Chapter-I

Introduction

The District Hanumangarh came into existence by carving out from Ganganagar district on July 12, 1994 as the 31st district of Rajasthan state.¹

Location

The district covering a total geographical area of 9656.09 sq. km² is located between 28°46′30″ to 29°57′20″ North latitudes and 73°49′55″ to 75°31′32″ East longitudes.³ It is surrounded by Ganganagar district in the west, Bikaner district in the southwest, Churu district in the south, Sirsa district of Haryana in the east and Firozpur district of Punjab in the north.

Nomenclature

The district derives its name from its headquarters in Hanumangarh town which is located at a distance of 64 km south-east of Ganganagar on the Sadulpur-Hanumangarh branch line of the northern railways. It is well connected also by road. The town was earlier known as Bhatner. In the year 1805, Maharaja Surat Singh of
Bikaner seized Bhatner after conquering Bhatis and as the day of his victory was Tuesday which is known as the day of god ‘Hanuman’, Bhatner was renamed as Hanumangarh by him.4

**Administrative Units**

It is divided into seven tehsils viz. Bhadra, Hanumangarh, Nohar, Pilibanga, Rawatsar, Sangria and Tibbi with three sub-tehsils Chhani Badi, Dabli Ratthan, and Pallu. The total area of district divided into three *Panchyat Samitis* viz. Bhadra, Hanumangarh and Nohar. The district has 1906 villages with a total population of 15,17,390 person as per 2001 census.

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**Geographical Features**

**Geological Formations**

The entire Hanumangarh district is covered by quaternary alluvium overlain by thin coating of wind-blown sand. The basement below alluvium consists of rocks belonging to Palana series and Nagaur group of Marwar super group. Basement rocks consist of mudstone, sandstone and basal evaporations sequence. Quaternary alluvium is mostly fluvial in origin and consists of alternating sequence of sand, silt and clay. The thickness of alluvium varies from 100m in the southern part to over 400m in the northern part.5
Hanumangarh district is divided into two units i.e. Younger Alluvium and Older Alluvium. Younger Alluvium covers maximum area of the district whereas Older Alluvium is found only in southern part of the district.

Fig. 1.2: Map showing the hydrogeological status of Hanumangarh district.

Younger Alluvium comprises of unconsolidated to loosely consolidated sediments of sand, silt, clay and *kankar*. It forms the principle aquifer and all potential zones fall in this hydrogeological unit. Almost all tehsils have younger alluvial formation except Rawatsar. Older Alluvium comprises sandy and gypseous clay with *kankar*. It occurs in the southern parts of the district. The older alluvium does not contain any potential zone.  

The leading part of the Rajputana Desert (as well as study area) is covered by windblown sand. The alluvium is mainly revealed along the flood plains and solid rock type soil occupies only a very small area. The deposit that now covers the plains consists mainly of formation of sand, silt and clay, laid down during the Pleistocene, i.e. the last geological period.
The region of Bhadra, Nohar, Sangria and some part of Rawatsar tehsils is influenced by the transverse dunes or horseshoe dunes, which result from a wind regime blows overwhelming from one narrow fan of direction the ridges running more or less perpendicularly to the prevailing winds, although certain small area of theses tehsils are covered by sand sheets type.8

**Topography**

The whole district is plain and covered with a thick layer of alluvium and wind-blown sand. It shows a general slope towards west. Generally the sand dunes are 4 to 5m high except in south western part, where they are more intensely developed, being sometimes 10 to 15m high. No important hill exists in the district. The height of the district varies between 168m and 227m above the mean sea level.9

**Soils**

Hanumangarh district consists of Aeolian, flood plain and desert plain soils with wide spread sandy, barren or well cultivated fields, sand dunes of varying heights and well-leveled plains for cultivation. Aeolian soils were formed by the deposition of fine loamy sand by wind and water erosion in the past. These soils are deep with sand to loamy fine sandy soil texture.10

The northern part of the district is covered by arid soils which are characterized by alluvial soils. These soils are loamy to sandy loam in character. Central part of the district is characterized by entisols i.e. desert soils which is loamy along Ghaggar river course. In southern rain fed zone the major soil groups are sandy to loamy sand at places underlined by lime concretion and gypsiferous substrata. The surface is covered with sand hummocks and sand dunes.11

