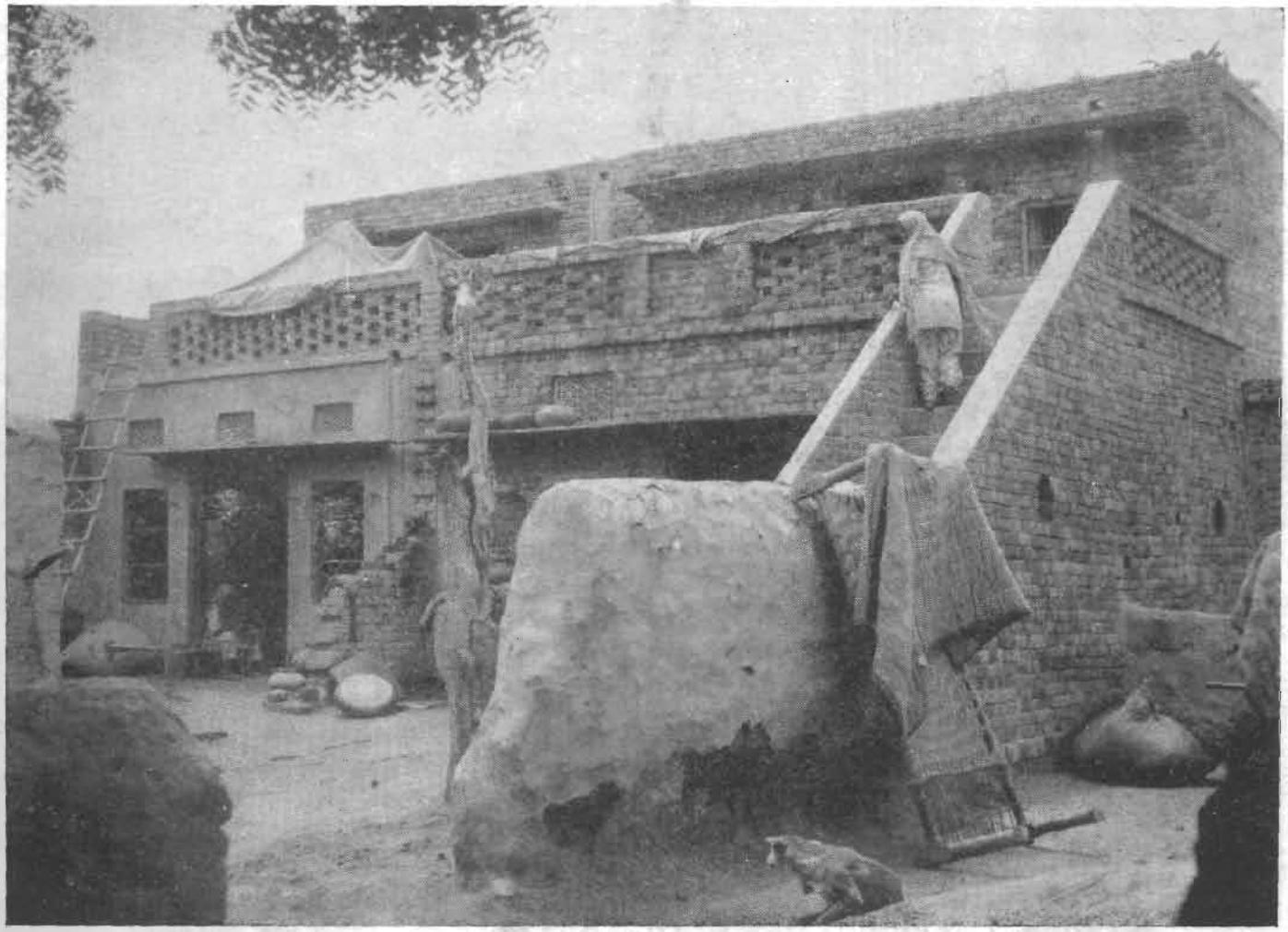
6. A view of a Dhanak locality in a town



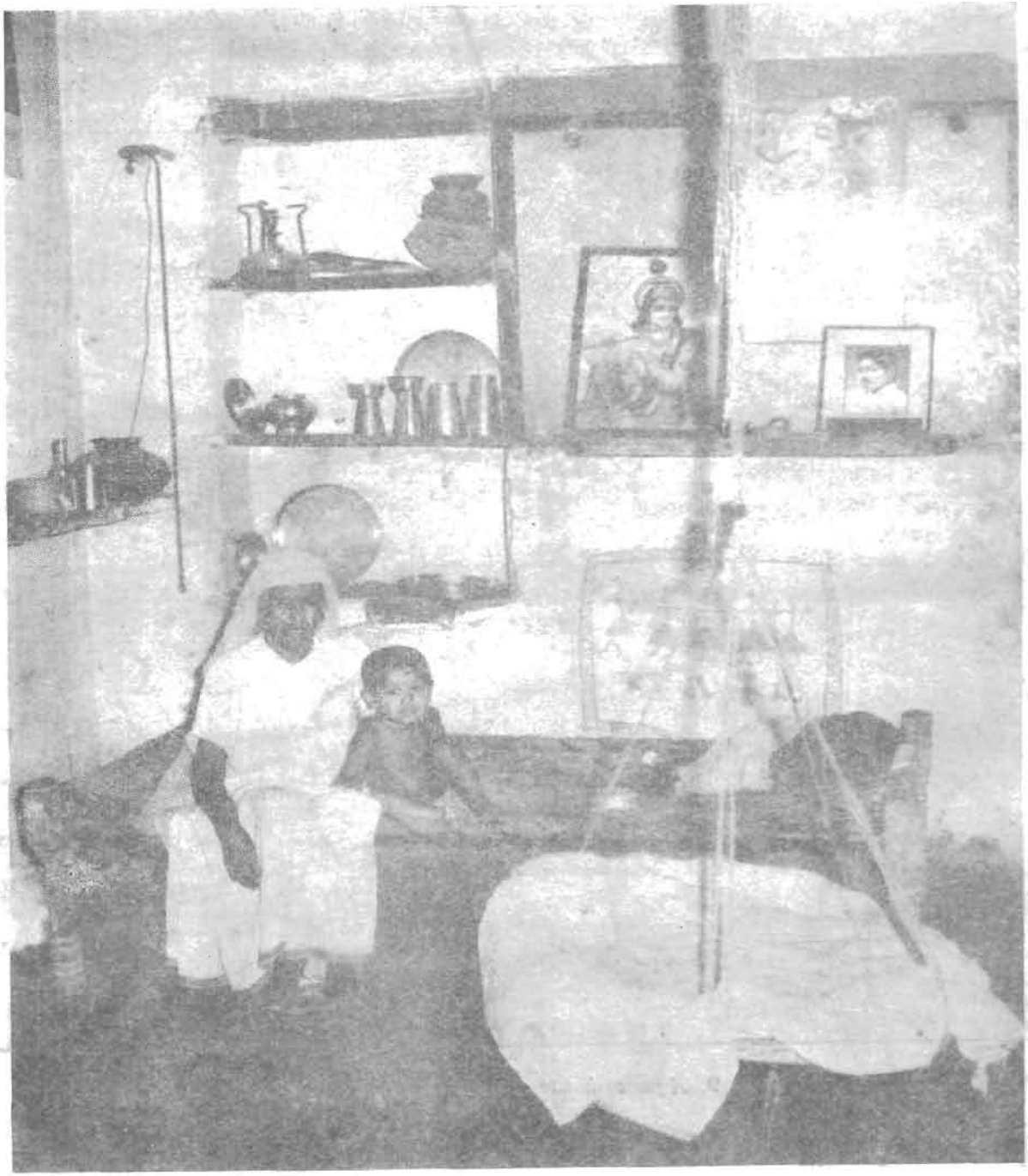
7. A kacha house of a Dhanak in a village



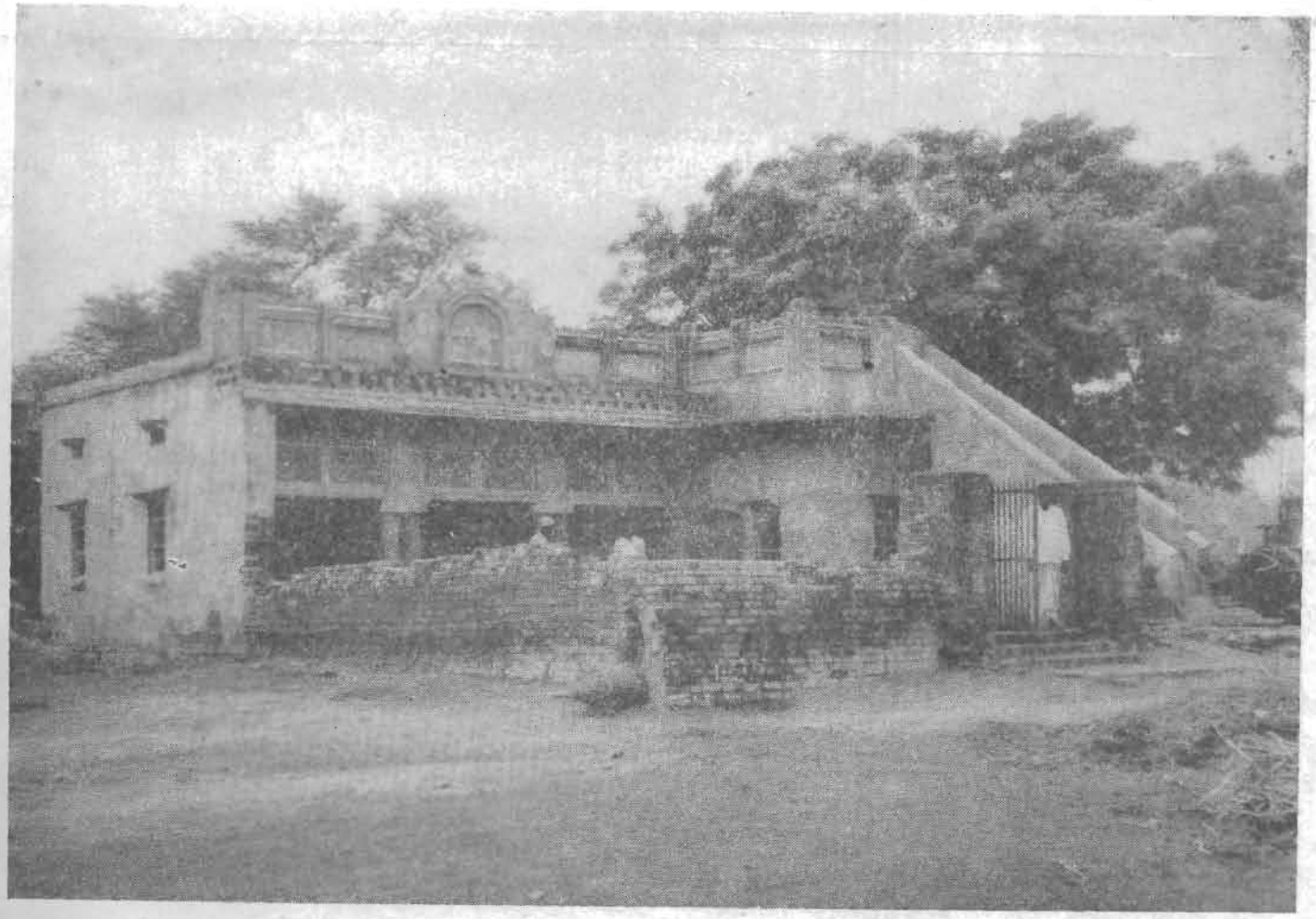
8. *Interior view of a Dhanak house in a village*



9. A pucca house of a Dhanak in a town



10. *Interior view of a Dhanak house in a town*



11. *Community hall of Dhanaks in a village*



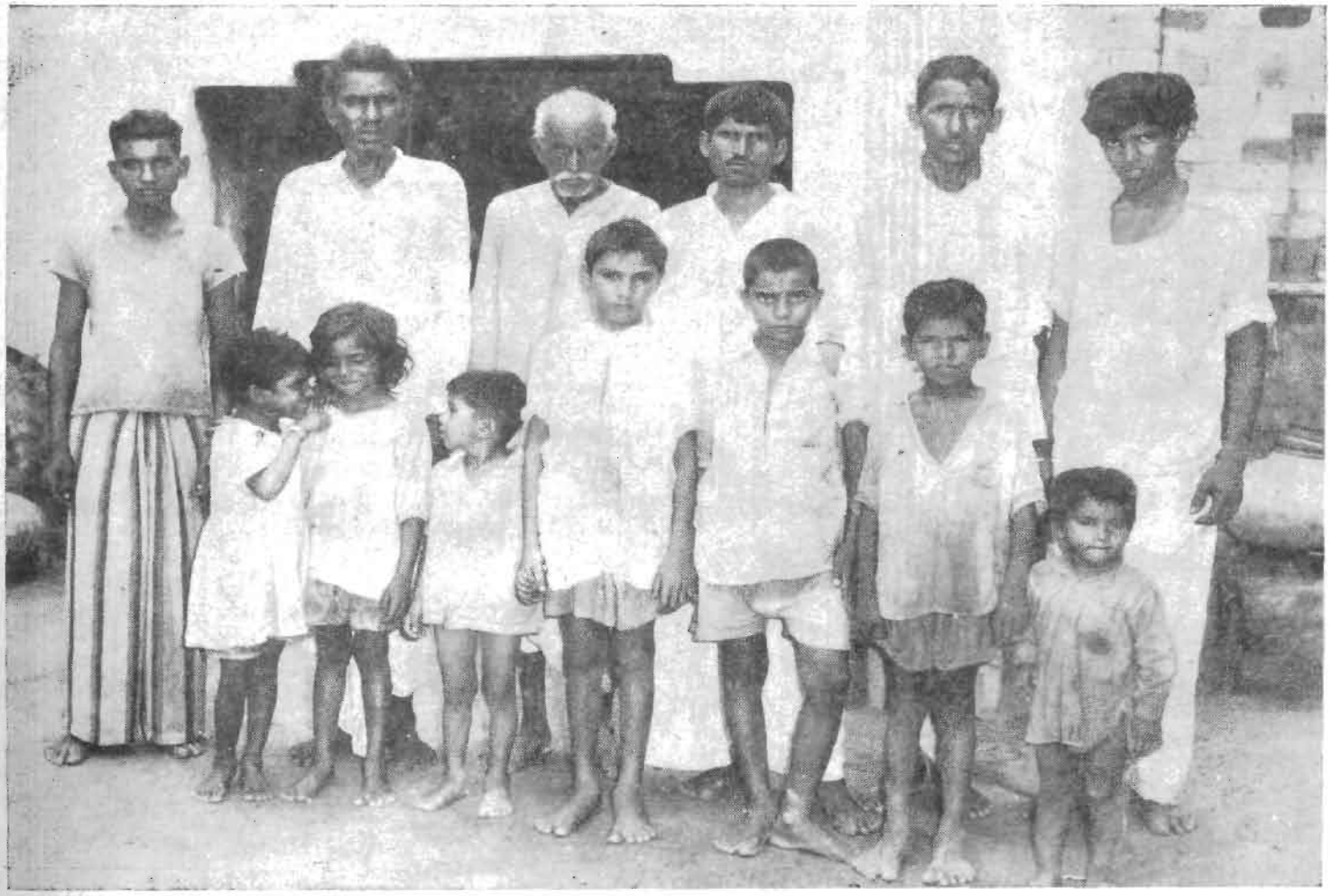
12. *A section of a Dhanak settlement in a town*



13. *A Dhanak male in his day-to-day dress*



14. *A Dhanak woman in her day-to-day dress*



15. *A group of Dhanak males and children in their day-to-day dress*



16. *Dhanak women and children in their day-to-day dress and ornaments*

married ones, who serve the children and males first. But there is no bar against women taking meals with the males. In fact, sometimes men and women are seen taking their meals together.

Utensils—For cooking food an average Dhanak household possesses a few utensils. These include *topia* (brass kettle), used for cooking pulses or vegetable curries; a *karchhi,* (a brass laddle for stirring and serving dishes); a few *kachola* or *beli,* which are small tea plates of brass for serving dishes; a few *thalis* (brass plates) in which food is served; a few *gilas,* which are brass tumblers used for drinking water or tea and *gadwi* (a brass pot) for serving water and tea, *etc.*

According to earlier scholars, such as Risley and Crooke (*op. cit.*) the Dhanaks are fond of drinking liquor. But during the field investigation conducted among the Dhanaks, they denied that they are specially fond of liquor or addicted to the same. They mostly smoke tobacco, usually the *hookah* (*hubble bubble*) or *chilam, bidis* and cigarettes. The *hookah* is generally enjoyed by elderly people whereas the cigarette and *bidi* by younger folk. Women are rarely seen smoking.

Language and Literacy

Language—The Dhanaks do not have any language which can be regarded as distinctive of their own community. They generally speak the regional language or dialect of the areas inhabited by them. In Haryana they mostly speak the Haryana *bhasha,* a dialect of Hindi.

Literacy and Education—According to 1961 Census returns, only 6.72 per cent Dhanaks are literates. Compared to 24.21 per cent literacy among the general population and 9.64 per cent literacy among the Scheduled Castes of Haryana and Punjab as a whole, it clearly demonstrates their educational backwardness. Not unexpectedly, there is a sharp difference in the sex-wise distribution of literacy. While the literacy among the males is 12.25 per cent, the same is only 0.56 per cent among the females. The possible reasons for negligible literacy among the Dhanak females have been discussed in a subsequent account. Likewise, the progress of literacy is poor in the rural areas as compared to urban ones, there being 5.94 per cent literates in the former areas against 10.52 per cent in the latter. The above data would indicate that the literacy among the Dhanaks is quite discouraging and far from being satisfactory. Furthermore, the literacy in the rural areas is half the literacy in the urban areas, which is indicative of the fact that the education has not so far made much headway among the Dhanaks of the rural areas.

