Chapter III

INTRODUCTION:

The Society in Haryana in the 1850s was predominantly rural in character, with about 90% people living in villages. Western education was yet to spread here. In the absence of the economic change and social mobilization which took place at that time in various other regions the people here led a traditional life, carried on agriculture with conventional plough and bullocks. Their village communities, through the Chaudharis, owing no obligation to the Government or any other authority except for the payment of taxes, managed all the affairs. The previous rulers viz. the Afghans, the Mughals and the Marathas always realized the worth of this arrangement and never interfered in the internal affairs of the village community so long as they paid their dues to the state. On the other hand the people, therefore, never bothered about the type and kind of the government which ruled over the country.

The British East India Company acquired the Haryana region (Rania, Hisar, Fatehabad) on 30th December 1803 from Daulat Rao Sindhia by the treaty of Durji-Arjan Gaon. Instead of establishing direct rule over the whole of the territory, the British created a large number of

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small estates to be ruled over by the local chieftains to them under their sovereignty. Sirsa and Rania were assigned to Nawab Zabita Khan. In 1837, a new District of Bhatiana Comprising the area of Sirsa, Dabwali, Rania, Abohar and Fazilka was formed. Perhaps the Sirsa District was named as Bhatiana District because this region was ruled over by the Bhattis. The District remained a part of the Delhi Division in the Northwest provinces till 1857. The estates of Nawab of Rania were confiscated by the British Government in 1818. The Nawab was granted pension, which was however reduced subsequently.

The Settlement officers of the British East India Company fixed land revenue at more than 50% of the total production without consulting or having consent of the Chaudharies in any way. The collection were made in February and September long before the harvest when the peasants had practically nothing with them in cash or in kind. The collection became, at times oppressive which impelled the peasants to desert their villages.

In the revenue records, a large number of villages during this period are shown as ‘Be-charagh’ which shows the plight of the village

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6 Ibid P-62.
folk. The peasants were thus compelled to go to the sahukars and the money-lenders to borrow money to pay their land revenue. The money lenders charged the exorbitant rate of interest and exploited the borrowers and at times deprived them of their holdings. The popular panchayats were divested of Judicial powers and the British Courts started administration justice which was foreign, costly and time consuming. Like the villagers, the urbanites who were engaged in professions of trade, craft, industry, service and labours also became victim of injurious economic policy of the British resulting into scene of dirty and deserted places in towns. The feudal chiefs like Bhattis of Sirsa, Rania and Fatehabad were also discontented with the British Government, because it had deprived them of their ancestral estates. Both the ruralites and the urbanites, thus, wished to throw away the British administration and rose against the foreign yoke alongwith their countrymen in 1857. This historical incident the first war of independence, is popularly known as ‘Ghadar’.

On the eve of the Great uprising, Hisar and Sirsa were the Military Stations of Secondary importance besides the main centre of the fourth regiment of regular cavalry at Hansi. During this period Seth Fateh Chand and his brother Seth Hunna Mal, treasurers of Sirsa and Hisar

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7 M.M. Juneja, *Op. CIT*, P. 72
8 Wilson, *Op. CIT*, P. 63
respectively, laid a private camel dark between Sirsa and Hisar to give timely information of movement of the troops. The news of the revolt in a section of Haryana light infantry at Hisar and Hansi and the killing of the British officers including the Deputy Commissioner, Mr. Wedderburn, on May 27, 1857 was conveyed to the British residents at Sirsa to alarm them. It was mainly owing to this information that the British officers and ladies who were demoralized fled without losing any times to save their lives. Captain Roebtson, the Superintendent of Bhatiana District, and his family moved via Dabwali and Bhatinda to Ferozepur where they reached safely.

The Britishers, some 17 in number, many of them women and children started for Sahuwala under the leadership of Donald Assistant Superintendent and having been joined there by Mr. Bowls, custom patrol, reached Rori after facing some trouble from the inhabitants of Thiraj and other villages who threatened them as they passed. At Rori the party took refuge in the Thana with the hope that the four Burkundazes (gun carrier sepoys) would save their lives.