**Rivers**

The Ghaggar river is the only major river in the district which is locally known as Nali and has northeast to southwest course and finally it enters to Pakistan. It is an ephemeral drainage, which sometimes gets flooded during monsoon.12 In its upper course, the bed of this river runs in a more or less east-west direction, up to the Indo-Pakistan border and known variously as the Ghaggar, Hakra and Sotra.13 The Ghaggar
is formed by a combination of two rivers which meet near Wallur\textsuperscript{14} or the west of Anupgarh.\textsuperscript{15} It flows with heavy water in rainy season and remains dry during rest of the seasons. The present researcher noticed it’s both eye views during explorations.

Fig. 1.3: Flooded (above) and dried (below) course of Ghaggar River (near Hanumangarh).
In ancient times, the eastern arm of the Ghaggar was formed by a combination of four rivers namely, (from east to west) Chautang or Drishadvati, Saraswati, Ghaggar and Naival or Semnala (old course of Sutlej-Beas).\textsuperscript{16}

The Chautang flows almost parallel and close to the Yamuna from the hills down to a little north of Karnal where the two rivers diverge. The Chautang taking a south-westerly course dries up near Safidon (Jind, Haryana). But Ghosh was able to trace its course for a considerable distance further to the south-west, past the towns of Bhadra and Nohar (District Hanumangarh) to near Suratgarh where it must have joined the Ghaggar.\textsuperscript{17} The Hansi branch of the Western Yamuna Canal today runs through this dry bed.

Another river running west of, and parallel to it, is also known as Chautang\textsuperscript{18} and joins the Saraswati at the town of Pehowa. The Harappan site of Banawali is probably located on its dry bed. To its west is, the Saraswati which joins the Ghaggar near the village Rasula, a few kilometer south-east of the small town of Shatrana.\textsuperscript{19} In the northern part of the district, the Naival or Semnala is the old course of Sutlej-Beas River which flows only during the rainy session.

From this point onwards, it takes a south-westerly course into Bahawalpur and there it is known as the Hakra or Wahind. After entering Sind, it turns southward and flows in that direction right down to its mouth in the rann of Kutch, and is known variously as the Narra (Nara), Hakra or Sagra, Wahind and Dahan. For the greater part of its course, the bed of the Hakra runs parallel to, that of the Indus.\textsuperscript{20}

**Lakes and Swamps**

No natural lake and tank exists in the district, however, an artificial lake known as Talwara \textit{Jhil} lies at village Talwara of Tibbi tehsil which came into existence by formation of a depression in the bed of Ghaggar river where water gets accumulated. But no irrigation is possible from the water of the \textit{Jhil} because the water is retained only for a few months.\textsuperscript{21}

Nineteen natural inter-dunal depressions are located in east and south-east of Hanumangarh town. These depressions are used to store excess floodwaters of Ghaggar. As the depression is filled with water, the area around depression
experienced a sudden rise in ground water level causing wide spread waterlogging condition. The specific areas affected by waterlogging are west and south-west of Badopal, south-east and south-west of Manak Theri, south-east of Rangmahal, and south-west of Kalanwali Dhani.

**Canals**

The district is drained by three canal systems of (1) Bhakhra Canal System, (2) Indira Gandhi Nahar Priyojana Canal System and (3) Sidhmukh-Nohar Canal System. Bhakhra Canal System utilizes water of Sutlej and Beas Rivers. It provides irrigation to 372,000 hec of land through a total of 1,949 km length of canal network. Out of the total area of the district 39.27% falls under Bhakhra Canal System.

Indira Gandhi Nahar Priyojana Canal System is a multi-disciplinary irrigation project conceived to use 10.6BCM of water available from Ravi and Beas annually to cultivate 1087 hec of land in Thar Desert of western Rajasthan. Out of the total area of the district, 17.60% area is wetted under this canal system.

Sidhmukh Nohar Canal System is an irrigation project planned to provide irrigation in Nohar and Bhadra tehsils by utilizing Rajasthan’s share in Ravi and Beas waters. 17.41% area is covered by this system.