The following table throws light on the different educational standards achieved by the Dhanak literates in Haryana and Punjab as per 1961 Census data :

Table showing various educational levels achieved by the Dhanaks of Punjab as per 1961 *Census data (C.I* 1961, *Vol. XIII, Part V-A(i)*, 1965

Educational Standard	Total			Rural			Urban		
	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Total population	163,619	86,176	77,443	135,662	71,221	64,441	27,957	14,955	13,002
2. Illiterates	152,624	75,618	77,006	127,608	63,464	64,144	25,016	12,154	12,862
3. Literates	10,995 (100·00)	10,558 (100·00)	437 (100·00)	8,054 (100·00))	7,757 (100.00)	297 (100·00)	2,941 (100·00)	2,801 (100·00)	140 (100·00)
4. Literates (without any educational level)	6,353 (57·78)	6,011 (56·93)	342 (78·26)	4,750 (58·98)	4,502 (58 04)	248 (83·50)	1,603 (54·50)	1,509 (53·87)	94 (67·14)
5. Primary or Junior Basic	4,227 (38·44)	4,132 (39·14)	95 (21·74)	3,008 (37·35)	2,959 (38·15)	49 (16·50)	1,219 (41·45)	1,173 (41·88)	46 (32·86)
6. Matriculation or Higher Secondary	408 (3·71)	408 (3·86)	.. .	296 (3·67)	296 (3·81)	. ..	112 (3·81)	112 (4·00)	.. ..
7. Technical Diploma not equal to Degree	4 (0·04)	4 (0·04)	.. ..	.. ..	. .	.. ..	4 (0 14)	4 (0·14)	.. ..
8. Non-technical Diploma not equal to Degree	.	..	..	.	..	..		..	..
9. University Degree or post-Graduate Degree other than Technical Degree	3 (0·03)	3 (0·03)	.. .	.. ..	. .	.. ..	3 (0·10)	3 (0·10)	.. ..
10 Technical Degree or Diploma equal to Degree or Post Graduate Degree	.	.	.			..	.	..	..

It is seen from the above table that the bulk—10,280 or 96.22 per cent—of the Dhanak literates have either not achieved any educational level at all and are merely supposed to read or write a letter or have only attained primary or junior basic level. Of these, more than half 6,353 or 57.78 per cent- -fall in the first category, while 4,227 or 38.44 per cent in the second. Only 408 (3.71 per cent) Dhanaks have attained the matriculation or higher secondary level. The post matriculation education among the Dhanaks is almost negligible since only 4 persons are holders of technical diploma not equal to degree and three who are holding a graduate or post-graduate university degree. These handful of 7 persons are all from the urban areas. There is none among them who possessed a non-technical diploma or technical degree or diploma equal to degree, graduate or post-graduate. The most significant point is that there is not a single female who has crossed the threshold of matriculation or higher secondary.

The poor standard of educational attainment of the Dhanaks recapitulated in the above paragraphs would perhaps throw some light on their adherence to their traditional occupations and their limited employment potential in jobs and services of higher levels, which require some formal education.

During the course of the present study, the Dhanaks reiterated their interest in the formal education and almost invariably expressed a positive desire to educate their sons. In fact, during the survey (1968), quite a few graduates or post-graduates were reported among them which indicates that during the last eight years or so they have made fairly good progress in the field of education. But they have still a long way to go. Neverthless, the Dhanak parents complained that they were unable to provide higher education to their children as they cannot meet the expenses for purchasing books and meeting other sundry charges demanded by the school or college authorities. The subsequent account would indicate that it is a common feature for the Dhanak children to drop out from the school soon after getting admission or after achieving primary level.

Almost complete illiteracy among the females is, however, to be looked for in other directions than mere pecuniary circumstances of their parents. Here, their educational lag is more due to the antipathy of the Dhanak community towards female education than lack of educational opportunities. The stock argument put forth by Dhanak informants is, "why should our daughters need any education, when they do not have to join any post or service". This is well illustrated by the data provided in the following pages :

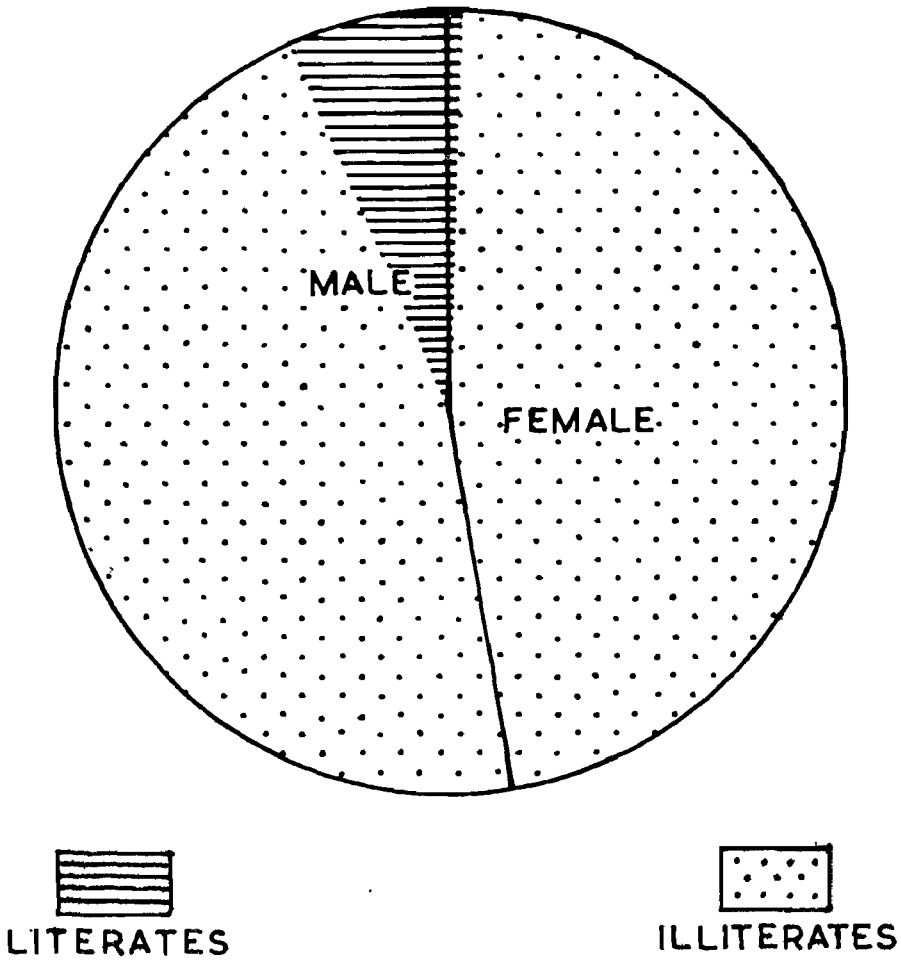
An enquiry was made in ten households having children of school-going age (in the age group 6—14) about the attitude of the Dhanak parents towards education of their children as well as certain other aspects of their education. These included 26 children,—14 males and 12 females. The sex-wise breakup of those children who were attending school at the time of the survey and those who were not is given in the table below :

Age-group	Attending School			Not attending school		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
6—7 .	1	Nil	1	3	4	7
8—10 .	4	1	5	1	4	5
11—14 .	4	Nil	4	1	3	4
6—14 .	9	1	10	5	11	16

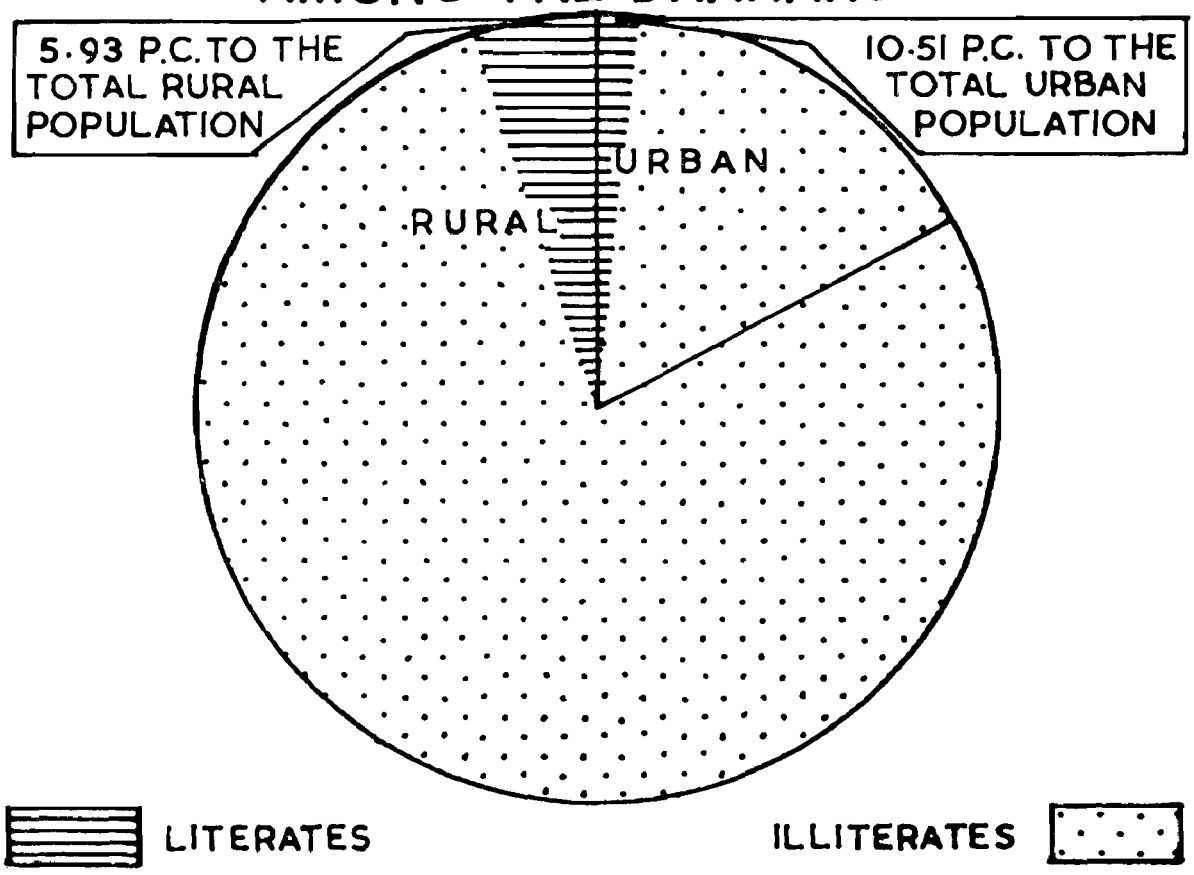
It will be worthwhile to highlight a few interesting facts brought out by the figures given in the above table. Out of the 26 children in the age group 6—14 covered in the sample only 10, or in other words 38.4 per cent, were attending schools. These included nine males and only one female. In other words, while 64.2 per cent of the male children in the above age group were attending schools, only 8.3 per cent female children were attending school in the same age group. These figures would confirm the neglect of female education as revealed by the 1961 Census data; discussed above. Further, out of the eight children in the age group 6-7, only one boy was attending school. This would suggest that the children join school rather late. The largest number of children attending school was found in the age group 8-10 as out of ten children, five or 50 per cent were students in the age group 11—14, the number of school-going children goes down to four.

Eight of the above ten households had children of both the sexes, while one each had either male or female children only. Out of these ten households, four households did not send their children to school at all. These included one household having female children only, and three which included children of both the sexes. The former household was having two girls in the school-going age group, one aged eight and the other six. These were the elder children of their parents. Out of the six households who were sending at least one of their children to the school, one household was having male children only. Of the remaining five households only one household sent one of the female children, aged eight, to the school at the age of six. At the time of survey she was studying in second standard. She was younger of the two school going children; her elder brother, aged fourteen, was also studying in a school.

LITERACY BY SEX AMONG THE DHANAKS



RURAL/URBAN LITERACY AMONG THE DHANAKS



Reasons for not sending the children to school.— As mentioned elsewhere, there were 5 boys in the age group 6—14 who were not attending any school. In case of 3, aged 6 or 7, their parents mentioned that they were too young to go to the school. Of these, one boy was second and two were fourth in order of birth among their siblings. In another case, it was stated that the boy, who was 11 years old, was required to help his father in making bricks in a kiln. Yet in another case, it was stated that it was not possible to educate the boy, who was third in order of birth among the siblings, because the head of the household could not afford his education due to the large size of his family.

As regards the female children, out of 12 girls covered in the above sample, only 1 was studying in the school. The reasons for not sending them to school as given by their parents were as follows :

In case of two girls, aged 13 and 10, who were sisters it was stated by their father that he could not afford their education due to his large family and meagre income. In case of six girls it was stated by their parents that they were not in favour of girl's education. In this connection one of the parents stated, "there is no use in educating the girls when they are not to join any service". Yet another reason advanced in case of two more girls was, "helping their parents in their work". Only in case of one girl, aged 8 years, who was the eldest child of her parents, it was stated that she would be soon admitted to the school. But no specific reason was advanced for her not attending the school, even after attaining the age of eight.

As to the activities of the children not attending school, it was stated by the heads of three households that their children assisted them in making bricks in a kiln. These included two girls who were sisters and one boy. Only in one household it was mentioned that one girl, aged 12 years, helped her mother in her household chores.

The data relating to age at admission in the school in respect of 9 boys and one girl from the above 10 households bring forth the following features :

Out of the 9 boys, 4 were admitted to school at the age of 6 years each. Of these, one each belonged to third and fourth order and two first in order of birth among their siblings. Three boys were admitted when aged 7. Of these, two were first and one third in order of birth among their siblings. Two of these lived in one household,—being brothers. Two more boys were admitted in the school at the age of 8 years. Of these, one was first and the other third in order of birth among their siblings. These two were also brothers. As regards the solitary girl, who was aged 6 when first admitted to the school, she was second in order of birth among her siblings.

The class up to which the above children had studied at the time of survey had also been recorded. The following table gives their birth order among the siblings and sex-wise distribution :

Birth order and education of Dhanak Children

Birth Order	Boys					Girls				
	Number who read upto class					Number who read upto class				
	I	II	III-IV	V-VI	VII-VIII	I	II	III-IV	V-VI	VII-VIII
1st	..	..	2	2	1	..	1	..	..	..
2nd	..	.	..	..	..	.	..	..	..	..
3rd	2	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
4th	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	.	..
	2	2	2	2	1	..	1	..		

The above table shows that two boys were studying in class 1. Both were third in order of birth among their siblings. Another two boys were studying in second class, one of them being third, and the other fourth in the order of birth among their siblings. Yet two more were studying in class III or IV. Both were the first born children of their parents. Two other boys were reading in 5th or 6th class, both belonging to the first order of birth among their siblings. Only one boy was studying in 8th class and happened to be the first born child of his parents.

As regards the only girl admitted in a school, she was a student of 2nd class, and second in order of birth among her siblings.

The above figures would indicate that there is, perhaps a correlation between the order birth and educational activity. The children who were first in order of birth, it appears, get some preferential treatment from their parents in the matter of education. But these figures are hardly adequate to warrant a generalisation in respect of the community as a whole.

It also came to light during the survey, that though all the children enjoyed full-fee concession, only a few joined classes in the middle standard after passing primary, and fewer still continued their study up to matriculation. Sometimes, they even discontinued study without completing the course, *e.g.*, fourteen years old Shera, the eldest child of his parents, joined school at the age of six but after studying upto class III stopped going to school as he fell ill. Since then, he has not resumed his studies. He was reported to be suffering from recurring fainting fits at the time of the survey.

Occupation and Economic Life

Workers and non-workers among the Dhanaks —The following table gives the sex-wise breakup of the workers and non-workers among the Dhanaks in rural and urban areas as per 1961 Census data :

Table showing the workers and non-workers among the Dhanaks

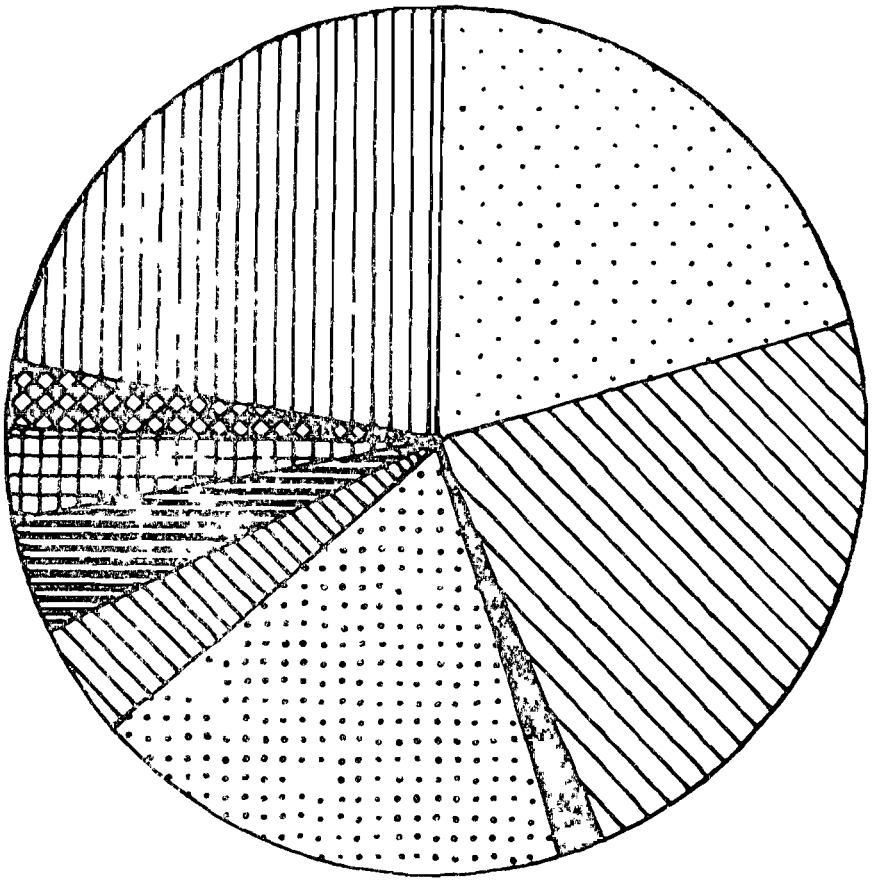
Area	Workers			Non-workers			Total		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
Rural	37,745	16,234	53,979	33,476	48,207	81,683	71,221	64,441	135,662
Urban	7,245	1,297	8,542	7,710	11,705	19,415	14,955	13,002	27,957
TOTAL	44,990	17,531	62,521	41,186	59,912	101,098	86,176	77,443	163,619

It is seen from the above table, that out of 163,619 persons only 62,521 persons, or in other words 38.21% Dhanaks, are workers. Of these, 53,979 are workers in the rural areas and 8,542 in the urban areas. The percentage of workers to their total population in the rural areas is slightly higher—39.7%—than the overall percentage of workers—(38.21%) among the Dhanaks as a whole. On the other hand, in the urban areas, the percentage of workers to their total population is 30.6% only.