The villagers besieged the thana and the Burkundazeo deserted their officers and went over to their fellow besiegers. The British, any

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9 Hisar Division, Letter from Deputy Commissioner, Sirsa to the Commissioner Hisar, No. 243, 29 May 1859, Haryana State Archives, P. 13
11 Ram Singh Jakhra, Op. CIT, P. 42
how, managed to flee and hastened to take refuge in the small mud fort and closed the gate. They could not procure food from the town and were prevented from fetching even water from the well outside. But in the darkness of the night Baba Janakidas, a Fakir of the place, brought them supplies of water and flour and passed them through the aperture under the fort gates. The party was thus enabled to hold out until the arrival of some Patiala troops who escorted them to a place of safety in Patiala territory.\textsuperscript{12} They were hospitably treated by the Patiala authorities until the restoration of order enabled them to return to Sirsa. The only Britishers left at Sirsa were lieut. Hillard the officer commanding the Detachment, and his brother-in-law, Mr. Fell Assistant Patrol. They were not in Sirsa town when others left it. They had gone out with some troops towards village Jodhkan to suppress some local disturbances, when they came back, they visited the barracks of the sepoys and made efforts to keep them away from the uprising. The sepoys refused to obey lieut. Hilliard’s orders but supplied him with money and allowed him and Mr. Fell to depart unmolested.\textsuperscript{13}

The custom peons, twenty in number were materially instrumental in promoting uprising against the British in Sirsa. They were the first to plunder the town and the European Officers property. They burnt down


\textsuperscript{13} Wilson, \textit{Op. CIT}, P. 64
the treasury house where the custom’s records were kept and lieut.\textsuperscript{14} Hilliard’s bungalow. On May 28, 1857 the sepoys occupied the tehsil treasury and seized Rs. 7,758,200 (Table-1) from these but without much violence marched off to join their comrades at Hansi.

**TABLE- 1\textsuperscript{15}**

| PARTICULARS OF THE CASH DEPOSITED IN THE SIRSA TREASURY FOUND IN THE ENCLOSURES: |  
| Patwari’s Dues | 3,827 | 11 | 7 |  
| Chowkidaree Dues | 1,711 | 0 | 0 |  
| Ameens’ Dues | 153 | 0 | 7 |  
| | | | |  
| | | 5,691 | 12 | 4 |  
| Travelling allowance of Amlah | 85 | 0 | 0 |  
| Pay of customs Establishment | 974 | 0 | 0 |  
| Pay of Lowars | 598 | 6 | 6 |  
| Advances for Jail manufacturing | 400 | 0 | 0 |  
| | | | |  
| | | 2,057 | 6 | 6 |  
| Total Rupees | | | |  
| | 7,758 | 20 | 0 |  

Having come to know about the timely information supplied to the British officers at Sirsa to alarm them, the subedar of the Haryana light infantry seized Lala Fateh Chand, treasurer of Sirsa, and sentenced him to

\textsuperscript{14} Deputy Commissioner, Sirs to the Commisioner, Hisar, Op. CIT, HSR, P. 13

\textsuperscript{15} Proceeding of the Foreign Department, Political (C) 26 January, 1859, National Archives of India, P. 43
be shot but on the intervention of a Brahmin Dubey Baldeo Prashad, Munsiff of Sirsa, his life was spared but was punished 1500 rupee and his house and property plundered. The civilians both Hindu and Muslims led by Hira Singh, Khote Singh, Man Singh, Mana, Rahim, Budhoo Gani Khan, Man Khan, Commudin Khan, Sawhoo Durrab and others also rose against the British. Lieut J.H. Hilliard and Assistant Patrol Mr. J.W. Fell who had been forced to leave Sirsa fled to the village Chhatriyan where both the officers were captured and murdered by the villagers on May 30, 1857 and later on were buried in the ground of St. John Methodist Church, Sirsa. The Tehsildar of Sirsa, the Revenue Sarishtadar and the Kotwali Muharrier were murdered and the records of the District Office were torn and scattered about while some of them were altogether destroyed.

The Bhattis led by the Nawab of Rania Nur Samad Khan, declared their independence. Bhatti Nur Samad Khan formed his own group and along with his uncle Ghulam Ali Khan captured a vast region, plundered property worth Rs. 1465 in this region, declared himself governor of Sirsa and then began to rule his erstwhile confiscated estate. All the local leaders acknowledged the central authority of Emperor Bahadur Shah.

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16 Private Papers- Lala Fateh Chand and Rai Sahib Ram Sukh Das. Treasurer Sirsa, 2 July 1884, P. 25
17 Private paper, Lala Fateh Chand, Op. CIT, 15 March 1866, P. 26
18 Deputy Commissioner, Sirsa to the Commissioner, Hisar, Op. CIT, Hisar, P. 16
Muhammad Azim, the Assistant of Delhi, proclaimed the end of the British rule and established his authority over most of the region.¹⁹

Some Britishers were rescued by the suthars of village Rasaliya. Several British residents fled to the adjoining Rajput state of Bikaner where Maharaja Sardar Singh granted the asylum. A British gentleman and a lady who were however left at Sirsa, in order to save their lives hid themselves under the stairs of the well popularly known as Mohunta Ka Kanua. Hearing the foot-steps of Pt. Ganeshi Lal who happened to be there to fetch water they entreated the latter to save their lives. The Panditji immediately informed Risaldar Shamsuddin Khan residing in the nearby Khan Sahib street. The Khan Sahib, who was all out in support of the British provided them horse and burkas and helped them to flee safely from Sirsa.²⁰