**Ground Water**

The native groundwater in Hanumangarh district is saline and occurs in 65% of the area. Only 18% area yields water of salinity less than 4000mm hos/cm at 25°C. Seepage from canals has improved the quality of phreatic aquifer. Slightly saline groundwater (EC< 4000mm hos/cm at 25°C) occurs from Nohar to Jhansal in the east and Pilibangan to Hanumangarh in north-west. Moderately saline groundwater is found in north-east and south-east of Hanumangarh and north-east of Nohar.
The Chloride content varies from 43ppm to 3231 ppm. High Chloride content (>250ppm) has been observed at Nohar, Masitanwali, Panniwali, Rawatsar and Bisrasar. The concentration of carbonate varies from negligible to 84ppm and bi-carbonate varies from 98ppm to 150ppm.\textsuperscript{28}

The region where rice crops are cultivated, the ground water goes down quickly.\textsuperscript{29} Small pockets located in eastern and southern boundaries has shallow water level less than 20m. Major part of the district, leaving aside small pockets situated in eastern and southern boundaries, have depth of water level within the range of 20 to 40m. Western and southern boundary of the district has depth to water level more than the range of 40m. Ground water table has shown widespread decline throughout the state as well as Hanumangarh district at the rate of 10 to 40cm per year.\textsuperscript{30}

**Minerals**

Gypsum is the only non-metallic mineral found in Hanumangarh district. Mine spoiled areas have been created through its unplanned mining leaving pits without any treatment or restoration.\textsuperscript{31} Gypsum is mostly present as hard nodules of gypsum crystals. Soils are shallow having depth 20-60cm and varies from fine sand, loamy fine sand and sandy loam. The underlying gypsum horizon consists of microcrystalline form, depth ranges from 60-150cm. Gypsum mine areas are occurring mainly in Rawatsar.
tehsil near Bisrasar, Hamirdesar, Jorawarpura, Kharsandi, Khopda, Khuian, Nyolakhi, Pallu, Purabsar, Ramka and Syorani villages.

This mineral is an important one which is mainly used in the manufacture of fertilizer, Portland cement and Plaster of Paris. This is exported to Sindri Fertilizer Factory. Its use is also made in textile and building industries. Besides occasional streaks of carbonate material used for manufacturing of lime or as building stone and good quality clay suitable for brick making are also found in the district. Sweet lime, locally called *Mithā Chūnā* is found in the vicinity of Rawatsar tehsil while gravel and mud are found in the most places in the district.32

**Ecological Features**

**Climate**

Climate indicates a generalized and composite picture of the average weather conditions and prominent departures from the average spread over a long period, for a given larger area. The climate of the district is marked with large variations of temperature, extreme dryness and scanty rainfall, which are characteristic of a desert climate. The cold season from November to March is followed by summer from April to June. The period from July to mid-September constitutes the south-west monsoon while mid-September to October is transitional post-monsoon period.33

**Clouds**

Even during the south-west monsoon season, the skies are over cast or heavily clouded only on a few days, on other days they are only moderately clouded. In the rest of the year, skies are mostly clear or lightly clouded except during the winter months when due to passing western disturbances, they are over cast for short spells of a day or two.34

**Rainfall**

To the west of the Aravalli range, the climate is characterized by low rainfall with erratic distribution, extremes of diurnal and annual temperatures, low humidity and high wind velocity. The climate is semi-arid to sub-humid in the east of the Aravalli range, characterized by more or less the same extremes in temperatures but relatively lower
wind velocity and high humidity with better rainfall. The entire state is characterized by hyper thermic condition.\textsuperscript{35}

The general trend of Isohyets is from north-west to south-east. There is a very quick and marked decrease in rainfall west of the Aravalli range, making western Rajasthan the most arid part. Mean annual rainfall is 281mm. This varies from 350mm to 225mm with a decreasing trend from south-east to north-west. The yearly total rainfall is highly variable at different places all over the district.\textsuperscript{36}

This area is situated in the south-east Asian monsoon region. Most of the moisture is carried to the region by monsoon from the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean.\textsuperscript{37} During the winter season, under the influence of an anticyclone over the Siberia dry north-westerly wind blows over the study area.