It is observed that when compared with workers among the Scheduled Castes in the country as a whole (47%), the percentage of workers among the Dhanaks is low. But when a comparison of working force among the Dhanaks is made with the workers among Scheduled Caste population in Haryana and Punjab as a whole, it is found that the percentage of workers—35.10—among the latter is actually lower than that among the former. This would indicate that the proportion of the workers among the Scheduled Castes in these regions is lower than the average for the Scheduled Castes in the country as a whole, *prima facie* suggesting a higher dependency rate among the former.

As regards the sex-wise breakup of workers, 44,990 or 52.21 per cent of the 86,176 males and 17,531 or 22.64 per cent of the 77,443 females among the Dhanaks are workers. The fewer number of female workers might have contributed to the comparatively low ratio of workers among the Dhanaks. This appears to be rather surprising, as from the earlier accounts on the community as well as the present investigation it is seen that their women-folk play an important role in contributing towards family income and some are engaged in outdoor economic activity as well. Apart from assisting their men-folk in various other economic activities, the Dhanak women specialise as mid-wives and are employed in this capacity in the villages and towns. In fact, this occupation is almost a monopoly of Dhanak women. It appears that as in the case of some other communities in rural India, the low participation rate of females does not depict the correct picture. The women-folk who might be actually participating in economic activity and contributing to the family earnings are not always returned as workers, as their participation in economic activity is not considered prestigious. In the case of Dhanaks there is a definite evidence that in the wake of social mobility or social reform movements—their caste council took a decision in third decade of the century to the effect that their women-folk should not engage themselves in outdoor economic activity and stop working in the fields of their Jat and Ahir *Jajmans*. Thus, in the case of Dhanaks, their reluctance in admitting their women-folk as being economically active can be traced to the

INDUSTRIAL CLASSIFICATION OF WORKERS AMONG THE DHANAKS



LEGEND: AS CULTIVATOR. AS AGRICULTURAL LABOURER. IN MINING, QUARRYING, LIVE STOCK, FORESTRY PLANTATION, ORCHARDS AND ALLIED ACTIVITIES. AT HOUSE-HOLD INDUSTRY. IN MANUFACTURING OTHER THAN HOUSE-HOLD INDUSTRY. IN CONSTRUCTION. IN TRADE AND COMMERCE. IN TRANSPORT, STORAGE AND COMMUNICATION. IN OTHER SERVICES.

attempts on the part of the community to raise itself in social status as has been discussed in details in a subsequent account.

The industrial classification of the persons at work—A table giving the industrial classification of the persons at work among the Dhanaks as returned during 1961 Census is given below :

Table showing the industrial classification of workers among the Dhanaks

(based on 1961 Census data)

Industrial classification				Percentage of workers to total population/percentage of workers engaged in industrial category to total workers		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
Total Population	86,176	77,443	163,619	..	..	.
Total workers	44.990	17,531	62,521	52·21	22·64	38 21
I As cultivator	9,139	6,230	15,369	20·31	35·54	24·58
II As agricultural labourer	10,423	4,100	14,523	23·17	23 39	23. 23
III In mining, quarrying, livestock, forestry, plantation, orchards and allied activities	652	89	741	1·45	0·51	1·19
IV At household industry	8,235	3,709	11,944	18·31	21·16	19·10
V In manufacturing other than household industry	1,853	499	2,352	4·12	2·85	3·76
VI In construction	1,965	215	2,180	4·37	1·22	3·49
VII In trade and commerce	1,464	449	1,913	3·25	2·56	3·06
VIII In transport storage and communication	1,225	23	1,248	2 72	0·31	2.00
IX In other services *	10,034	2,217	12,251	22·30	12·64	19·59
1 Tanning and currying of hides and skins	95	32	127	0·21	0·18	0·20
2. Scavenging	34	62	96	0·08	0·35	0 15

*Also includes figures given in the columns against items 1 & 2

It is seen from the above table that the Dhanaks are found engaged in diverse types of occupations. Apart from the reason of occupational mobility, this is a reflection of their association with a variety of occupations from the very beginning as discussed earlier. The largest proportion of their workers is engaged as cultivators, followed by agricultural labourers. But the largest proportion of male workers is engaged as agricultural labourers. Interestingly enough, the percentage of cultivators among the females is higher than that among the males. Those who are engaged in agricultural sector in the capacity of cultivators of agricultural labourers, account for 47.81% of the total working force. Next to these, the other industrial category which attracts Dhanak workers is "Other Services". This includes government servants, peons in various institutions, employees in textile mills working as weaving masters, etc., printers, musicians, and their women-folk as *dais*. Almost an equal number of workers, which comprise one-third women workers, is engaged in household industry. These are mostly weavers who work on handlooms installed in their homes and comprise 19.10% of the working force. Next in order, comes the industrial category of construction, which accounts for 3.49% workers. This mainly relates to the persons who are engaged in making bricks of clay at kilns. The remaining 11.32% workers are dispersed in various other industrial categories, *viz.*, mining, quarrying, etc., trade and commerce, transport and communication and in some special occupations, such as tanning of hides as well as sweepers and scavengers. When the above statistics of their occupational pattern are seen in the light of the discussion on their traditional occupation towards the beginning of the monograph, it is noted that some occupational mobility has taken place among the Dhanaks, particularly in favour of occupations which are considered better and more prestigious, such as cultivation. But it may be mentioned that the Census data on occupational pattern of Dhanaks do not reveal the full picture, as the same provide information on the main occupations of the workers and do not throw any light on the subsidiary occupations, which sometimes have a significant bearing on the economic life of a community. During the survey conducted in connection with the present study, it was found that in some cases the households which returned cultivation or agricultural labour as their main occupation in some cases derived more income from the other subsidiary occupations, including scavenging. But as the last named occupation is indicative of a low social status it is not highlighted. In fact, it was found that in a few cases where the members

of a household primarily made earnings from the above occupations, but possessed a meagre quantity of land returned cultivation as their main occupation.

In order to gain some insight about the economic life of the community, a study of a few important occupations in which the Dhanaks are engaged was carried out, during the present study. The same is briefly discussed below :

1. *Cultivation*- Both men and women engage themselves in this occupation. Curiously enough, as mentioned earlier, the percentage of the workers engaged in cultivation is higher among the females than among the males. This occupation is considered highly prestigious as a Dhanak is very keen to somehow acquire land and practise cultivation. In fact, the occupational mobility has been primarily aimed towards this occupation. But the mere cultivation of land does not *ipso-facto* suggest that the cultivator is the owner of the land. There are only a few Dhanaks who have proprietary rights over the land they cultivate. Here *en passe*—some idea about the land tenure system in Haryana and Punjab may be given. The land is divided into the following categories :

(1) *Chahi,* which is irrigated by wells;

(2) *Chahi-Nehri,* which is irrigated by wells as well as by canals;

(3) *Nehri,* which is irrigated by canals; and

(4) *Barani,* which is entirely dependent on rainfall.

Of all the above categories of land, *Barani* is considered to be the most inferior. Not unexpectedly the terms of contract under the tenancy system differ according to the 'inferiority' or 'superiority' of land.

The most commonly operated systems in cultivation of land are as follows :

(i) *Batai* (Share-cropping)—In this case the owner of the land and the cultivator contribute to the expenditure on cultivation, though unequally, and the former is given a fixed share of the produce as agreed upon earlier.

(ii) *Theka*—In this system the cultivator promises a fixed amount of money to the land owner without any other obligation. Usually the rate of such payment is Rs. 200 per *Kila* (acre).

Since most of the Dhanaks cannot afford to pay cash money to the landlord for the land taken for cultivation, they generally resort to *batai* system. The landlord charge *batai* at the rate of one half of the total produce, if the land is of *barani* variety. In other cases he gets 2/5th of the total produce. However, the landowner contributes to the cost of cultivation by paying half the cost of seeds as well as fifty per cent of the levy assessed as water charges. Besides farmyard manure, which is free of cost, the landlord may at his discretion subsidize the cost of chemical fertilizers.

The tenant under this system makes his contribution in terms of labour, bullocks, bullock-cart and agricultural implements and does not get any depreciation allowance for any of these items. He pays half of the amount of land revenue assessed on the land under his cutivation. At the time of harvesting, payment in kind—wheat-sheaves, jaggery, etc,—are given to the daily labourers from the undivided common pool of the produce. But the payments made in cash are borne by the tenant alone. It is the responsibility of the tenant to transport the land owner's share of produce to his place. As the landlord generally does not share the cost of chemical fertilizers, the tenants do not feel inclined to add these to the soil.

Another avenue, which provides an opportunity to the Dhanaks, along with other Scheduled Castes, for cultivation is the land-purchase scheme enunciated by the government which enables them to purchase lands on subsidy and on easy instalments. The Dhanaks in general have also been benefitted by this scheme. The conditions that government laid down under the scheme are as follows :

1. 5 acres of land is to be allotted to a family.
2. The land is to be purchased for not more than Rs. 900/- per acre.
3. Of the estimated cost of Rs. 4,500/-, a sum of Rs. 2,000/- is given in the form of government subsidy and the balance raised as a loan.
4. The loan is to be raised from a co-operative or a mortgage bank at the guarantee of government.
5. If the cost of land of five acres is less than Rs. 4,500/- the difference between the actual price paid and the above figure is deducted from Rs. 2,000/-, the subsidy provided by the government.

It may be mentioned that though some Dhanaks have been benefitted from the scheme but at the time of survey they complained that the banks had stopped giving loans, which were previously repayable in twenty half-yearly instalments with interest. The government now allots the land to those who can themselves arrange to pay the balance of money. Another important point which was brought forward by the Dhanaks was that the rate of Rs. 900/- per acre fixed by the government did not fetch good and fertile lands. Most of the lands were of *barani* variety and far off from their actual residences. Though the scheme makes a provision of providing

Rs. 500/- more as subsidy for the construction of a well, in case the land does not have one, or for the construction of a house at the site of the land, in case the family purchasing the land does not possess one, it appears that a feeling of discontent is rampant among the Dhanaks, who maintain that the government should provide more funds for helping them in carrying on agricultural operations with more facilities which only can result in good yield.

They further hold that the five acres unit of land is too meagre for the maintenance of a family. The Ahirs and Jats, the main land-owing communities of the area, on the other hand expressed the opinion that the Dhanaks lack the requisite skill in agriculture and cannot carry on necessary operations without any guidance. They also maintained that the Dhanaks do not have the financial resources and as a result cannot invest money on their lands which is so necessary for successful cultivation. Whatever may be the truth, it appears that the Dhanaks carry on cultivation in a backward way.

It would be worthwhile to give a brief account of the agricultural activities carried on by the Dhanaks.

According to the informants, the persons who engage themselves in cultivation remain busy for almost throughout the year as per the following calendar :

Month	Agricultural operations
1. *Chet* (March-April)	Ploughing for Kharif crops; reaping and thrashing of oil seeds and barley; planting of sugarcane.
2. *Baisakh* (April-May)	Harvesting and thrashing of Rabi crops; weeding and watering of sugarcane, sowing of cotton and chilly crops.
3. *Jeth* (May-June)	Completion of thrashing of Rabi crops and grains and fodder are stored; weeding and watering of sugarcane; sowing of cotton and transplantation of chilly plants.
4. *Har* (June-July)	Sowing of maize, *bazra*, *chari* and *san* crops; transplanting of paddy; digging out onions, weeding of sugarcane saplings, cotton and chillies; Rabi ploughing started.
5. *Sawan* (July-August)	Sowing of groundnut, *gawara* pulses maize and transplanting of paddy completed; watering of maize and pady; ploughing of Rabi crops continued.
6. *Bhadon* (August-Sept.)	Ploughing of Rabi crops; watering of maize and chillies; hoeing of maize, chillies and ground- nut.
7. *Asu* (Sept.-Oct.)	Ploughing for Rabi crops continues, sowing of *sarson* (mustard), gram and *metha* an picking of cotton commencesd
8. *Kate* (Oct.-Nov.)	Rabi sowing completed; harvesting of Kharif crops, digging of groundnut; picking of cotton continues.
9. *Maghar* (Nov.-Dec.)	Harvesting of Kharif crops and digging out of groundnuts completed; cotton picking continues; transplantin- of onion plants; weeding of Rabi crops.
10. *Po* (Dec.-Jan.)	Cotton-picking completed; watering of Rabi crops.
11. *Magh* or *Mah* (Jan.-Feb.)	Watering of Rabi crops continues; reaping and crushing of sugarcane.
12. *Phagun* (Feb.-March)	Weeding of onion plants; watering of Rabi crops continues; reaping and pressing of sugarcane completed; ploughing the beds for sugarcane, sowing continues; fodder cutting.

Agricultural labour—As mentioned earlier the largest proportion of the working force among the Dhanak males is engaged in agricultural labour. As the majority of the cultivators among the Dhanaks did not own land, they used to work as tenant cultivators before the passage of the Punjab Security of Land Tenures Act, 1953. The Dhanaks complained that the impact of the 1953 Act, which was passed with the best of intentions, has not been favourable to them as the land owners now do not feel inclined to lease them land for cultivation, fearing that once they give land to them (or others) the latter will acquire proprietary rights by tilling the land and later it would not be possible to dislodge them from the lands leased. Besides, there are certain other provisions in the Act which are more favourable to tenants and, therefore, not liked by the landowners. The overall effect of these measures has been that the landowners have stopped giving their lands under tenancy law. Even where they give lands on tenancy, they give it to a 'tried' person, who would work according to their wishes. These factors, according to Dhanaks, have led to some of them being reduced to the status of agricultural labourers from that of cultivators. But it appears that this alone does not seem to have contributed to a large proportion of the Dhanaks depending upon agricultural labour as their livelihood. There has been an occupational mobility from some other occupations in favour of agricultural labour. It is understood that many of the Dhanaks who were engaged as scavengers and sweepers or as tanners of hides and skins have left these occupations, as the same are considered derogatory, and adopted other occupations especially agricultural labour.

There are two types of agricultural labourers—(i) the daily or casual labourers and (ii) *Seer* or attached agricultural labourers.

The daily labourers—The daily or casual labourers are usually engaged for some specific agricultural operations, *viz.*, sowing and weeding or harvesting for which he generally receives a remuneration of Rs. 3/- per day. The harvesting season sees him most busy. During the harvesting of wheat crop, which lasts for 10—15 days after the Baisakhi festival, falling on the 13th April, a labourer harvests 15 to 25 *bhariyan* (bundles) of wheat. His remuneration for the task varies. At times he gets one *bhari* (bundle) every day or 1 *bhari* after every 30 to 35 *bhariyan* harvested by him. Previously the practice was to give 1 *bhari* for every 20 *bhariyan* harvested. It may be mentioned *enpasse* that a *bhari* of wheat contains nearly 15—20 kilos of grains and 20—25 kilos of chaff. Sometimes, the labourer is paid Rs. 5/- to Rs. 7/- per day, if he harvests more *bhariyan*. The females engaged in harvesting do not get wages at per with the males. In fact, they receive half of what the males receive as payment. Many Dhanaks stated that the practice of giving remuneration in kind is now being discouraged by the cultivators for the very reason that the price of wheat is on the increase day-by-day.

As regards the harvesting and thrashing of paddy, a group of persons, usually 20 in number, are engaged as labourers for this purpose. They usually thrash nearly 40 maunds of paddy per day and are given 3 maunds of it per day as remuneration, which is divided equally amongst the members of the group. The harvesting season for the paddy lasts for 20 days in a year.

An agricultural labourer engaged in harvesting leaves for his work early in the morning and returns late in the evening. He is provided the mid-day meals by the employer.

Another important activity carried on by the cultivators requiring the services of the agricultural labourer is the preparation of *gur* (jaggery). A person employed to feed the furnace in this operation is given meals and tea twice, in addition to five kilos of jaggery for every twenty hours of service.

Attached agricultural labour—Seer is the prevalent form of attached agricultural labour. Under this system the labourer is to enter into a contract with a cultivator for one year. The labourer is supposed to act as a personal servant of the cultivator landlord and can be entrusted with any kind of job and has always to be at the back and call of his master. His usual duties include ploughing, work involving the use of mattock, watering the fields, preparation and maintenance of water channels and other allied tasks. He is paid 1/5th or 1/6th of the total produce under one plough. Besides, the labourer also gets an interest free loan of a few hundred rupees at the time when he enters into contract which he can repay at his leisure but in any case before the contract is over.

The contract entered into by the landlord and the *seer* or attached labourer also sometimes lays down a condition that the women-folk of the labourer's family would remove *Goha Kura* (cattle dung and garbage) and prepare cowdung cakes, *etc.*, for which he is given additional remuneration in terms of more food grains. But now the Dhanaks hesitate and even resist accepting this condition for the reason that they feel that their wives and daughters with their regular visits to the employers' houses and fields are subject to exploitation and may even sometimes find it difficult to safeguard their virtue. As discussed in a subsequent account in the wake of social mobility movements among the Dhanaks aimed at raising their social status they now desist their women-folk from visiting the houses and fields of their employers for the removal of garbage and doing similar other sundry tasks.