Temperature

There are seasonal variations in the temperature records. The temperature begins to increase in March and continues to be increased towards the end of June when it reaches up to 42\textdegree C. The summer heat with scorching, a dust laden wind blowing frequently becomes intense and unbearable and the day temperature sometimes goes up to 50\textdegree C. With the advance of south-west monsoon by about the middle of July, temperature drops down a little, but weather continues to be oppressive due to increased moisture in the air. With withdrawal of the monsoon by about the latter half of September, day and night temperatures both begin to fall, the drop in night temperature being more rapid. The diurnal range of temperature is very large, particularly in the winter months and its drop after nightfall is rather sudden and trying. January is the coldest month with the mean daily minimum temperature at 4.7\textdegree C and the mean daily maximum at 20.5\textdegree C. In the wake of western disturbances moving across North India during the winter season, cold waves affect the district and the minimum temperature sometimes drops to 2\textdegree or 3\textdegree C below the freezing point resulting in frosts.\textsuperscript{38}

Humidity

Except during the short rainy season, humidity is low and even during this period the air is drier in between the rains. The summer months are the driest, especially the
afternoons during April and May when the relative humidities are of the order of 20 to 25 percent.\textsuperscript{39}

**Winds**

Three types of winds blow in the region: (1) monsoon winds (2) winter winds and (3) lloo (local winds). During summer, the sub-tropical high pressure belt and the thermal equator are displaced northward in response to the changing pattern of solar heating of the earth. In Southern Asia this movement is magnified by the effects of the vast land mass. The equatorial westerly embedded in tropical easterlies also move northward. From the ocean, they move towards the land mass and blow over the Asian continent. These are the south-westerly summer monsoon. During winter, the sub-tropical high pressure belt and the thermal equator retreat southward. The normal trade wind is re-established. This is the winter monsoon. Local winds develop as a result of local differences in the temperature and pressure. They affect small areas and are restricted to the lowest levels of the troposphere.\textsuperscript{40}

In the plains of northern India and Pakistan, sometimes a very hot and dry wind blows from the west in the months of May and June, usually in the afternoons. It is known as *Loo*. Its temperature invariably ranges between 45\textdegree{} C and 50\textdegree{} C. It may cause sunstroke to people. The whole of northwest India is visited by periodical dust storms and large concentrations of atmospheric aerosol are seen over the area, especially during the pre-monsoon season.\textsuperscript{41} In the south-west monsoon season, winds from the south-west and west are more common, with the easterlies and south-easterlies blowing on some days. In the post-monsoon and winter season, south-easterlies and westerly are common in the mornings while northerlies and north-westerlies are predominant in the afternoons. During summer, winds blow from west or south-west in the morning. In the afternoons, winds blow from directions between west and north.

**Contemporary Setting**

**Crops**

The majority of the people of the area mainly depend upon agriculture. Farming is still continues to be a big gamble for farmer because it entirely depends upon weather
conditions. The district is endowed with rich soil and is well drained with moisture retaining characteristics which are very much helpful for the production of food and cash crops.42

There are mainly two harvests in a year viz. the Rabi and Kharif. Rabi is locally called Sadhu. This is winter sowing. Rabi crops are sown in Nali type of soil on which rain waters during monsoon leaves moisture. The major Rabi crops are Barley, Berseem, Gram, Methi, Mustard, Tobacco, Tubers, Wheat, and other vegetables. In sandy area or Rohi only sadhu crops are sown and Dhora is the uncultivated barren land with sand dunes.43

The Kharif is locally called Samnu. The Kharif crop consists chiefly of Bajara, Gawar, Ground Nut, Jowar, Maiz, Moong, Moth, Paddy, San and Sugarcane.44

Out of the total cropped area (1.18 million hec) in the district during 1997-98 about 58% goes to Rabi crops and rest of 42% to Kharif crops. Of the total cropped area 47% is irrigated while 53% goes rain fed. Gram, Wheat, Gawar, Mustard and Bajara are most dominant crops constituting 31.5%, 17.32%, 10.89%, 7.58% and 5.80% of the total cropped area respectively. Gram is mainly taken on the conserved moisture. Other important crops are Cotton, Moth, Paddy, Moong, Barley and Taramira constituting 18.25%, 2.49%, 1.92%, 1.5%, 1.25% and 0.78% respectively.45