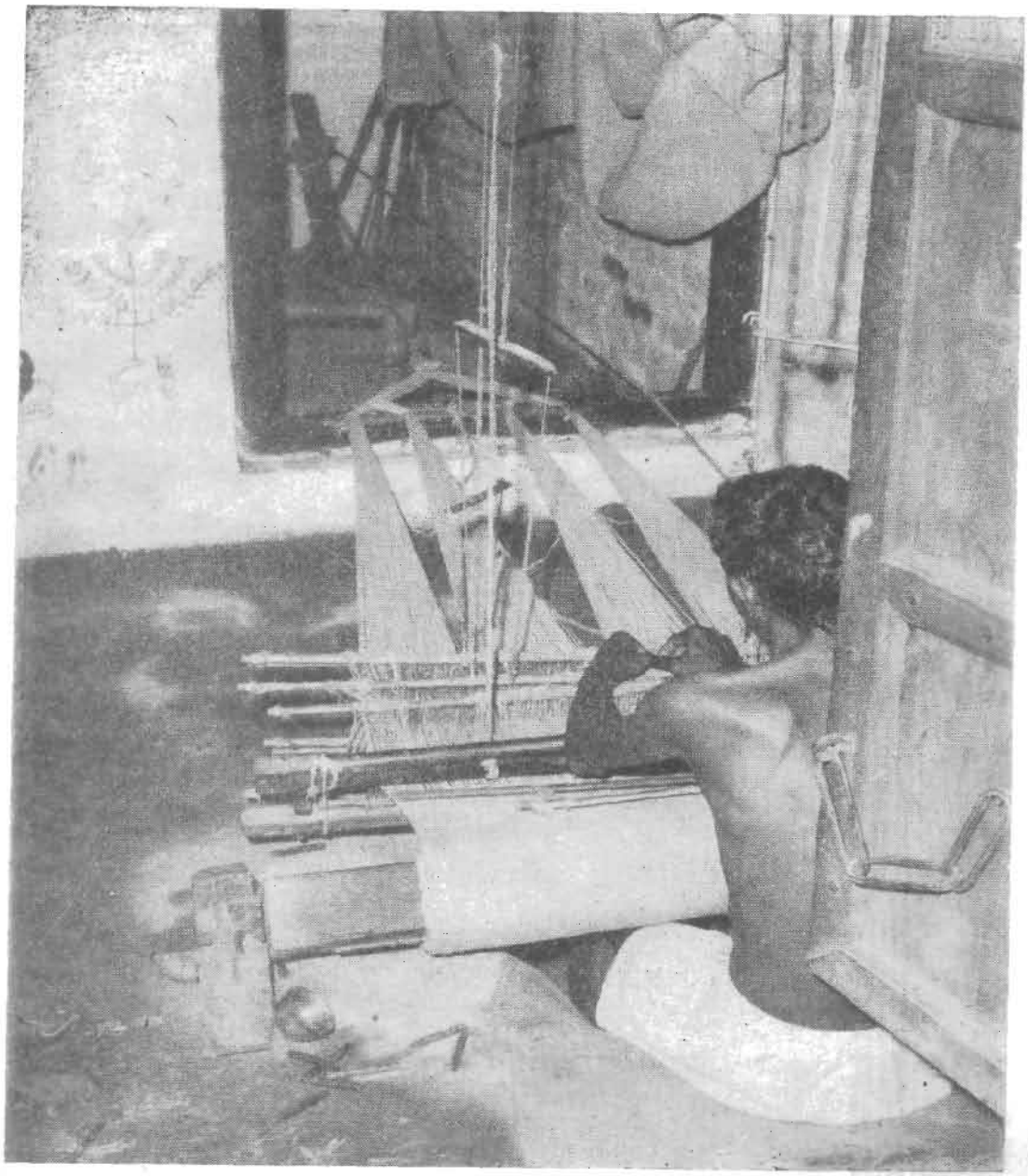
The Dhanaks complained that it is very tiresome and troublesome to work as an attached agricultural labour. This difficult and back-breaking task coupled with the occasional insistence of the landlord for the services of their women-folk as well often leads to the labourer and the cultivator employer coming into conflict with each other which sometimes results in the abrogation of the contract.

Weaving—Weaving is one of the occupations with which the Dhanak associate themselves proudly. They mentioned that it is their traditional occupation and the following rhyme current among them boastfully speak of the community's specialisation in weaving.

Char Kare Pir Ke,
Chaukhri Khat;
Thai Jis Ko Nahin Ava,
Woh Dhanak Hi Nahin

(Four strings in the name of the Pir are required for weaving a cot; one who does not know weaving is not a Dhanak.)

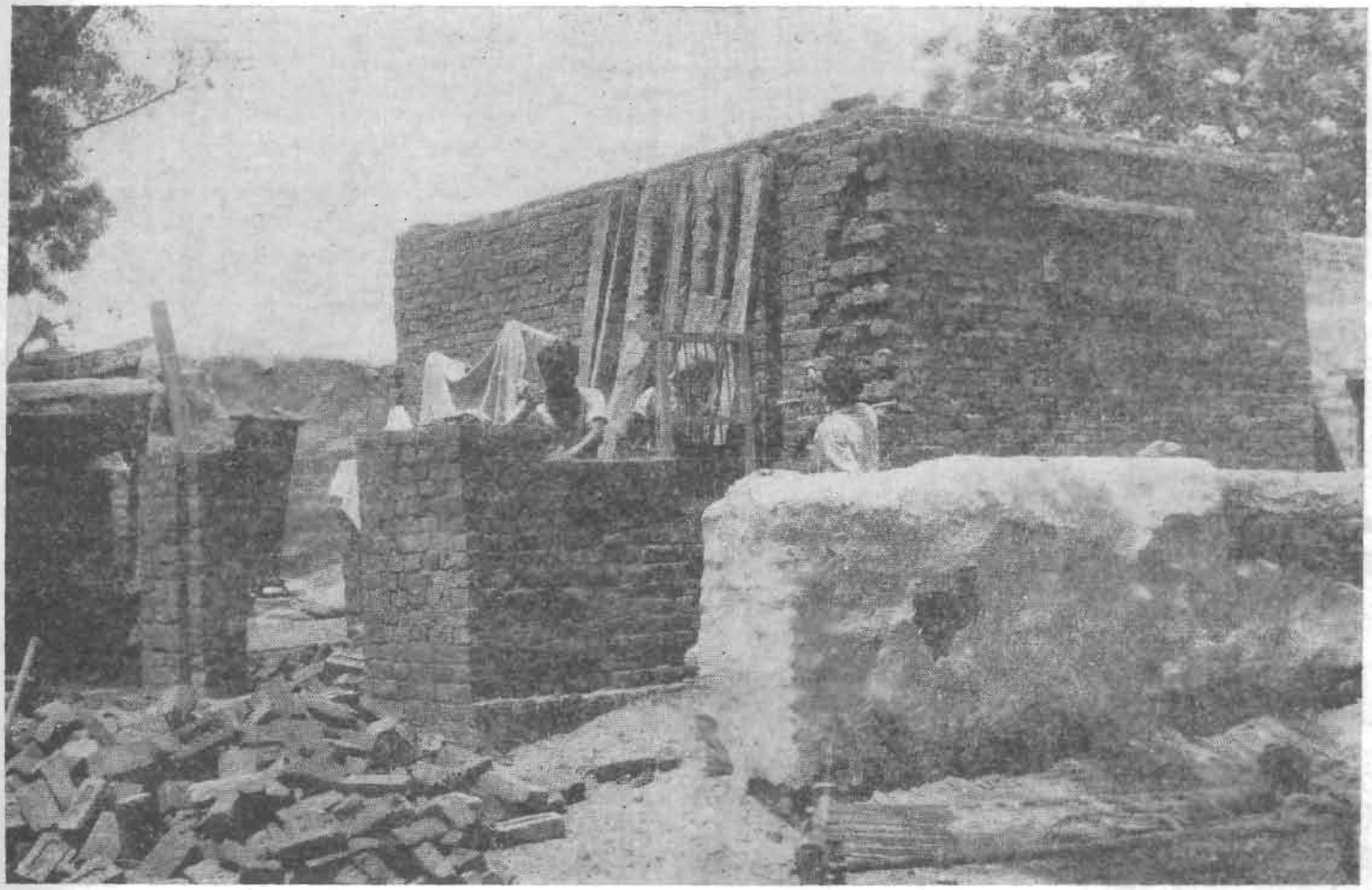
It may not be out of place to mention here that the Dhanaks discussed in this monograph specialise in weaving cots. During the course of the field investigations a significant number reported themselves engaged in weaving exclusively or in addition to some other occupation. In fact, most of the Dhanaks have installed *Khadi* or handloom in their houses, irrespective of the fact whether they are actively engaged in weaving. This is one occupation in which the females of the household also participate with ease. It was reported that



17. A Dhanak working on a handloom installed in the house



18. Musical instruments of Dhanak band party



19. Dhanaks engaged in house construction

two persons, usually a couple, can weave one kilo of *soot* (cotton threads) on a handloom. It is said that in one day they can produce 8-9 metres long cloth of 1/2 metre width and 6 metres long cloth of 14/16 metre width. For weaving one kilo of *soot,* they charge Rs. 3/- only. The actual weaving operation on the handloom is carried on by the males, whereas the females assist by making *Nale* or *Nalis* (wrapping of the cotton thread on reeds and spindles).

Brick making—Some of the Dhanaks in Bhiwani town were found engaged in *pather* (making bricks). The work in main involves the preparation of clay from earth and making raw bricks. They undertake this work on contract basis. A person engaged in this occupation leaves his house at 5.00 a.m. and comes back at about 8.00 p.m. During this time two persons make more than 1,000 clay bricks for which they are paid Rs. 5/- by the contractor. For each lot of a thousand bricks an additional number of 20 bricks more is prepared as a precautionary measure for adjustment against damaged bricks. Even slight rain showers spoil the shape of the bricks and such a damaged brick, if accepted by the contractor, is counted not as a full brick but only as half. Thus, for every 1,000 such bricks he is paid Rs. 2.50 only against the usual amount of Rs. 5.00.

The persons who engage themselves in this profession usually take their women-folk and children along with them for assistance. It is a common sight to see small groups usually consisting of husband, wife and one or two children making bricks, and their small children playing beside them. They bring their tiffins along with them and take the meals at the place of work, whenever they feel hungry. But they would never dare to waste their time, so as not to affect their income.

Some of the Dhanaks were also reported working as *Jalaiya* (fire man) at brick kilns, for looking or firing raw bricks. A fireman works for 12 hours a day and is paid Rs. 90/- per month.

Construction—Some of the Dhanak males are also engaged as masons at the rate of Rs. 7/- per day. Some others work as *beldars* (labourers). The male labourers get Rs. 3.50 per day and the females Rs. 2.50. They work for 8 hours a day, with half an hour's break for lunch.

Apart from the above occupations, a few Dhanaks are also engaged as part-time musicians in band parties, playing their trade mostly during marriage season.

Occupational histories of a few Dhanaks were also collected and the same are described here.

1. *B. K.*: Thirty years old B. K. is employed as a Sizing Master in Bhiwani Textile Mills. His job requires him to supervise the work of weavers or sizers. He gets a salary of Rs. 250/- per month. He has read upto 7th class only. His place of work is nearly 3 kms. from his residence and he uses his bike for necessary transportation. He spends most of his leisure time in his locality with his family. He does not spend much of his time with his jobmates outside working hours. He is neither a member of any trade union nor of any club or organisation. He likes to mix more with his fellow castemen than with members of other communities.

He gave the names of three persons as his closest collaborators in his job. One of them belongs to his own caste, while the other two are Brahmins. All of them are working as Sizers under his supervision and are on good personal terms with him and also aware that B. K. belongs to a Scheduled Caste. But, according to B. K., this does not affect their personal relations. They, however, do not meet each other outside working hours. When asked whether his Brahmin colleagues maintain their caste norms and practise any discrimination towards him in matters partaining to commensality, he replied in the negative and added an unprintable word as an act of retalliation if they ever dared to practise any such discretion.

2. *P.C.*: P C. is a young man of 25 years of age. He has passed higher secondary examination and is presently working as a Printer in a textile mill. The mill is situated at a distance of 3 kms. from his place of residence and sometimes he goes there on a cycle and sometimes on foot. He works in the mill for 8 hours and gets Rs. 137.20 p.m. as salary.

He passes most of his time in his locality with his friends of his own caste. But when goes out of his locality he passes his leisure hours with friends who belong to other communities, including one Brahmin also.

He is a member of the Mazdoor Sangathan Sangh affiliated to INTUC. He named a Kumhar, a Thakur and a Jogi by caste as his three closest collaborators in his job performance. They are aware that he belongs to a Scheduled Caste. According to him he is on good personal terms with his three colleagues and claimed that they have free commensal relations with him which are not affected by caste considerations.

3. *R. C.*: R. C. is mainly occupied in the work of *pather* or brick making. The months of February, March, April, May and June find him most busy in this work. During the rainy season, the work of brick-making comes to a stop when he has to resort to selling vegetables for his livelihood. During his peak periods of work as a *pather,* he claims, he works for nearly 15 hours a day. He mentioned that even then he does not earn enough for himself and his family through

this occupation. He wants to own a small kiln of his own, for which he has all the experience but does not posses the necessary funds.

His father was also engaged as a brick maker. C. R. regrets that he and his children would also die working in this occupation. He has a desire to educate his children but cannot afford it. He wishes that at least one of them should join some government service after getting education. But he did not mention any service specifically.

Speaking about his reminiscences of the past he mentioned that when he was young he never bothered for or hankered after any other occupation as he thought there was nothing good or bad in any occupation; but now he realized that how bad *pather* work was. "It is very troublesome. It goes even to the marrow of one's bones."

4. *P. C.* : P. C. makes his living as a tailor. He complained that he did not earn enough for himself and his family through this occupation. He said that he wants to change his occupation but was not specific about the occupation that he would like to have. What he actually wanted was to improve his economic status.

One of his sons, who is 22 years old and has passed higher secondary examination is seeking employment in some government office. His son has also registered his name with the employment exchange. He has also learnt to repair printing press. Presently, he is working as a mechanic in a printing press. But when asked about his occupational aspiration, he mentioned that he wants to become a Brick Contractor to be economically better off.

Life Cycle

Birth—The Dhanaks broadly understand the physiology of sex and reproduction. They believe that conception is the result of coitus, when both the partners reach orgasm simultaneously. Stoppage of mensus accompanied by nausea as well as a tendency for spitting frequently are indicative of pregnancy.

Birth of a child among the Dhanaks is an occasion of great rejoicing. The children are always welcomed, and more so if they are males. It is most unfortunate for a woman to be barren. She is looked down upon in the society. Consequently, a barren woman suffers from a social stigma and is at times associated with the possession of evil eye, for the fear of which the children are kept away from her. She has to bear many insults and not allowed to wear *pillia* (headcover of yellow colour), which is indicative of fertility. She tries all the possible avenues, from sorcery to the propitiation of the gods, to be bestowed with the boon of a child. Barrenness sometimes leads to the disruption of family life and in a few cases results in changing the composition of the family. For instance, a husband may take another wife without deserting or divorcing the first one. Here it may not be out of place to mention the case of L. R. His wife failed to deliver a child. She herself suggested that L. R. might take another wife. on his agreement to her proposal, she persuaded him to marry her own sister. Thus L. R. is now married to two women, both of whom are living with him. It is another matter that L. R. could not beget a child even from his second wife. It is, however, not always that the matter is settled to the near satisfaction of the barren wife. In the above case the wife of L. R. was a clever and resourceful woman and fortunate enough to have a younger sister of suitable age, otherwise in many cases the barrenness of the woman results in her suffering a lot of degradation, in as much as that she may be deserted or divorced by her husband.

The Dhanaks attribute barrenness of a woman to certain factors mentioned below :

1. Excess of heat in the womb which destroys the semen of the male.

2. A woman may have a broad perforation in her womb resulting in non-retention of semen leading to failure of conception.

3. If the womb of a woman is surrounded by a mass of fatty tissue, the semen of the male fails to enter the womb.

4. The weak semen of the husband may also result in barrenness or still birth.

Generally speaking, the Dhanaks do not have any inhibition for having many children, specially in the rural areas. During the present survey, many of them mentioned that they would like to have as many children as their wives could bear. In case of large families, however, they do feel the economic hardship. In fact, in urban areas, some of the enlightened Dhanaks expressed a desire to limit their families and agreed that it was better to have a small family to feed less mouths with limited income. Most of these however, leave the size of their family to 'the will of the god', as they put it. Thus, while they would not like to have a large family, they would not resort to any special devices to limit the size of the family. But it appears that in such cases the lack of motivation for practising family planning does not always stem from any supernatural or psychological factor, such as guilt or fear, but certain misgivings and misapprehensions towards family planning measures, particularly sterilisation. They seem to be particularly wary of vasectomy operation. In fact, in the rural areas in some cases they were reluctant to furnish details about the size of their family for the fear that they may be sterilised by undergoing vasectomy. A few case studies given below provide some insight in the matter.

1. R. C., aged 35, married when he was only 10 years old. He has six children—four sons and two daughters. He admitted that 6 children are too much a burden to bear and resolved to undergo the vasectomy operation; but actually failed to have himself operated upon for one reason or the other. He mentioned that once one of his friends and he went together to a clinic for undergoing vasectomy. His friend was the first to be operated upon. But immediately after the operation, his friend complained of severe pain and was confined in the hospital for about a month. This discouraged R. C. to undergo the operation and he left the idea for the time being. After five or six months, he again picked up courage to go to a hospital for the necessary opration; but some of his friends told him that his wife may still beget a child (from some other person) and he would be a subject of ridicule. Though this was meant to be a joke, it appears that in the deeper recess of his mind he was nagged by this fear which impelled him again to give up the idea of undergoing the operation. Later, after two or three months, a camp on family planning was organised in the locality wherein on the spot vasectomy operations were arranged. Since R. C. had certain mental reservations and fears he wanted to consult the doctor in-charge about the pros and cons of the operation, but he complained that the compounder did not allow him to see the doctor and told him that he was himself competent enough to perform the necessary operation. But R. C. demurred and returned home without undergoing the operation. He explained that he never wanted to be operatd upon by a compounder. Eventually, he has completely given up the idea of undergoing the operation him self and instead has decided to have his wife operated upon at the time of next delivery.

2. 57 year old C. R. was married at the age of 7. His first wife died after giving birth to four daughters, three of whom died in infancy. C. R. married again at the age of 30. His second wife gave birth to seven children—four daughters and three sons. One of the sons died when aged three, nearly five years ago. Thus, C. R. has now seven children—five daughters and two sons. C. R finds it difficult to feed nine mouths. He mentioned that he would not have married the second time had his first wife given birth to a son instead of daughters. He claimed that he was very keen to undergo the vasectomy operation but his wife, who is now aged 41, does not concur. Inspite of having six children of her own, which include two sons, she desires to have more children, at least one more son to take the place of the one who died a few years ago, and does not consider herself old enough to stop procreation. Her youngest child is a daughter aged three years. His wife has threatened C. R. that she would desert him if he gets himself operated upon.

3. S. S. took a lot of time in counting his children. Eventually, he disclosed that he was having six sons and three daughters. He further stated that three more children were born to his wife, but they died in infancy. He claims himself to be a man of 'progressive views' and has got his wife inserted with a loop only last year.

The above case studies would give some idea about the attitude of the Dhanaks towards the size of the family and family planning measures. It would also be seen that they have a marked preference for sons, which are considered essential for perpetuating the lineage in their patrilineal society. The sons, apart from the practical advantages they give to their parents, are considered a must for a man in keeping with the popular beliefs among the Hindus that a man can only go to heaven if his funeral pyre is lit by his son. A daughter, according to Dhanaks, is not to be kept in the home for her whole life, and the parents are merely 'trustees' of her future life partner and his parents. The daughters after marriage leave the household of the parents and severe the ritual as well as jural relations with their natal families. The desire for the son often finds manifestations in a man marrying again if his wife fails to give birth to a son. As already mentioned C. R. of Bhiwani gave this as the reason for marrying the second time after the death of his first wife. He asserted that he would not have married the second time had his first wife begot him a son instead of a daughter. Similarly, the desire for a son led fifty years old, M. R., to marry again during the life time of the first wife. He married his first wife at the age of 19 and was blessed with two daughters. His brother died a few years ago, leaving behind his childless widow. As M. R. had no son he kept his brother's widow with him and was fortunate enough to beget a son through her. M. R. insisted that he would not have married his brother's widow had he begot a son from his first wife.

The preference for a son finds its manifestation in the manner the sex of the new born is disclosed. In the case of birth of a male child, the head of the household announces the birth with a bang of *hasli* or a *thali,* while the announcement of a daughter is made quietly and the members of the household feel crest-fallen. The wailing of a female child is summed up in the following couplet :

Sakhi ri bin vidya, reh gai khali,
Men hui Jab baja thickra,
Bhai hua Jab baji thali;
Bhai hua Jab Dhari Haveli,
Main hui tab chudali.

(My dear friend, I am devoid of all education when I was born an earthen bowl was broken,

but when my brother was born there was a sound of a gong. When he was born the house was mortgaged (for celebrations) but at the time of my birth, the house was freed from any encumfrances.)

On the birth of a male child they also distribute *gur* among the lineage members as well as among the neighbours, who reciprocate by bringing some food grains which are given to an old buffalo. A string of mango leaves is also tied across the main entrance of the house. The mango leaves are known for their everlasting greeness and symbolic of a long and happy life. The following items of dress are also sent by the parents, of the mother if the newly born is a male child :

1. *For the mother* :
   (a) *Orhni* (headgear)
   (b) *Kameez* (shirt)
   (c) *Ghagri* (petticoat)
   (d) *Juti* (indigenous shoes)
   (e) 2 Bangles
2. *For the child* :
   (a) 1 *Hasli* (necklace)
   (b) 1 *Chand*
   (c) 1 *Tabeej* (amulet)
3. *For the dai* :
   (a) 1 *Orhni* (headgear)
   (b) 1 *Ghagri* (petticoat)

Before the actual delivery there is a good deal of speculation about the sex of the child. They have the following beliefs which foretell the sex of the child before delivery.

1. If a louse thrown in the milk extracted from the expeetant mother dies, the child would be a female one, otherwise it would be a male one. In case the louse floats, the inference is that it will be a hermaphrodite.

2. If the left foot of the mother is heavier than the right one then the child would be a female.

3. If the expectant mother lifts her right foot with a slight delay after raising the left foot then the child in the womb would be a male one.

The Dhanaks do not observe any special prenatal practices. The pregnant woman performs her usual and daily chores until the time of delivery. No special diet is prescribed for her though she is given a good deal of oil with her diet which is supposed to make the delivery less painful. She is, however, advised to avoid strenuous work a few days before the delivery. She remains in her husband's house for the delivery in keeping with the popular belief that the child must be born amidst his own people. The enceinte is not confined in a separate room or apartment and the delivery takes place in the corner of the main room, which is partitioned by tying a cloth as a curtain. As mentioned elsewhere, many Dhanak women specialise in the occupation of *dais;* and in fact in this capacity serve the other communities except the Bhangis. Requisition of *dai* at the time of child birth does not, therefore, poses any problem and one of the elderly relations or villagers assist the enceinte in delivery. She cuts the umblical cord with either a knife or a sickle. She immediately informs the members of the family about the sex of the child. The *dai* also digs a pit in the left corner of the room and buries the placenta therein. She looks after the mother and child for 10 days. During this period she also washes the dirty clothes as well as massages the body of the mother. For her services, she gets a remuneration of Rs. 5/-, as also the cloth worn by the mother at the time of delivery.

For the first two days, the child is given a mixture of jaggery and water. On the third day, the husband's sister washes the breast of the mother. In her absence, the father's sister is sent for to perform this task. She is given a present of Rs. 5/- to Re. 1/- along with some ornaments, depending on the economic status of the household. It is only after the performance of this ceremony that the child is put to the mother's breast. On this day, the mother is given a bath by the *dai* or the husband's sister or the father's sister.

On the 10th day, a *havan* (fire sacrifice) is performed in the house by a priest belonging to their own community. The Dhanaks claim that now the Brahmin priest also serves them on this occasion but the latter does not accept *kacha* or *pucca* food from them. The priest is paid Rs. 2/- in the case of a female child and Rs. 5/- in the case of a male one. It is said that it is only after the performance of the *havan* that the other households would accept food and water from the household in which a child has been born. The pollution period lasts up to 30 days. The pollution ends on the 30th day, when the *kuan-puja* (worship of the well) ceremony is performed. On this day, the mother takes a bath, adorns herself in the new clothes given by her parents, and proceeds to a well accompanied by other women of the household and neighbourhood. She keeps a *potra* (napkin used as a loin cloth for a child) on her head on which some leaves of *peepal* (Ficus religisa) tree are also kept. She also keeps *garwi* (pitcher) full of water on her head. In another *potra* she puts some *gur* and *bajra* grains and arranges them in five heaps in one row. She further makes three more heaps and arranges them in parallel rows. She then puts a few heaps of the grains on

the parapet of the well and distributes the remaining to the women present. The distribution of *bajra* grains to the other women is supposed to symbolise transfer of her fertility to them. She then brings a pitcher full of water home which marks the removal of pollution and henceforth the members of the household, including the mother, are free to resume their normal activities.

Tonsure Ceremony.—The first hair cutting ceremony, known as *mundan* is performed in respect of boys. The ceremony is required to be performed by the time the child attains the age of one year but is often postponed for one reason or the other. If they can afford it, the Dhanaks prefer to perform the ceremony at the temple of Gurgaon Wali Mata, or Devi as they prefer to call the goddess, where congregations are held on Tuesdays in the month of March-April. Accordingly, Purushottam Das of Rohtak performed the tonsure ceremony of his son, Ratna, at Gurgaon three years ago when the latter was five years old. According to him his son's hair were cut by a Hindu barber and offered to the Devi. The *mundan* of his second son, Anand, aged 5, has not yet been performed. But in most of the cases the tonsure ceremony is held at home on any suitable day, though as far as possible a few locks of the cut hair are sent later to the shrine of the goddess at Gurgaon. When tonsure ceremony is held at home no special functionary is invited for cutting the hair and the father of the boy himself cuts the hair of his son. Generally, no feast is given to the communitymen on this occasion. By way of illustration it may be mentioned that Chajju Ram performed the *mundan* ceremony of his sons at his home in Bhiwani town, as like many other members of the community, he could ill-afford going to Gurgaon for the purpose. The *mundan* of his eldest son was performed at the age of 8 years, while that of the other two at the age of 1½ years and two years each. In each case the room, an earthen lamp was lit before which plastered with cuwdung. In one corner of the room, an earthen lamp was lit before which every member of the household bowed or prostrated. Nearby, a *havan* (sacred fire) was also lit and sweet rice with *gur* (jaggary) also prepared. Some of the rice grains were put in the fire after touching them to the earthen lamp. Then, Chajju Ram himself cut a lock of the hair of his son after uttering the name of the Devi. After cutting all the hair some sweetened rice were put in an earthen pot and kept at cross-roads in the name of the Devi. A lock of the hair, along with a dried cocoanut and 2 paise coin and *mouli* (sacred thread of white and red colour) was wrapped in a red cloth and kept aside to be taken to the temple of the goddess at Gurgaon. Three such packages are still lying in his home as so far he has not been able to go to Gurgaon to offer them to the goddess.

Sex and Marriage.—The Dhanaks claim that they do not tolerate extra-marital or pre-marital relations and the offender is put to shame, disgrace and ostracise. It is said that the unchastity on the part of an unmarried girl results in a fine being imposed on her parents by the caste panchayat; and that a man could get rid of his wife on account of adultery on her part though the latter does not enjoy the same privilege on a reciprocal basis. But during the survey for the present study, some of their neighbours belonging to other communities stated that in the sexual matters the Dhanaks are not very strict and do not always insist upon a strict code of behaviour. It was reported that some of the girls and boys of the community were having pre-marital sex relations. But it was not possible to verify the veracity of the above statement.

There is no institution among the Dhanaks which can be a source of information on sexual matters to the nubile girls and boys. The adolescent and young girls learn about the sex from their friends and so do the boys, who often take vile pleasure in obscene and vulgar talks and jokes about the sex organs and sex relations.

According to the earlier writers, the Dhanaks generally married their children as infants. Thus, according to Crooke (*op. cit.*), the Dhanaks of U.P. married their children between the ages 7 to 10. Russel (*op. cit.*) also recorded child marriage among the Dhanaks. But Risley has mentioned that the Dhanaks practised infant as well as adult marriages though the former practice was considered more respectable. (Risley; *op. cit.*) The Dhanaks acknowledge that in the past infant marriages were very much in vogue in their community. In fact, they disclosed that they used to perform the marriage of their children between the ages 3 to 5 years. In this connection they referred to an interesting practice of marrying the children by putting them on brass *thalis* (large plates). But they mentioned that the age at marriage has now gone up gradually during the recent times and at present the girls are generally married at the ages between 12—14 years, before they attain puberty, while the boys between the ages 16—18 years. It would, however, appear that despite the recent rise in the age at marriage they still marry rather early. This seems to be further borne out from the 1961 Census data on the marital status of the community as it is noticed therefrom that out of 41,229 males and 37,109 females in the age group 0—14 as many as 1,826 (4.62%) males and 3,805 (11.43%) females were married or widowed/divorced. This suggests that many Dhanaks,

specially the females, are still married at an early age as children or infants. This is further substantiated by the fact that according to the same source out of 31,276 females in the age group 15—44, only 781 (2.4%) were unmarried. It appears that the Dhanaks still consider it prestigious to marry their children early; specially in the rural areas.

However, in order to gain further insight in the matter, the actual age at marriage was recorded in respect of 60 males and 62 females during the survey conducted in connection with the present ethnographic study of the Dhanaks. The average age at marriage works out to be 17, in case of the males and 12.5 in case of the females. This is in conformity with the range for the preferential age at marriage for boys (16—18) and girls (12—14), as reported by the Dhanak informants. It is noteworthy that the above 122 cases includes many cases of infant and child marriages. In fact, 4 males and 12 females married below the age of nine years. A few of these cases are of special interest as it is noticed that 4 female babies in arms or toddlers were married at the age of only one year. These include now 21 years old Om Pati, daughter of Banwari, who married Ram Kumar of Delhi at the age of just one year, 20 years ago. In two other cases, Sarojni and Naini, daughters of Kishan Lal, married Amilal and Dani Ram respectively at the age of just one year, 70 to 75 years ago. The lowest age at marriage in case of a male child recorded in the above sample is just 3 years. This refers to Banarsi Das, now aged 50, who married 48 years old Piari Devi when the latter was only one year old.

In all the cases where the age at marriage of either sexes was below nine years, the marriage was performed 75 to 20 years ago. The present sample includes no case where the marriage was performed below the age of nine years in case of either sexes during the last decade. This would to a certain extent support the statement of the Dhanak informants that there has been an increase in the age at marriage during the recent years.

The following account gives a brief analysis of the different age groups wherein the marriage was performed in respect of the above mentioned 122 cases.

Out of sixty males, four married at the ages ranging between 3 to 9 years, as mentioned earlier. Further, six males married in the age group 11—14 years; thirteen between the ages 15—16; twenty at the ages 17 and 18; ten at the age of 19 or 20 and seven between the ages 21 to 25 years. As regards the females, out of the sixty two cases, twelve married below the age of nine years, as stated earlier. Besides, thirty two married in the age group 11—14; twelve in the age group 15 to 16, four at the age of 17 or 18 and one each at the age of 21 and 30.

As mentioned elsewhere, the Dhanaks in Haryana and Punjab are not having any endogamous sub-divisions and are divided into numerous *gots* or clans. They regulate their marriages on the principle of clan exogamy, *i.e.*, the husband and wife should not belong to the same *got*. In addition, they avoid the *got* of father, mother and father's mother as well, while entering into a marital alliance. It is said that in the past one could not marry into one's mother's mother *got* as well, but now this restriction has gradually disappeared. It is not known whether this change is due to a necessity felt by the Dhanaks for widening their mating circle or whether their concept of incestous marital alliances has undergone a change. They also observe territorial exogamy and no marriage may take place between a boy and a girl of the same village. In fact, as far as possible, they avoid marriages within a radius of 10 to 20 kms., even if the boy and the girl do not fall within the prohibited degrees of relationship in terms of clan membership or consanguineous or affinal relationship. This is in conformity with the general practice and norms of the other communities of the area, including the dominant Jat and Ahir castes. This stems from the belief that the members of both the sexes in the village in the same generation stand in the relationship of brothers and sisters. In fact, all the members of a village or a confederation of villages in a limited area are regarded as 'kins belonging to one 'family'. Anyhow, a survey of ninety marital alliances indicated that in most of the cases before their marriage, the spouses resided between a distance of 30 to 60 kms There were only 3 cases wherein the spouses resided at a distance of 10 kms. before marriage on the other hand there were many cases where the marital alliances were made at distances muh beyond 100 kms. In a few cases the husband or wife resided in other States, mostly U.P. and Delhi. There were two cases where the marriage alliance was forged at a distance of 300 to 500 kms. away in U.P. In one case, twenty one year old Madan Lal of Bhiwani town married a girl residing in Bareilly in U.P. In the other case a girl was married to a boy residing in Muzzafarnagar in U.P.

It, however, appears that they prefer marriag with certain relations. The most preferred marriage appears to be marriage with the sister' husband's brother in case of the females or conversely with brother's wife's sister in case of th males. It would be of some interest to mentio that out of the sixty two cases of female marriages surveyed, in as many as twelve cases a girl married her sister's husband's brother. As fo example, Chottu of village Chapar married Dhan of village Dhanari who was his brother's wife

sister. Similarly, Chandrakala of Rohtak married her sister's husband's brother, a resident of Bhiwani town. There are other cases of marital alliances where the spouses stood in some other relationship to each other before marriage. These included marriage of a person with his father's brother's son's wife's sister (*i.e.*, with first parallel cousin's wife's sister) or marriage of a woman with her sister's husband's father's brother's son and marriage of a person with his brother's wife's father's brother's daughter or a woman marrying her father's brother's daughter's husband's brother.

Though monogamy is the prevalent form of marriage, cases of polygyny do occur on such grounds as barrenness of the first wife, *etc.* Some times, even when the first wife has given birth to children, a man may marry another woman. But generally polygyny is limited to marriage with two women only. During the survey of married couples, a few cases of polygyny came to light, but in none of these, a person was married to more than two women at the same time. In case of the second marriage, generally the wife's sister is preferred, provided she is of suitable age. Thus, C.R. of Bhiwani was married to two sisters and was having children from both.