Irrigation

Agriculture is the most dominant land use comprising 93% of the total geographical area of the district. Canal irrigated area constitutes 33% and occurs in northern plains. It includes 3,810 sq. km (39.36%) Bhakhra canal command area and 1598 sq. km (16.46%) IGNP command area. Irrigated double cropped area constitutes 33.10% of the district and 35.58% of the total agricultural land.46 Double cropping is done both under irrigation and conserved moisture. Irrigated double-cropped area is mainly concentrated throughout Tibbi, Sangria, Hanumangarh and Pillibangan tehsils occupying their 69.41%, 62.42%, 61.53% and 53.99% area respectively.47

Chemical analysis of water samples collected from tube-wells show that salinity increases with depth. The deep groundwater is highly saline and cannot be used for any
purposes. High value of nitrate and fluoride has also affected the portability of groundwater.48

Flora:

The Flora of the region is sparse as expected in the desert land. This is an important source to reconstruct the ancient environment and also act as a significant indicator of environmental changes. On account of the pressure of population and extensive cultivation very little of the wild flora has been left in the region. Various kinds of trees and scrubs can be seen on the banks of canals, roadsides and other different locations. It has a small range of slow-growing thorny trees, shrubs and grasses that has adapted itself to the harsh conditions.49

Due to adverse conditions such as scarcity of surface water instability of soil, arid or semi-arid climate etc. no major forest exist in the district. An area of 2,743 hec has been mapped as notified forest occurring mainly in Hanumangarh tehsil. Forest department has carried out plantation at several places with Eucalyptus, Acacia tortilis, Acacia nilotica and Dalbergia sissoo. Altogether an area of 5,043 hec has been identified under this category. These are mainly concentrated in Nohar, Bhadra and Rawatsar tehsils comprising 1,532 hec, 766 hec and 202 hec respectively. Permanent pastures and Oran constitute 11,619 hec area and are in highly degraded condition.50 Such lands are mainly concentrated in rain-fed southern part of the district. Sangria and Tibbi tehsils have no pastures. Settlements and water bodies constitute 2.18% and 0.29% area of the district respectively.51

Most commonly found tree species are Āk (Calotropis procera), Babul (Acacia arabika), Bawli (Acacia jacquemonti), Beri (Zizphus nummularia), Bui (Aerna tomentosa), Dhāk (Butea frondosa), Jaal (Salvadora oleoides Decne), Jand/Khejari (Prosopis spicigera), Moonj (Saccharum munja) Pahari Kīkar (Prosopis juliflora), Pipal (Ficus religiosa L.), Rohirā (Tecomella undulata), Shisham (Dalbergia sissoo) and Śīris (Albizzia lebbek). The Khejari held sacred by the Bishnoi community of Jodhpur, is extremely drought resistant, due to its deep root system. It is a multipurpose tree— its thorny twigs are used to form barriers between fields to keep animals away from the crops, its leaves are dried and used as fodder, its fruits are eaten after ripen and when
unripe it is cooked and eaten as Sāngṛi. The utility list goes on further; the wood is used for furniture and the branches as fuel. 52

Grasses

Several types of grasses include the parasitic plant Amarbel (Cuscuta reflexa), Anjan (Cenchrus ciliaris), Bathua (Chenopodium spp.), Bharut (Cenchrus catharticus), Boor (Cenchrus jwarancusa), Dābh (Desmostachya bipinnatta), Dhaman (Pennis etem cenchroides), Dūb (Cynodon dactylon), Lana (Haloxylon selicornis), Lani (Haloxylon recurvum), Motha (Cyperus rotundus) and Sawan (Eleusine flage illifera).