There are a few cases of love marriage and marriage by elopment among the Dhanaks. Generally, such cases are not looked upon favourably, but do not invoke any serious reprisal. Marriage generally takes place as a result of negotiations between the parents of boys and girls. It is said that in the past, invariably the boy's relations approached the girl's parents for her hand in marriage. Russel (*op. cit.*) has also mentioned that among the Dhanaks of Central India the proposal of marriage came from the boy's side and even where a girl's parents wanted to negotiate marriage with a particular boy, they took the assistance of common relations or friends to request the boy's father to formally approach the girl's parents. However, according to the Dhanaks, this practice has undergone a complete change and now it is always the girl's parents who approach the boy's father or his relations for entering into a marital alliance. When asked for the reason of this reversal of roles, some of the elderly Dhanaks expressed the view that this change has been brought about as a result of a cultural upsurge among them during the third decade of the century when their communitymen in the area made a concerted effort to raise their social status. They mentioned that in their zeal for social climbing, they started imitating many of the customs and ceremonies prevalent among the caste Hindus of the area, especially the Jats and Ahirs who were their *Jajmans* and served as cultural models for them. During the present study, however, it could not be ascertained from the Jats and Ahirs or other Castes of the area whether for forging marital alliances the initiative is taken by girl's parents in their community.

The negotiations between the boy's side and the girl's side take place generally through an intermediary, who may be a common relation or a friend and known as *bichola* or go-between. If the negotiations proceed satisfactorily and both the sides are satisfied with the attributes of the boy or the girl, the latter's father accompanied by a few close relations and the go-between visits the boy's father's house on an appointed day for the performance of *sagai* or betrothal ceremony. Some Dhanaks claimed that prior to the performance of *sagai*, a Brahmin priest is consulted to indicate an auspicious date for observing betrothal ceremony, but in most of the cases no prior consultation with a Brahmin priest is made and *sagai* is fixed for any day suitable to both the parties. A brief ceremony is also performed on the occasion. The boy sits on a *chowki* (a small wooden stool) facing the east and the girl's father applies a *tilak* mark of turmeric paste on his forehead and sticks a few rice grains on the mark. He also puts some sweetmeats, preferably *batashas* (sugar puffs), in his mouth. Further, he gives a gift of one rupee each to the boy and all his agnates present on the occasion.

The account given by earlier writers do not indicate whether the Dhanaks follow the custom of accepting bride price from the boy's father or not. Though when asked, the Dhanak informants generally deny that bride price is accepted during their marriages, when pressed further, a few would reluctantly admit that they accept some money from the boy's father at the time of betrothal ceremony to meet a part of the marriage expenses. This is quite a significant amount and varies between Rs. 500/- to Rs. 2,000/-. In fact, as discussed in details in a subsequent account when a woman deserted her husband, his father pressed his claims for the restitution of the conjugal rights of his son on the grounds that he had paid a bride price of Rs. 2,000/- to her brother. It appears that though the time bound custom of bride price is still prevalent among the Dhanaks, they feel hesitant in admitting it; as acceptance of bride price is considered to be indicative of a lower social status and not at all prestigious. They, therefore, try to make out that the money accepted as bride price is merely a contribution of the boy's father to help the girl's parents to meet the expenses on the marriage of their daughter. Perhaps, it will not be out of place to mention here that during the ethnographic study conducted by the Census organisation among some other Scheduled Castes in Punjab and Haryana as well as in other states, many of the communities who accept bride price gave the same explanation, *viz.*, that the amount is realised from boy's father to meet part of the expenses on the girl's marriage.

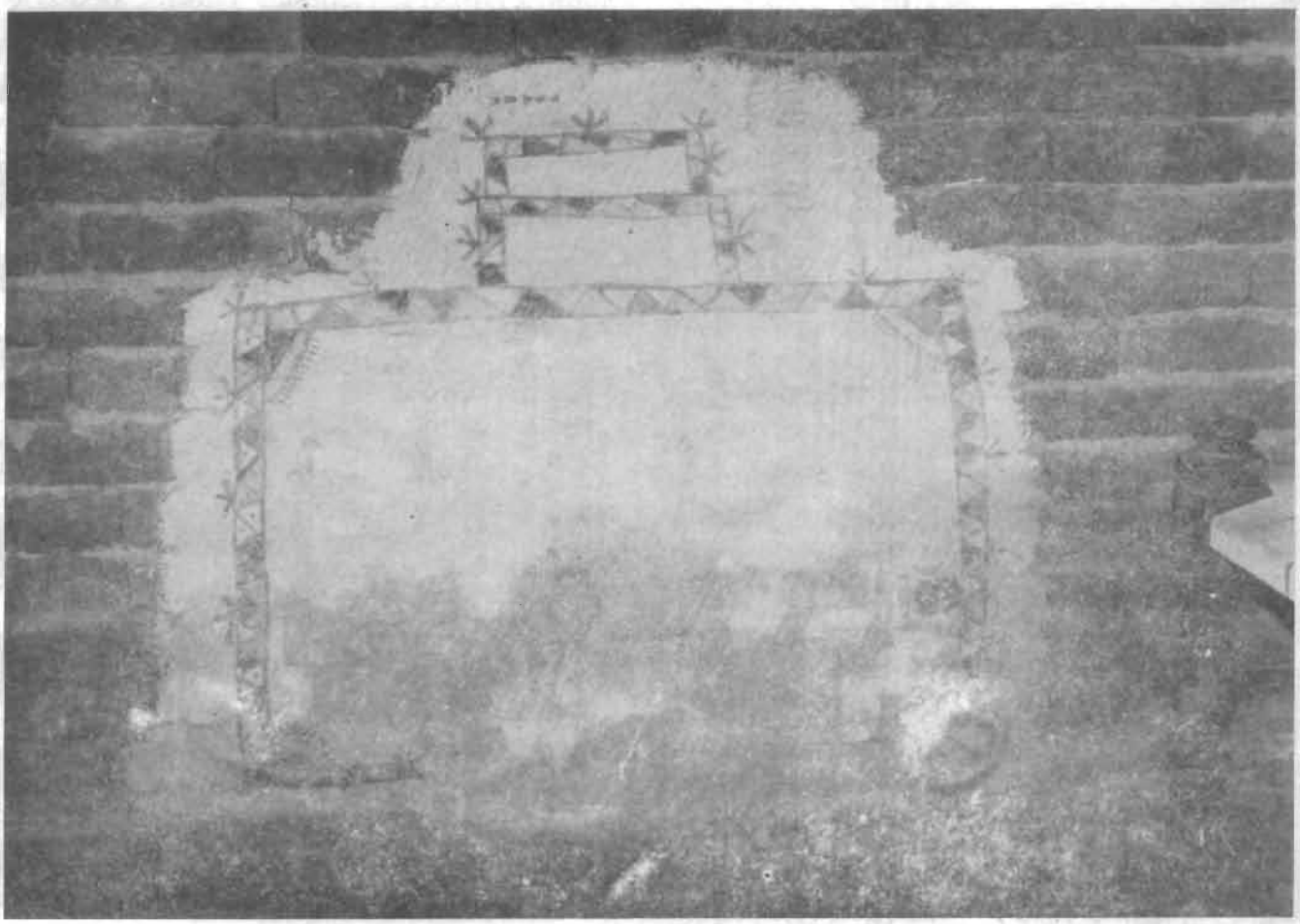
After the exchange of gifts and bride price in cash, the boy's father hands over some clothes and ornaments to the go-between to be passed on to the would be bride, who is required to put on these at the time of the marriage ceremony. While returning to the girl's residence, the go-between is often accompanied by a few persons comprising the agnates and other close relations of the boy, such as his brothers and paternal uncle (s). On reaching the girl's home, they are received with due respect by her parents and entertained to a feast. Besides, a token gift of one rupee each is given to all the members accompanying the go-between. According to the Dhanaks, they visit a Brahmin priest or an astrologer belonging any other community to suggest an auspicious date for marriage which may be convenient to both the partners.

Eleven days before the actual day of marriage, the girl's parents send *lagan* (comprising presents of dress and other items) to the boy's parents. It consists of the following articles :

(i) One *Kameez*; (ii) one *Daman*; (iii) one *Orna;* (iv) pair of *Juti;* (v) two silver bangles for the mother of the would-be groom; (vi) one *Fatka* (a long cloth of yellow colour) which the groom wraps around his shoulders at the time of the marriage ceremony; one cocoanut, seven tuberous roots of turmeric and seven pieces of betelnut. The tuberous roots of turmeric are symbolic of reproduction and fertility. Some Dhanaks claimed that the *lagan* is sent through a Brahmin or Nai who is given one rupee by the boy's parents as a gift. However, on deeper probe it came to light that more often than not the so-called Brahmin or Nai is no other than a person of their own community whose functions correspond to that of a Brahmin priest or a Nai among the high castes. For seven days before the day of the actual marriage, the boy as well as the girl are applied *vatna* (a paste of turmeric powder, barley flour and mustard oil) on the body before they are given a bath by their respective mother or father's brother's wife. On the actual day of marriage, the groom after taking a bath puts on a new dress of finer material which is sent by his maternal uncle as *bhat*. The *bhat* also includes a gift of some cash money and sometimes a ring, if the maternal uncle affords it. Likewise, the bride also receives the *bhat* comprising of a complete set of bridal dress and an ornament or two and some cash money from her maternal uncle. Before the departure of the *barat* or marriage party, the bride groom's brother's wife applies *surma* (collyrium) on his eyes for which she receives a gift of one rupee from the groom's father. Before proceeding to the bride's house, the groom touches his mother's breast with his mouth. According to the Dhanaks, this practice has a significance which is rooted in their former custom of marriage by force or capture in the past when they were serving as warriors in the armies. Their explanation is that the offering of breasts by the mother to her son is symbolic of warning to her son that he may not 'waste' her milk by proving a failure in capturing or securing a bride for himself. There, however, appears to be no evidence to support their contention that in the past they performed their marriages by capture. In any case, the practice of the mother symbolically offering her breast to her son before his proceeding to the bride's house for performance of marriage ceremony is by no means characteristic of the Dhanak community only. In fact, during the various ethnographic surveys conducted by the Census Organisation, it came to light that this practice is in vogue among many other communities of Delhi and Himachal Pradesh. Among these, a mention may be made of the Banjaras, the Dhobis and the Kolis of Delhi and Chhimbe of Himachal Pradesh. However, slightly different interpretations were offered by them for this practice. The most common explanation offered was that the symbolic offering of the breasts by the mother to her son is to make him realise that as she suckled him as a child he should prove true to her milk (or be sincere to her) and not neglect her after acquiring another woman as a bride for himself. Thus, it appears that the explanation offered by the Dhanaks about the significance of the above practice is aimed at glorifying their past.

On the marriage day, a structure, known as *tur*, is brought by groom's mother's brother (maternal uncle) and fixed on the right side of the entrance of the house. The *tur* comprises a vertical piece of wood, about two metres in height, with a platform on the top and having five holes in it. A horizontal strip of wood is passed through each hole and five small earthen bowls are hung by tying them to the splinters with threads. The five bowls have small perforations at the bottom and are joined to each other by passing a yellow thread through the holes in the bottom. Before departure of the *barat*, the kins, are given a feast near the *tur*. When the groom comes out of the house to proceed to the bride's house, one of his sisters throws *turi* over his head. The *turi* is made of small pieces of reeds on one end of which kneaded flour is pasted. This is supposed to ward off evil spirits and protect the groom from evil eye.

The *barat,* which comprises males only and includes about 40 to 50 persons, is received by the bride's relations at the outskirts of her village. The marriage party is housed in an open space or a building or a tent, known as *Janjh ghar* and offered light refreshments of tea and snacks. The groom is taken to the entrance of the bride's house where a structure, known as *tauran,* is constructed. It comprises a wooden plank or platform on which four pegs are mounted and on each of the pegs, a sparrow, made of wood,



20. 'Thapa'—Palm impressions made on the wall by newly married couple

is placed. In some cases, *tauran* is not constructed but a wooden sparrow is fixed on the lintel of the door of the main entrance. The groom, who goes to the bride's house armed with a *chhanti* (iron-rod) in his hand, strikes at the sparrow (or sparrows) and breaks it. There are different versions regarding the significance of this ritual. According to one version, in olden days a groom was required to kill a living sparrow with a bow and arrow to show his skill in archery in which he was required to be an adept, as it was the main occupation of the community. It is said that in case he failed, the marriage could not be performed. The other version has it that, the ceremony is a relic of the *swayamvara* (marriage by competition) performed in ancient times wherein a man after having defeated other suitors claimed the girl's hand by knocking at the door of her father's house with his sword.

After the members of the bridegroom's party and other relations and friends are entertained with dinner, the main marriage ceremony is performed during the late hours of the night under a *mandap* (marriage booth) erected in the courtyard in front of the bride's house. The *mandap* consists of four upright bamboo poles fixed to form a rectangular platform which is decorated with flowers green leaves. Then a *havan* (fire sacrifice) is performed at the centre of the *mandap* and two priests of their community, representing both the sides, sit on a *chowki* (low wooden stool) each. The bridegroom is also seated on a *chowki*, facing towards the east. The priest from the bride's side kindles the fire and recites a few *mantras* (incantations). Thereafter, the bride escorted by her brother's wife or her sister is brought to the *mandap*. She sits on the left side of the groom and keeps her face covered with a veil. Next, the father of the bride joins the hands of the bride and the groom and the priests from both sides recite some *sloka* (incantations) and put incense, ghee and rice in the sacred fire. The couple takes seven circumambulations around the sacred fire—the bride leading in the first three rounds and the groom in the next four. This marks the solemnisation of the marriage and the couple and the relations retire for the remaining hours of the night.

Next day, the ceremony of *vida* (departure) is performed in the morning. The bride's father usually gives utensils and about 100 rupees to the groom's father, though sometimes if he cannot afford, he presents a token gift of rupee one only. Thereafter, the *barat* accompanied by the bride leaves for the groom's village after having been entertained with breakfast comprising of tea and snacks. Generally, the bride's brother also accompanies her to her in-laws house to take her back after two days.

Muklawa—The Dhanaks observe the custom of *muklawa*, which literally means bringing back the bride from her parents' house to her husband's house to finally consummate the marriage. As in majority of the cases the bride is of tender age, she returns to her parents and stays with them till she attains puberty. In many cases, therefore, the *muklawa* or consummation of marriage takes place after some years. It came to light that in some cases, the *muklawa* was held 10 to 12 years after marriage. But if the bride is of age, then she is brought back from her parent's house by the groom to his house within two or three days only. At the time of *muklawa* no formal ceremony or ritual is performed The husband may visit the wife's house alone, or he may be accompanied by a relation or friend, staying there for a day or two. For instance, in case of Ratni of Bhiwani, who is now 32 years old, her *muklawa* was held after six years of marriage. She was married to Bisha at the age of 10 years and her *muklawa* took place after she attained the age of 16 years, when her husband accompanied by his mother and a friend visited her house. After having stayed there for two days, they left for his home accompanied by Ratni. No ceremony was performed on the occasion. Similarly, in case of thirty years old Bishno, who was married to Ram Partap of Rohtak at the age of 12 years, her *muklawa* was held after three years of marriage when she was 15 years old. In her case, her husband visited her house in company of his brother and left along with her the same day after having been entertained to lunch in her house. In this case too no rite or ritual was performed.

Widow remarriage—The Dhanaks allow their widows to re-marry. It is said that they prefer that the widow marries her husband's younger brother, but this is by no means obligatory on her part. But from the survey of 122 cases of marriages conducted among the Dhanaks during the present study, it is noticed that the junior levirate is quite common. One of the explanations given for the same is that, in case a widow marries any person other than her husband's younger brother she loses her share in her late husband's property. Besides, the second husband has to pay compensation to her in-laws for the bride price paid by them to her father at the time of her first marriage. In widow marriage, which is known locally as *Kerewa*, no elaborate rites are performed. In fact, the husband and wife simply exchange garlands, though in some cases the former may apply vermilion on the parting of her hair on her forehead and arranges a feast for the *biradari* (community), if he can afford it. A widower generally marries a widow and preferably his deceased wife's sister, if she is of suitable age and unmarried.

Divorce and Separation.—Though the Dhanaks hesitate in admitting that they permit divorce, it has been found that divorce and separation do take place among them. In fact,

according to the 1961 Census data on marital status of Dhanaks, there are quite a few men and women who are either divorced or separated. There is no formal procedure for affecting divorce. The main grounds on which the husband may divorce his wife is her incapability to bear a child or adultery on her part. However, as mentioned elsewhere, the wife is not permitted to divorce her husband if he is proved guilty of the indiscretion of adultery. She may, however, divorce him if he is impotent or mentally deranged. Normally, a woman is not allowed divorce if she is ill-treated or is unhappy in her husband's house but in many such cases she simply runs away to her parents' house and does not come back to stay with her husband despite coaxing, cajoling, threatening or recriminations by her husband or the in-laws. In such cases, the separation or divorce is a *fait accompli.*

A few cases of divorce or separation recorded during the present study are given below :

17 years old N. R. of Rohtak belonging to Kirar clan married 19 years old N. K. a resident of Bhiwani and belonging to Solanki *got.* Within 1½ years of their marriage it was alleged that the latter (husband) became mad and his wife went to her parents, who did not send her back to live with her husband. She is now separated from him without obtaining any formal divorce. It is, however, understood that two years after separation N. K. got engaged to another woman. It is not certain whether he has completely recovered from his mental affliction.

In another case, forty one years old G. W. of Patiala was married at the age of seven to a man residing at Madaru village. The latter deserted her after a few years. After 8 years of separation from her husband, she was married again to another person residing at Bhiwani.