Shrubs

The shrub Calligonum polygonoides, locally known as phog serves several purposes. It stabilizes sand dunes, its wood is used for construction, the branches make camel fodder and its pods known as lasson are eaten as vegetables. Other shrubs like Hins (Capparis septaria L. Carissa spinarum L.), leafless Kair (Capparis decidua), Khip (Leptadenia pyrotechnica), Mallah (Zizyphus nummularia) and Thor (Euphorbia caduca) also have various uses. Khair provides strong and durable wood that is resistant to white ants and lastly also produces a fruit that is edible both fresh and preserved. Āk and Thor secrete a juice that is taken as a cough balm while the leaves of Thor known as papri are eaten as a vegetable. 53

Medicinal Plants

Ashwagandha (Withania sominifera), Bansa (Adhatoda vasida), Bhākhrā (Tribulus terrestrial), Brahmi (Hydrocotyle vulgaris), Dhaturā (Datura stramonium), Ephedrine (Ephedra gerardiana), Ginger (Zingiber officinalis), Jalap (Exogenium purga), Mulhatti (Glycyrrhiza glabra), Neem (Azadirachta indica), Tulsī (Ocimum sanctum) and Haldi (Curcuma domestica) are the main medicinal plants which are used by the local people of the region.

Drug Plants

Bhāng (Cannabis sativa), Dhaturā (Datura stramonium), Indian poppy (Papaver sominiferum) and Tabacco (Nicotiana tabacum) are the main plants those cultivated for drugs by the people in the region. 54
**Fauna:**

Due to growing population, extensive cultivation of the land and reclamation of jungles and barren lands, wild animals are disappearing very fast. Thus finding no refuge and shelter, animals and birds have migrated and are still migrating to other places or hunted. However, a few wild animals are still found in the region.

**Mammals**

Blackbuck (*Antilope cervicapara*), Bandar (*Macaca mulatta*), Bheriya (*Canis lupus*), Blue bull or Neelgai (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*), Chhuchhunder (*Suncus murinus*), Chinkèr (*Gazella gazelle*), common house Rat (*Rattus rattus*), common Langó (*Prebytis entellus*), common Yellow Bat (*Scotophilus heathi*), desert Cat (*Felis lybica ornater*), Gilheri (*Funambulus pennant*), Indian Fox (*Vulpes bengtalenis*), Indian Hare (*Lepus nigricollis*), Jackal (*Canis aureus*), Striped Hyaena (*Hyaena hyaena*) and wild boar (*Sus scrofa cristats*) etc. are the mammals found in the region.

**Birds**

The common birds found in the area of present study are Batbar (*Pterocles exustus*), Black Partridge (*Francolinus francolinus asiae*), Bluewinged Teal (*Anas querquedula*), Bulbul (*Molpastes cafer*), common Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*), Cotton Teal (*Nettapus coromandelianus coromandelianus*), Eagle Owl (*Bubo bubo*), Grey Quail (*Conturnix conturnix coturnix*), House Crow (*Corvus splendens*), Indian jungle Crow (*Corvus macrorhynchos cluminatus*), Indian *Myna* (*Acridotheres gininianus*), Indian pied Kingfisher (*Ceryle rudis leuc melantra*), Indian pied *Myna* (*Sturnus contra contra*), Indian purple Sunbird (*Estrilda amandava amandava*), Indian Ring Dove (*Streptopelia risoria*), Indian Shikra (*Astur badius*), Indian small green Bee-Easter (*Merops orientalis*), King Crow (*Dicrurus adsimilis albirictus*), Koel (*Eudynamys scolopacea scolopacea*), Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), Mor (*Pavo cristatus*), Mottle wood Owl (*Strix ocellata*), Northern jungle *Myna* (*Acridotheres fuscus fuscus*), Northern Khati-chira (*Upupa epops*), Pintail (*Anas acuta*), Redvented Spotbill Duck (*Anas poecilorhyncha*), Titar (*Francolinus pondicerianus*), Western Turtle Dove (*Streptopelia orientalis meena*) and Wigeon (*Anas Penelope*).
Reptiles

Common Indian Krait (Elapide bungarus caeruleus), common Lizards (Haemidactylus brooki), Girgit (Calotesversicolour), Indian Python (molurus), Phoorsa (Echis carinatus), Rat Snake (Ptyas mucosus), Sanda (Uromastix hardwicki), Sand boa (Eryx johni johni) and sand Snake (Psammophilus leithi) are the reptile species.