Death Rites.—The Dhanaks believe in the physiological explanation of death, which is regarded as the will of God or destiny. Death is hardly associated with such superstitutions as the result of black magic or machination of evil spirits. The Dhanaks dispose the body of the deceased by cremation though the children below the age of ten years are buried. When it is certain that the person will not survive and death is imminent, he is removed from the cot and laid on the ground on a mattress. After he expires, his corpse is bathed with curd and water and attired in new clothes. In case the deceased is a male, his body is wrapped in a white *kaffan* or sheet whereas the corpse of a female is wrapped in a red sheet. They do not keep the body lying for a long time to avoid putrefication and wait only up to 12-15 hours for the relations and friends to come and have a last glimpse of the face of the deceased. After the corpse is placed on a bier, it is carried out of the house on the shoulders of four persons, who are generally the close relations of the deceased, such as the sons or brothers. The other relations follow the bier. The weeping and wailing women trail behind the males. When the procession reaches the outskirts of the cremation or burial ground, the bier is stopped for a moment and the pall-bearers change their places and the women given a last glimpse of the deceased as they are not allowed to enter the cremation or burial ground. The latter return to their respective houses after taking a bath in a well outside their locality. In the meanwhile, on reaching the cremation ground, the corpse is placed on a pyre of wood which is lit by the eldest son or in his absence by the brother of the deceased. If the deceased happened to be *Swasni* (a women whose husband is living), her pyre is lit by her husband. After the pyre is lit, all the persons who accompanied the procession leave the ground and return home after having taken a bath in a nearby well, stream or rivulet. Sometimes they symbolically sprinkle a few drops of water on their head and body to free themselves from pollution. The household in which a death has occurred is considered to be polluted for thirteen days. During this period, no member of any other household accepts food or water from it. Besides, the members of the deceased's household do not take part in any religious or social ceremony, such as marriage in the community or in the village. On the third day after the cremation, the *Phul* (the charred pieces of bones and ashes) are collected by the deceased's son for immersion in any running water or stream. If they can afford it, they immerse the ashes in river Ganges at Hardwar or Garh Mukteshwar in Uttar Pradesh.

On the 10th day, the house is cleansed and its floor and walls are smeared with a paste of cowdung and water. An Acharaj, belonging to their own community, is invited and given a bedding, a cot and a few clothes of the deceased. All the agnates of the deceased get their heads, beards and moustaches shaved off on this occasion. On the *Tehriveen,* or the 13th day, after cleansing the house by sprinkling a mixture of cowdung and water, a feast is given to the relatives and neighbours which marks the end of the pollution period.

Sharad—The Dhanaks perform annual *sharads* (obsequies) which require feeding of the manes in the month of September-October. On such occasion, they prepare *puris* and *kheer* and feed a few priests and also give a feast to the close relations in the name of the deceased.

Religion and Festivals

The Dhanaks are mostly Hindus, a fact acknowledged by earlier writers. During the 1961 Census, the Dhanaks of Haryana and Punjab have mostly returned their religion as *Hinduism.* A handful among them—256 or 0.16% of their

total population have, however, returned themselves as Sikhs. Nevertheless, it has been said of Dhanaks that in addition to the usual Hindu gods and goddesses included in the Hindu pantheon they worship or venerate certain Muslim saints and visit their shrines. Thus, about Dhanaks of Uttar Pradesh, Crooke (*op. cit.*) has stated, "They make pilgrimages to the tomb of Madar Sahib at Makhanpur in the Cawnpore District and in the month of Magh offer a sort of pudding (*Malida*) and honey which are taken by the Khadims in charge of the shrine. They also worship the two Miyans; the great or Bara Miyan has his tomb at Jalasar, in the Etah District, and the little or Chhota at Amroha, in Moradabad. These saints are worshipped after child-birth. If the child happened to be a son they offer a he-got, for a daughter the offering is of the kind of cake (*gulgula*)...." But no such tradition or practice was found among the Dhanaks of Haryana and Punjab at all. In fact, they betrayed complete ignorance about these Muslim saints and their shrines in U.P. and denied that they ever paid homage or veneration to any Muslim saint in their habitats or elsewhere. Similarly, not unexpectedly, the minor Hindu gods and goddesses, such as Bandi, Goraiya, Mahabir Ram Thakur, Gahit, Dharam Raj and Sokha Sindabas, mentioned by Risley (*op. cit.*) in respect of Dhanaks of Bihar are unknown to their counterparts discussed in this monograph.

The Dhanaks who mostly follow Snatan Dharmi sect worship Hindu gods and goddesses. These include Shri Ram, Krishna, Shiva or Shivji. However, they do not have free access to temples and have installed the idols or images of gods in their homes. It was also mentioned by them that the worship of sun god is very popular among them. Their women-folk particularly make offerings of flowers and water to the god. But the sun god is especially worshipped during the month of *Baisakh* (March-April) when flowers, rice, betel leaves, cardamoms and small coins are offered to the God. It is interesting to observe that the worship of sun god with almost similar offerings has been recorded by Risley among the Dhanaks of Bihar (Risley, *Ibid*).

Among the goddesses, special mention may be made of Gurgaon Wali Mata, who is believed to control certain epidemic diseases, such as the small-pox. She is worshipped with offerings of flowers and sweets, specially on such occasion as tonsure ceremony or serious illness in the family. It would be of some interest to mention that the Dhanaks claimed that they specially rever Ravana but they do not actually worship it because previously they were dominated by the people who were supporters and followers of Rama and as such they were afraid to worship Ravana and had to instead pretend worship of the former. They also claimed a special reverence for the cow and a few of them offer a ball of kneaded flour to a cow on tuesdays.

An account of the religious practice and beliefs of Dhanaks would not be complete without a mention of the Lal Guru who has been considered as their patron-saint. According to a legend narrated by the Dhanaks, Lal Guru was a Rajput Raja who fought against the Muslims and was defeated by them. He did not bow to them and showed them black flags. Later on, he went to Guru Nanak for his help and became his disciple. The Guru asked him to take pork to test his loyality, which he readily did. It appears that there are different interpretations and versions regarding the Lal Guru and legends associated with it and the one narrated above may not be of universal parlance. It is interesting to observe that the above deity is associated with the sweeper and scavenging communities in different names irrespective of their religious allegiance. While the Hindus and Sikh Chuhras and Bhangis worship it as Lal Guru, the Muslim Lal Begis (sweepers) venerate it as Lal Beg and actually named after it. But although Lal Guru is still very important for the Bhangis and the Chuhras, the Dhanaks have now relegated it to the background. It appears that the decline in its popularity is linked with the attempt of the community to give up scavenging in the wake of social climbing. Since the worship of Lal Guru is especially associated with low castes such as sweepers and scavengers, the worship of Lal Guru is given least importance now. Some even altogether denied that Lal Guru or Lal Beg was ever regarded as their patron-saint.

There are a few Dhanaks who are Arya Samajists, which forbids idol worship and lays stress on Vedic religion. It is said that the Arya Samaj movement gained momentum in the second to third decade of the century among the Hindus of erstwhile Punjab and a few Dhanaks embraced this sect as they found it more attractive on account of their social disability of offering worship in temples of popular gods and goddesses. Apart from the Snatan Dharmis and Arya Samajists, a few Dhanaks have embraced Kabirpanthi sect and regard saint Kabir as their patron-saint. But even those who are not Kabirpanthis, venerate saint Kabir—may be because he was a *Julaha* (weaver), weaving being an important occupation of the community.

Festivals

Festivals—The Dhanaks in Haryana and Punjab do not have any festival which can be termed as the characteristic of their community. They participate in most of the important local festivals of the Hindus. They, however, specially, celebrate the festival of Guga Pir which is generally celebrated by the Harijan castes, and specially the sweeper castes such as the Chuhra, *etc.* It is celebrated on the 9th of *Bhadon* (August-September). There

are different legends associated with Guga Pir. According to one such legend, narrated by the Dhanak informants, his name was Guga Chauhan, who was a Rajput disciple of Gorakhnath, the lord of snakes. It is said that the snake bite is cured by his grace and barren women are blessed with offsprings. According to another version recounted by informants, Guga Pir is the same as the Lal Guru or Lal Beg discussed earlier. A fair is held at his shrine and generally cooked *sewian* (vermicelli) are distributed. Some people also take out a procession to celebrate the festival. In the procession, a man carries a stick with plumes of peacock feathers tied at one end and some gingle bells on the other. The processionists move about dancing and singing songs composed in the honour of the Pir.

The other festivals which are celebrated by the members of the Dhanak community with more enthusiasm and zeal are the Teej, the Holi and Shivratri. The Teej festival is celebrated by the young girls and, especially newly married ones, in the same manner as among the other communities on the 3rd day of *Sawan* (July-August). The Holi is also celebrated in the same manner as among other communities and they narrated the same popular legend of Prahalad and Harnakush as to the origin of the festival.

Though Dussehra is considered as an important festival in the area, the Dhanaks disclaimed its celebration on the ground that historically speaking it is not an occasion of rejoicing for them but rather a matter of lamentation as they belong to the stock of Ravana, who was defeated by Rama. But whatever their belief about the genesis of this festival, the Dhanaks do participate in the fairs and bazars held and enjoy the Dussehra and the Ram Lila celebrations. Like others, the burning of the effigy of Ravana is especially watched and enjoyed by their children.

Inter-community Relationship and Social Status

It appears that the Dhanaks who are spread almost throughout north India do not occupy the same social status everywhere. As mentioned elsewhere, the Dhanak caste appears to be of mixed origin, having different traditions of origin as well as different traditional occupations. Their social status varied to a large extent according to the nature of the occupation in which they primarily engaged themselves. Thus, according to Risley (*op. cit.*), the social position of the Dhanaks of Bihar, who are mostly cultivators, is quite respectable and they rank with such castes as Kurmis and Kathis. Russel (*op. cit.*) ranks the Dhanaks of C.P., "just above the impure castes". But in and around Haryana and Punjab, where the Dhanaks have been employed as sweepers and scavengers in addition to other occupations associated with them, they appeared to have occupied a low social status. Thus, according to 1911 Census Report of Punjab and Delhi, (Vol XIV, Pt.I, p : 453) Dhanak is a low caste of scavengers and weavers and the difference between a Dhanak and Chuhra is that the former, while doing general scavenging will not remove the night soil. In fact, according to Rose (1908, *op. cit.*) even the Chuhras are said to look down upon them though they are apparently on equality as neither will eat the leavings of the other

However, during the survey conducted in connection with the present study, an attempt was made to enquire into the present social status of the community. As mentioned elsewhere, the Dhanaks live in the rural as well as the urban areas. In the latter areas, their settlements are generally extensions of the multi-caste *mohallas* and localities predominantly occupied by the castes of low social status, such as the Chamar, the Julaha and the Bhangi. In rural areas, they do not live in villages exclusively of their own and reside with other castes in the same village. But their habitations are generally located on the outskirts or periphery of the village as in the case of other castes of low status. In both the rural and the urban areas, their relations with other castes are institutionalised, specially in the matter of commensality, although there is no such rigid pattern in these matters in the urban areas.

The Dhanaks rank very low in the local caste hierarchy. They are ranked below all the castes of the region except Bhangis or Chuhras and possibly Dheya. Their low social status can be gauged from the fact that some caste Hindus feel polluted by their touch. It is acknowledged by the Dhanaks that previously they used to rank with the Bhangis, but as a result of their recent efforts in giving up scavenging work they have somewhat improved their status. However, their touch still carries pollution to the high castes, like the Brahmins and the Banias, especially in the rural areas. They cannot enter the houses of the caste Hindus None of the castes except Bhangis accept food or water from them, while they themselves accept food and water from all barring Dheyas, Kumhar and Chamars. The Bhangis and the Dhanaks accept food and water from each other on a reciprocal basis. In the matter of the availability of public amenities and social intercourse also the Dhanaks appear to suffer from a number of social disabilities. Though in the urban areas, they do not encounter any serious difficulty in drawing water from public taps it is said that they still do not have free access to the common village wells used by caste Hindus and draw water from only those public well which have been constructed with government aid. They also do not appear to have complete freedom in the matter of using public village bathing ghats. It is said that previously they used to be debarred from entering village *dhabas* or country tea and sweet shops but now there is relaxation in the

matter and nobody challenges them when they feel like refreshing themselves in the above places. In the past, they could not participate freely in village entertainments, such as *bhajan-mandlis* and *swangs* and watched the performance from a distance only. There is, however, no such disability now. It is claimed by a few Dhanaks that in the past their children were segregated in the schools and made to sit in a separate row. But this discrimination is no longer practised. Though it is claimed by a few Dhanaks that after passing of the legislation in favour of the entry of the Scheduled Castes into public temples they are free to enter temples and offer worship, it has come to light that this claim is substantiated only in respect of two or three temples in cities and larger towns. As, for example, they have freedom to enter and carry on worship in the Kirorimal Temple at Bhiwani. In the villages and smaller towns, they are continued to be debarred from entering the temples.

The Dhanaks are not rendered traditional services by the Brahmin priest, the Nai (barber by caste) and the Dhobi (washerman by caste) during their social functions, such as birth and marriage, etc. A priest of their own caste officiates at their marriage ceremonies. Some Dhanaks in the urban areas, however, claim that now the Brahmin priest also serves them on the occasion of their social ceremonies for which the latter receives remuneration in kind as he would not accept food or water from them. But it is understood that no Brahmin priest who serves the caste Hindus of the same area would render them any service. In such cases only those Brahmin priests who are considered degraded and attend the other Scheduled Castes serve them.

In a subsequent account it has been described how the Dhanaks have made attempts for social climbing by giving up scavenging work and similar menial jobs. To some extent these attempts have helped them to raise themselves above the level of Chuhras and Bhangis. But their social status remains a low one.

Structure of Social Control, Prestige and Leadership

It is said that in the past the Dhanaks had their traditional panchayats or councils which used to play an important role in regulating the affairs of the community. This institution operated at two levels, viz., the village level and the regional level. The latter comprised a number of villages and obviously wielded more power and authority.

The panchayats dealt with such matters as breach of social norms of the community, disputes arising out of divorces and cases of elopement and adultery, etc. The panchayats had the power of imposing fines and even ostracizing the guilty persons or offenders. These sanctions enabled the panchayat to yield sufficient influence and power over the members of the community. The panchayat was presided over by a *choudhary* whose office generally operated on hereditary principle. But in case the heir was unsuitable to the office there was scope for other individuals endowed with the qualities of leadership, truthfulness, honesty and resourcefulness to aspire for the office of the *choudhary*. On the complaints being brought to its notice, the panchayat used to hold its meetings at a convenient place and deliberated on the issue brought before it and delivered its judgement. In the case of dispute involving the members of two different villages or localities, the panchayats of the two villages or localities met together or the matter used to be referred to the regional panchayat. Even in case of a dispute between the members belonging to the same village, a disputant had an option to appeal against the judgement of the village panchayat and move the regional panchayat in the matter.

But now, due to various reasons, the caste panchayat has ceased to function as an organised institution except in a few rural areas. It is said that the institution which has been languishing for quite some time among them received its final death blow as a result of the introduction of the panchayati raj, bringing in its wake the inter-caste village panchayat as opposed to intra-caste panchayat. Now, in most of the cases, especially in the urban areas, the disputes between the members of the Dhanak community are referred to the court of law. But in some cases an effort is made to settle the matter in a sitting of the elders of the community commanding some respect, who try to resolve the dispute by way of arbitration and persuasion. If they succeed, which seldom is the case these days, there is an end to the matter otherwise the issue is referred to a court of law by one or both the contestents. A recent case of dispute which could not be resolved by an assembly of the Dhanaks elders discussed below will be of some interest.

A few years ago, a girl residing in Bhiwani was married to a boy in a nearby village. As is customary, immediately after marriage she returned to her home town to stay with her parents. The marriage was consummated only one year before the present study. But after staying with her husband and his parents for a few days, the girl in question returned to her parental house complaining that her husband was a hermaphrodite. It is understood that the boy's father had paid a bride price of Rs. 2,000/- to the girl's brother and had no intention to take the matter lying down. After a few days, he went to her house and asked her brother that she be made to accompany him to her husband's house. But her brother refused and he returned to his village without accomplishing his mission. After a few days, the boy's father again visited Bhiwani along

with a few elderly villagers and requested the girl's relations to allow the girl to accompany him. On this occasion, some of the local elders of the community also assembled. In the assembly of the elders the boy's father maintained that his son was not a hermaphrodite and volunteered that the latter could be medically examined to remove any doubts. But the girl's relations refused to take any step in the matter on the plea that a medical certificate could easily be obtained by giving bribes. Some of the villagers accompanying the boy's father put forward the suggestion that the boy and the girl may be kept in a separate room for a few days in Bhiwani and the behaviour of the boy be noted. But this suggestion was also unacceptable to the girl's relations. Someone in the assembly proposed that the boy may wear a thin *dhoti* whereby it could be known whether he was a hermaphrodite or not but this too did not find favour. It is said that due to the alleged obstinacy and adamant behaviour of the girl's relations the elders of the community did not succeed in resolving the deadlock.

It was also reported by a few local persons of the other communities that the girl in question was not at all interested in staying with her husband as she was of immoral character and secretly indulged in prostitution whereby she earned handsome cash money. It is, however, understood that the boy's father was contemplating to refer the case to a court of law for restitution of conjugal rights.

The above case would amply bring out the inefficacy of the traditional agencies to settle disputes and enforce order. Though most of the caste elders from both sides were convinced of the just case of the boy's side and the unreasonable attitude of the girl's relations, they could not persuade the latter to redress the grievances of the former. They carried no authority or power to bring the guilty to the book and their decisions and judgement could be flouted by any member of the community with impunity.

During the rapid survey for the present study the other aspects of leadership among the Dhanaks could not be studied in detail. It, however, appears that the traditional and institutionalised leadership has gradually lost ground and withered away without necessarily facing any serious challenge from the elite groups. A few individuals who are ambitious and wish to play a role in their community affairs generally develop a following by associating themselves with political parties operating in the area. But their leadership appears to be of diffused nature and not much different from the traditional leadership in the sense that it is not necessarily anti-traditional or even completely modernistic. The main difference is that the present one operates from a different forum. It is enterprisingly individualistic and operates through modern democratic channels as against the institutionalised formal or informal traditional leadership.

It would appear that in the urban centres of Haryana and Punjab, the caste panchayat of Dhanaks may have lost its influence as a result of "loss of focus", as in the world view of the members of their community, the caste may be becoming less and less primary referrent of life. But in the urban Delhi, the Dhanaks have their own caste panchayat which though may not be as powerful as in the past, it is certainly more than a rudimentary organisation and functions fairly effectively. It, therefore, appears that there is complex interplay of various forces contributing to the effective or ineffective functioning of traditional panchayats.