Amphibians

Bata (Labeo bata), Dolla (Channa punetatus), common toad (Bufonidae bufo melanostictus), Ghally (Ompok bimaculatus), Indian bull frog (Ranidae rana tigrina), Indian burrowing frog (Rana breviceps), Indian cricket frog (Rana limnocharis), Katla (Catla catla), Magur (Clarias batrachus), Mallee (Wallago attu), Mrigal (Cirrhinus reba), Rohu (Labeo rohita), Singhara (Mystus seenghala) and Siriha (Labeo gonius) are the amphibians found in the region.

People

About 90% of the total population comes from the village. Majority of the people in the region belongs to the village life style. The Jats, Brâhmans, Râjputs, Muslims and schedule cast are the major groups of the population. All these groups mainly depend on agriculture. The Râjputs though represent only a small proportion of the populace are the most influential section of the people in Rajasthan. They are proud of their martial reputation and of their ancestry. The Banjârâs are travelling tradesmen and artisans. The Gadia Lohâr is the ironsmith who travels in bullock carts, generally manufacture and repair agricultural and household implements. Some other castes, such as Ahir, Jogi, Bania, Kumhâra etc. are also the part of the social formation of the region.

Religions and Beliefs

Most of the population of Hanumangarh belongs to Hindu belief. But Sikhs, followers of Sikhism, are also in good number. The Muslims form less than 10% of the population and most of them are Sunnis. The Mahajan community (the trading class) is subdivided into a large number of groups, some of these groups are Jain, while others are Hindu. Shiva, Vishnû, Râma, Krishnâ, Hanumânâ etc. are the main deities which are worshipped in the region.
Demographics

As of 2001 Census of India, Hanumangarh had a population of 129,654. Males constitute 54% of the population and females 46%. Hanumangarh has an average literacy rate of 65%, higher than the national average of 59.5%. Male literacy is 72%, and female literacy is 57%. About 14% of the population was under 6 years of age.58

Language and Dialect

The major dialect in all over the region is spoken Bagdi with the admixture of Haryanvi/Rajasthani/Punjabi words. The displaced persons who settled in this region speak Punjabi. Both, the local and displaced persons have adopted many words from each other’s language. Besides, Punjabi, English, Hindi and Urdu are also in use. For writing purposes, Devanagri script is used by a large number of people.59

Festivals

The main festivals of Hindus are Diwali, Holi, Dussehera, Sheetla Ashtami, Akshaya Tritiya, Raksha Bandhan, Makar Sakranti etc. The birthday of all the ten Gurus are celebrated by the Sikhs but the birthday of first Guru Nanak and the tenth Guru Govind Singh are celebrated on a larger scale. The festivals, celebrated by the Muslims in the region are Bara Wafat, Shab-e-Barat, Ramzan, Moharrum, Id-Ui-Fitar and Id-Ui-Juha.60

Music

The ballad traditions of Rajasthan are indeed appealing. Here bards sing about folk heroes like Tejaji, Gogaji and Ramdev Ji. They sing and narrate heroic tales of battles and even of legendary lovers and their tragedies. Here too the music has a strong religious taste and is sung in dedication to various deities. Some religious songs are folk idioms of Saints like Surdas, Kabirdas, Meerabai and others. These songs are mostly heard in nightlong celebrations.

Places of Interest:

Bhatner Fort, Hanumangarh

The ancient fort situated on the bank of river Ghaggar is the chief attraction of the district and is of great historical value. It was ruled by Bhatti Rajputs for a long period and for a short spell was under the Turk Timur the Lame, who wrote in his
autobiography Tuzuk-i-Timuri, that he had not seen a stronger and more fortified citadel in the whole of India. The same mason who built the Bhatinda fort also erected Bhatner fort.61

Fig. 1.5: Main entrance of the Bhatner Fort, Hanumangarh.

It was in 1527 the fourth ruler of Bikaner Rao Jait Singh annexed the fort and made it a part of the Bikaner state. In year 1805, Maharaja Surat Singh of Bikaner captured Bhatner after defeating Bhatis. Since the day of his victory was Tuesday (known as the day of god ‘Hanuman’), he named Bhatner as Hanumangarh. The entire fort is built of bricks. It is a large parallelogram having twelve projected circular bastions on each side, a typical feature of Mughal fortification. The fort is built over a site which has yielded remains of Painted Grey Ware culture, Rangmahal culture and Medieval times.

Bhadarakali Temple, Amarpura Thehdi

The historical temple of Maa Bhadrakali is situated at Amarpura Thehdi village, 7 km from the district headquarters. Maharaja Ram Singh, sixth ruler of Bikaner is said to have constructed this temple on Badshah Akbar’s desire.62 Though pilgrims visit the temple throughout the year but during the Mela days on Chaitra Sudi 8 and 9,
thousands of pilgrims from Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan visit the temple to worship the goddess.

Gogaji Temple, Gogamedi

Gogamedi is a place of religious importance in Nohar tehsil about 85 km south-east from district headquarter. The village is situated on the Sadulpur-Hanumangarh branch of the Northern Railways. It is also connected with Nohar by metalled road and buses ply over it. There is a famous temple of Goga peer. Goga is believed to have held sway in the thirteenth century over the entire area extending from Hansi to the Sutlej. Many of the villages folk believe that a visit to his shrine renders them immune from snake bite. A grand fair is held here annually (in August) on Bhadwa Badi 1 and continues till Bhadwa Sudi 11 in the martyr of Gogaji. Thousands of pilgrims from various parts of the country visit the place during the occasion to worship Gogaji ‘god of snakes’. Gogaji’s samâdhi is made of marble and has two minarets and a boundary wall. His idol shows him riding a blue horse and with a snake coiled around his neck. Devotees rub incense at the samâdhi and offer coconuts, 'batashas' (sugar drops) and cash and sing songs in his praise.

Gogaji was born in Chauhan Rajput dynasty of Dadrewa village of Churu District in Rajasthan. It is believed that Gogaji went into samâdhi at Gogamedi. The beauty of this place is that the pilgrims from every caste and religion visit here to worship Gogaji. He is known as Goga among the Hindus and Jahar Peer among the Muslims. Moreover, the temple has one Hindu priest and one Muslim priest, which is a great example of communal harmony.

Nohar

The town is the headquarters of the sub-division and tehsil of the same name. It lies on the Hanumangarh-Sadulpur branch line of the Northern Railways at a distance of 63 km from the district headquarters. Nohar is a very old town. About Vikram Samvat 1970 or 1813 AD the fort of Nohar was built. Nohar is also known for an old Jain temple and the Jogi Assan of Nath Sampradaya. There is also a Sikh Gurudwara which was said to have been founded to commemorate the visit of Guru Govind Singh to this place.63
Pallu

It is a sub tehsil headquarters under the tehsil Rawatsar situated in south of district headquarters at a distance of 72 km. The place has attracted attention as a result of unearthing of some sculptures which are believed to relate to the 12th and 13th centuries. Of these, two marble statues of Saraswati (Goddess of Learning) are considered to be among the best pieces of the medieval Indian art. Many other pieces of art and coins have been discovered. The study of which is yet to be conducted and it is expected to throw considerable light on the ancient culture of this area.

The place is also known for a temple of Brahmani but there is some controversy about its identity. Some claim it a Jain temple while others consider it Hindu temple. A fair is held here on Asoj Sudi Ashtami (September-October) every year.64

Sangria

The town is the headquarters of the sub-division and tehsil of the same name. It lies on the Hanumangarh-Bhatinda line of the Northern Railways at a distance of 35 km from the district headquarters. In early days Sangria was popular for its Gangaur mela (fair) for the sale and purchase of animals such as camels, oxen, cows, buffaloes, goats, sheep, donkeys and horses. It was also well known at one time for its herds of Billy goats, hence Sangria was called Bokawali (a village of Billy goats) or Boak market (a place to sell and purchase Billy goats). The main attraction of the town is a museum which is named as Sir Chotu Ram memorial Museum. It can boast of some rare collections in the form of old images, ancient paintings, modern paintings and things belonging to Chinese, Tibetan and European art. The museum has at present, ten main sections devoted to sculptures, epigraphs, antiquities, paintings, etc.65

Notes and References

6 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
14 Ibid. p. 57.
20 Ibid. p. 147.


Ibid.


Ibid. p. 19.


Ibid. p. 19


Ibid. p. 200.