Social Reform and Welfare

The Dhanaks have an all-India organisation, *viz.*, Akhil Bhartiya Dhanak Mahasabha, with headquarters at Delhi. Though most of the Dhanaks interviewed were aware of this organisation, none of them knew anything about its constitution or activities. They could only tell that the main function of the organisation was to look after the general welfare of their community. No local unit of the above organisation or any other organised agency aiming at social reforms appears to be functioning in Haryana and Punjab. It, however, appears that some Dhanaks of these States have been very much exercised over certain matters having a bearing on the social status of the community. They are responsible for organising *ad hoc* social reform movements for alleviating the status of the community as they feel that their depressed social status is due to certain unhealthy practices and customs in their society which need to be weeded out. It is said that as a result of their efforts, and specially due to the initiative of an ex-MLA belonging to the community, a conference of the Dhanaks was organised in Panchevan village in Dadri about 18 years ago. In the conference some Dhanaks lamented their depressed condition and status and exhorted their community to take some concrete steps to improve their social standing. They specially decried the practice of sending their women-folk to work in the houses of Jats and Ahirs for removal of cowdung and garbage, etc. They emphasised that by depending upon the earnings of their women-folk, the Dhanaks were exposing the latter to exploitation and were themselves becoming subjects of ridicule by others. They appealed that the Dhanak males should shake off their lethargy and indolence and take active part in economic activities. They should take over the role of 'bread earners' instead of living as 'dependents of their wives'. It was also suggested that the community should completely dissociate itself from the degrading occupation of scavenging and

leave it to the Chuhras or Bhangis. It is said that as a result of the decisions taken in the conference many Dhanaks gave up scavenging altogether as an occupation and also stopped their women-folk from going to work in the houses and fields of Jats, Ahirs and other communities of the area.

It would, however, appear that while these movements helped the Dhanaks in enhancing their social status to a certain extent and inculcated a sense of achievement among them, these were not without serious repercussions. The jats and the Ahirs who were the main *Jajmans* or patrons of the Dhanaks resented the measures adopted by the latter and retaliated by invoking economic sanctions against them, and bycotting and harassing them. It is alleged that they even stopped the Dhanaks from visiting their fields for defecation. This created a good deal of ill will. However, with the passage of time the tension subsided and there was a let up in the uncompromising attitude of the Jats and Ahirs on the one hand and the Dhanaks on the other. Finding themselves in a quandary and facing other inconveniences, including loss of source of livelihood, it is said, that some of the Dhanaks yielded to the pressure of the Jats and the Ahirs and allowed their women-folk to resume work in the fields and houses of the latter. There was, however, a significant section of the 'non-conformists' who actively resisted the pressure from the Jats and Ahirs and did not permit their women-folk to do any menial jobs for the communities in question. It is claimed by the Dhanaks that a major achievement of these social reform movements was that since then they have almost completely given up scavenging and allied menial jobs which has helped them to acquire a higher social status over the Bhangis and Chuhras, who used to be earlier bracketed with them.

Thus, it would appear that despite some initial set-backs the above movements helped the Dhanaks in social climbing, of course to a limited extent.

Biographies

1. *B.R.*—65 years old B.R. is a tall and hefty person, belonging to a family of traditional weavers settled in Rohtak town since generations. He is the younger of the only two sons of his parents. His 85 years old brother lives separately, having set up his own household after marriage during the lifetime of his parents.

At the age of 18 years, B. R. married a 15 years old girl residing in Chilam village and belonging to Khanagwal *got*, his own *got* being Kirar. After the performance of marriage rites his wife went back to stay with her parents and their *muklawa* (consummation of marriage) took place two years after marriage. However, B. R. is now a widower, his wife having died at the age of 40, after giving birth to two sons and two daughters. He did not marry again for the fear of ill-treatment of the children by their step-mother. His sons have studied upto primary level. He regretted that he could not provide higher education to them for lack of financial resources. One of them is a vegetable seller and the other is a musician. All his children are now married. His sons have established their separate households after marriage. B. R., however, takes his meals in the house of his younger son.

At the time of the survey carried out in connection with the present study, B. R. was a Senior Vice-President of the District Municipal Committee and a President of the Trust of Dhanuk Primary School at Rohtak. He has, however, had no formal education which he regrets very much. He attributed it to mainly two factors:—firstly, in earlier times when he was young, 'Harijans' were not encouraged to attend schools and, secondly, his parents could not afford his education because of their poverty. Perforce he started his career as a weaver at the age of 16 years. He had learnt the art of weaving from his father. Side by side he was also employed as a part-time musician (trumpeter) in a band party. As a weaver he used to earn 8 annas (50 paise) per *khes* (blanket), which could be woven in two days, and Rs. 2/- to Rs. 3/- per day whenever he was hired as a musician in a band party during marriages, *etc.* But he could earn as a musician only for a few days during the marriage season. According to him, despite his meagre earnings, he was able to eke out a fairly comfortable living as the commodities were not so expensive during those days. He now laments that the prices of essential commodities have now gone very high and it is difficult for the members of his community to carry on without hardship.

He mentioned that he was much moved by the plight of the Scheduled Castes, and specially his community, and after independence started taking active interest in politics and public life. He joined Congress party in 1949 and in 1962 was elected as a member of the Municipal Committee on the party ticket. Two years ago he was elected as the Senior Vice President of the District Municipal Committee. He is holding this office in an honorary capacity.

B. R. is not satisfied with the working of the State Social Welfare Department. He alleged that the Department is discriminatory in the matter of giving aids and benefits to the different Scheduled Castes in the State. In support of his allegations he mentioned that in Haryana whole only 46 Dhanaks possessed 25 bighas of land, another important Scheduled Caste of the State possessed 1,143 bighas. He complained that among the Scheduled Castes only one community is

enjoying most of the benefits accruing from the government grants.

2. *R.C.*—R.C. is a young man of 35 years, whose main occupation is weaving. He has been an active member of a political party for the last 12 years. His father was a stone cutter and could not provide his son with higher education; as a result R. C. could read up to sixth class only. R. C. was married when he was only 10 years old. He has 4 sons and 2 daughters. His two sons are studying in a school. His elder daughter, who is 11 years old and the eldest child, was never sent to any school. It is his earnest desire that his sons should occupy good position in life. He has 5 brothers who are married and are living separately. Till last year he was living with his father and mother, but has now established his separate household as a result of a dispute between his mother and his wife.

He started his career as a Machine Operator in Punjab Cloth Mill in Bhiwani where he used to get Rs. 65/- per month. After having worked there for many years, he left the job a few years ago, to participate in active politics. He first contested the Panchayat elections from Johanpal village in 1963 and was elected as the Sarpanch of the village panchayat for three consecutive terms. During the present survey he mentioned that he did not contest the latest elections as he had his fill of active politics and decided to run his household properly. He has now installed a handloom in his house after receiving his provident fund amount of Rs. 1,500/- from the cloth mill where he was employed earlier. He obtains yarn from Khaddar Bhandar and weaves about 15 metres a day. His wife helps him in weaving operation and he earns about Rs. 125/- p.m. from this source.

When asked about the changes that he has seen in his community he sadly recalled the old times, when his community was living in extremely depressed conditions. He regretted that in those days the elderly men of the community did not like to work. They used to send their women-folk for work in the fields and houses of Jat and other agricultural communities of the area for removing garbage and waste, while they themselves sat idle, gossiping and smoking *bidis*. Their women-folk used to bring food and eatables, *etc.* from their employers and the men-folk 'enjoyed' the free food. "This was the reason", lamented R. C., "for the social degradation of our community". However, he sees a ray of light in the matter of amelioration of the conditions of his community as the Dhanak males have gradually realised their folly. They now discourage their women-folk to work as scavengers or to do any other menial jobs, such as lifting fodder and cowdung from the fields of the agricultural communities of the area. He is now of the opinion that the social status of the community is gradually improving and the practice of untouchability is dying out. In support of his views he mentioned that previously the members of his community were debarred from entering temples, but now they no longer suffer from this disability.

3. *S.S.*—In the footsteps of his father, 55 years old S. S. is eking out his livelihood as a labourer in a brick kiln. The father and son were previously living in Nimli village near Dadri but migrated to Bhiwani town for better employment prospects. S.S. is younger of the only two sons of his parents. None of the brothers was fortunate enough to get any formal education. S. S. began his career as a child labourer at the age of ten on a meagre remuneration of two annas (12 paise) per day. When he was 25 years old, he married a girl of Khangawal *got* residing in Shalabaz village about 40 kms. from Bhiwani. At the time of marriage his wife was 15 years old. They have 9 children—6 sons and 3 daughters. They had 3 more children who died in infancy. S. S. found it extremely difficult to manage his large household with his meagre income and he reluctantly agreed to practice family planning measures. It was only last year that his wife got the loop inserted. He has somehow managed to arrange marriage of his three sons and two daughters but because of his poverty he could not give any education to his children.

He complained that for the last four months he has not been able to secure any job and as a result was forced to borrow an amount of Rs. 400/- from a grocer in the town. He is very depressed and does not see a way out of his present predicament and economic plight.

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ANNEXURE

FRAMEWORK FOR ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

I. Name, Identity, Origin and History

1. Name; synonym; sub-caste/sub-tribe as in President's Order and is in other published sources such as census reports, monographs, etc., grouping with other castes and tribes during various censuses. Affinity with other castes and tribes according to recognised authorities.
2. Etymological significance of the name; names by which the community is referred to by (a) others and (b) itself.
3. Identification of the community by occupation or any other way of life.
4. Myths and legends connected with the origin and history of the community and its segments; historical reference and popular beliefs about history and migration of the community.

II. Distribution and Population Trend

1. Area where found; population and concentration in the State and outside; physical aspects of the areas of concentration.
2. Numerical strength in 1961 and population variations during 1901—1961; sex ratio; age groups and rural-urban distribution in 1961.

III. Physical Characteristics

Racial stock; appearance and affinity with other known communities.

IV. Family, Clan, Kinship and Other Analogus Divisions

1. Family; size (observed and published), Types, residence after marriage, descent, lineage and its economic and religious function and inheritance.
2. Clan/gotra and sub-clans; names, etymological meaning, clustering of clans, belief and mythology about origin, status among clans, clan and regulation of marriage (preference and prohibition), occupation and clan, clan and rituals, clan and food (restrictions, prescriptions, etc.)

V. Dwelling, Dress, Food, Ornaments and Other Material Objects Distinctive of the Community

1. Settlement; village site, location; settlement pattern agglomerated, nucleated, dispersed, sprinkled, isolated, amorphous, star-shaped, horse shoe-shaped, linear, rectangular, circular or ring-shaped, etc., and variations; regional pattern *vis-a-vis* pattern of the community.
2. Neighbourhood pattern on the basis of religion, castes (caste Hindus, untouchables) and tribes, etc., with segregations, if any, and the basis thereof.
3. Dwelling unit: Compound, entrance, source of water, the use of different parts of the house (latrine, cattle-shed, isolation huts, etc.); shape (square, round, irregular, etc.); storeys; nature of floor, plinth; wall; roofing; thatching; ventilations and doors; material used; decorations and embellishments; temporary structures.
4. Dress, including headgear and foot wear used ordinarily, on ceremonial occasions and special occasions, sex-wise and according to majority or minority; dress of priests and office-bearers; variations.
5. Ornaments use; material used; from whom obtained; variations according to sex and age.
6. Personal decoration: Tattooing; mutilation (chipping of teeth, etc.); hair cutting; how done, purpose, attitude and variations according to sex and age.
7. Food and drink: Materials (staple and other), prescriptions and prohibitions, fuel, utensils, and mode of preparation; practices connected with serving and taking of food; preservation of food and rituals, if any.
8. Equipments connected with economic pursuits, religion and ritual; how procured; material used, construction, manipulation and purpose.
9. Other household equipments. As above.
10. Equipments connected with recording of time, space and weight and their methods of use. As above.

VI. Environmental Sanitation, Hygienic Habits, Disease and Treatment

1. Environmental sanitation, settlement, disposal of night soil, garbage, etc.
2. Hygienic habits; cleanliness of body, teeth, dress, houses, utensils, etc.
3. Diseases: Incidence; local names; interpretation of the causes; symptoms; diagnoses and cure—persons and methods involved.
4. Modern systems of medicine and attitude of the community towards it.

VII. **Language and Education**

1. Ancestral Language : Classification according to Grierson, persistence of ancestral language and literature.
2. Mother tongue : Classification according to Grierson; bilingualism and multi-lingualism, regional language.
3. Information collected during 1961 on language and literature.
4. Education and literacy : Traditional and modern attitude, information collected during 1961—literacy and levels of education.

VIII. **Economic Life**

1. Economic resources : Land, community land, individual ownership and types of land possessed and land utilised.
2. Forest wealth : Flora and fauna; nature and extent of right in the forest, forest utilization.
3. Fishery, Livestock and others.
4. Working force : Sex-wise, urban and rural variations and comparison of the same with the region.
5. Non workers.
6. Industrial classifications : Details as collected in the field and comparison with that of the 1961 Census figures; traditional occupation and changes in the pattern; main and subsidiary occupations.
7. Forced labour, bonded labour, patron-client relationship (*Jajmani*), mode of payment.
8. Seasonal migration connected with occupation : Recruitment, formation of working groups.
9. Nomadic movement : Cycle and occupational pattern.
10. Shifting cultivation : Method, implements and equipments, produce, participation, cycle of rotation, measure to regulate shifting cultivation and its impact.
11. Terrace cultivation : As above.
12. Income and expenditure : Sources of income, extent, expenditure on food, clothing, house, education, social functions and others.
13. Other aspects of economic life.

IX. **Life Cycle**

A. Birth

1. Beliefs and practices connected with conception, barrenness, still birth, miscarriage, abortion, child death, regulation of sex, etc.
2. Pre-natal and natal practises : Residence, diet, work, taboos, etc., delivery place, assistance, equipments used in delivery, position during delivery, severance of umbilical cord (who does and how done), disposal of placenta.
3. Post-natal practises : Confinement and segregation, ceremonial pollution, diet for mother and child, rituals.
4. Protection and care of child and training.
5. Attitude towards birth of child, preference about sex, preference about number, segregation of sex, etc.

B. Initiation

1. Initiation ceremony; descriptions.
2. Pre-marital sex relations within the community, outside the community, sanctions and taboos.

C. Marriage

1. Age at marriage for both sex : Prohibited degrees of relationship, preferences, widow remarriage (preferences and taboos).
2. Civil status and social status.
3. Types of marriage : monogamy, polygamy (polyandry and polygyny).
4. Selection of spouse : Qualities valued (for bride and groom) mode of selection, procedure.
5. Modes of acquiring mate; by negotiation, force, intrusion, elopement, etc.
6. Terms of settlement : Payment of bride price, dowry, service, exchange, adoption, etc.
7. Ceremonies connected with marriage : Details including who presides over the marriage and services of functional castes.
8. Statistical data as per 1961 Census.
9. Divorce : Reasons and procedure.

D. Death

1. Concept about death, measures to ensure future well-being of the soul, measures to avert harm by the spirits.
2. Methods of disposal : Burial, cremation, exposure, floating on water, etc.
3. Preparations for disposal of dead, informing friends and relatives, treatment of the dead body, digging of pit, for disposal;

how carried, who carried, who accompany, place of disposal, methods of disposal, norms and taboos.

4. Ceremonies connected with disposal.
5. Death rites : Details.
6. Monuments : Tombs, megaliths, etc.
7. Pollution : Duration, restrictions in work, food, dress, shaving, hair cropping, sex life, etc., removal of pollution.
8. Mourning : Mourners and duration.

X. **Religion**

1. Deities : Supreme deity, benevolent deities, malevolent spirits, presiding deities of village and other aspects of life including occupation, clans, gotras, etc.
2. Place of the deities in the regional pattern and Brahmanical and other traditions.
3. Rituals and concepts associated with the pantheon.
4. Spots associated with the deities, pilgrim centres and methods of worship.
5. Religious functionaries.
6. Calendar of festivals and their observance.
7. Concept of soul, hell, heaven, rebirth, trans-migration of soul, etc.
8. Sects and denominations : Name, distribution, beliefs and practises, etc.
9. Statistical information.

XI. **Leisure, Recreation and Child Play**

1. Use of leisure time : For male, female, children and adult; seasonal variation in leisure time.
2. Recreations—their mode and extent, for males, females and children.
3. Leisure and recreation with reference to work.

XII. **Relation Among Different Segments of the Community**

Recognised segments—name, basis (territorial, ceremonial, social, prestige, religion, sect, education, age, etc.). Inter-relationship among various segments; status of the segments, status of women.

XIII. **Inter-community Relationship**

1. Ceremonial relationship : Service by Brahmins, traditional service by castes like barbers, washermen, etc.
2. Pollution by touch or proximity to high caste Hindus, use of well, admission to temple.
3. Secular relationship : Model for other communities; dominance due to economic resources, political status, social status, etc.
4. Bridge role, buffer role, alliance and antagonism of the community.

XIV. **Structure of Social Control, Prestige and Leadership**

1. Social control : Levels of social control, community level, religion level, hereditary, special functionaries, etc., social control by other agencies.
2. Mode of acquiring offices.
3. Control exercised by traditionally recognised leaders, functionaries of statutory bodies of the region, powerful individuals belonging to the community, etc., at the regional level and local level.
4. Relationship between spheres of social control and agencies of social control.
5. Leadership : For social change, for technological change, for political action and for other organised activities at the community level, regional level and local level.
6. Social prestige : Method of gaining social prestige (by performing ritual, merit of feast, associating with historical association, etc.), symbol of social prestige.

XV. **Social Reform and Welfare**

1. Social reform movements : Intensity; reasons (for raising social status, establishing traditional norms, for westernisation, etc.); history and import of the movements.
2. Social welfare : Agency, religious organisation, community as a whole, Govt., official and non-official, role of the social welfare measures and impact.

XVI. **References cited**

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