The inhabitants of the town of Sirsa, guessing threat of a prey to be plundered, fled with their movable articles leaving immovable and heavy goods at Sirsa to the territory of Bikaner state to save themselves from the general loot. Pt. Ganeshi Lal took up his Bhagwat and left the town but he on the way at Dabar on Rania road saw a lahar taking off the yellow

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¹⁹ Wilson, *Op. CIT*, P. 63

²⁰ Deputy Commissioner Sirsa to the Commission, *Hisar dated 23 September 1859, No. 434, HSA.*
turban of the local baniya, who happened to be there, with his sword and saw a golden ring tied with the choti.  

The iron-smith cut it off and took it in his possession but did not harm his body. He then approached the Panditji but seeing only the book in the bundle on his head allowed him to go. The well to do families of the town like Fateh Chand Ram Sukh Das, Bal Chand, Sada Sukh Mohunta, Mehtab Rai Bhopal and others left the town under the darkness of the night for Nohar. They travelled the whole night but in the morning they found themselves in Begu village situated on the outskirts of Sirsa town. The Muslim denizens of the village did not harm anybody but on the other hand they provided them food and water. It is clearly evident that there was no issue to Hindu or Muslim. The plunderers were anti-social elements who were concerned only with the booty of valuables.

The prince, Muhammad Azim, escorted safely the treasure of Sirsa and a contingent of force to the Mughal emperor in Delhi. Rs. 3,31,000 were deposited with the royal treasury on June 11, 1851. The prince was, therefore honoured by the Emperor but his absence from this region proved disastrous.

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22 *IBID*, P. 450
24 Jugal Kishore Gupta, *History of Sirsa Town*, P. 60
Ferozepur was then quiet and calm. The rising of the youth and 57th Native infantry had been suppressed and their attempt to keep the fort of Ferozepore in possession had been made abortive by the 61st English infantry on May 12, 1857. At the instance of John Lawrence, the Chief Commissioner of the Punajb, General Van Courtlandt the Deputy Commissioner of Ferozepur, was appointed on 31st May 1857 to the command of an irregular force comprising miscellaneous levies of Malik Khyroodin Khan, Ressala of irregular Horse of Nawab Emamuddin Khan, Rajput Soldiers of Raja Jawahar Singh and two guns with 1000 lbs of gun powder to restore the British authority over the Bhatiana authority. Captain Robertson the Superintendent of Bhatiana District was detailed with him as his political adviser and the civil officers who had taken refuge at Ambala and Karnal were requested to join him. This contingent under General Van Vourtland marched in the first week of June, 1857 via Malout where a reinforcement of about 120 men joined it. This contingent did not meet any hindrance until they reached Odhan, a small village between. Dabwali and Sirsa, where as pitched battle was fought between the British and Bhattis, numbering 3000-4000 led by Nawab of Rania on 17th June.

26 Devi Shankar Prabhakar, Swadhinta Sangram our Haryana (Delhi 1976), P. 112
27 Foreign (Secret), 30 July 1858, National Archives, Delhi, P. 46
The Bhattis fought like dare-devils but the English defeated them. About 530 of the Nawab’s men fell fighting. The Nawab, somehow managed to escape, but he was caught while passing through the Ludhiana District and sentenced to death by hanging. On June 18, the British attacked the village of Chhatrayan where lieut. Hilliard and Mr. Fell were killed. The attack was so sudden that the villagers could neither come out to fight nor run away to save their lives. They were massacred and their houses were burnt to ashes.29

The next day i.e. June 19, General Van Courtlandt seconded by Lieut.G. Pearse of the Madras artillery attacked Khaireka, a village on the Ghaggar, where the people had already got the information of the British onslaught on Chhatrayan. They mobilized themselves to thousands and put up a stiff resistance to the British on the outskirts of the village. The village of Saharana, situated on the left bank of the dry bed of Ghaggar river, also was strongly occupied by the Bhattis.30

Khaireka, like all villages in this part of the region, was very strong, each portion being surrounded by a deep ditch with the strong embarkment and paving the gateway. General Van Courtlandt detailed the lieut.31 Pearse to the left to prevent that portion of the Bhattis who occupied the village Saharana from reinforcing the village of Khaireka

29 Foreign (Secret), 25 September 1857, National Archives, Delhi, P. 46
30 Wilson, Op. CIT, P. 64
31 Foreign (Secret), 25 September 1857, National Archives, Delhi, P. 48
Jawahir Singh’s troops under lieut. Sadlier on the left, two guns under lieut Walcott in the centre, the new levies under Captain Bloamfield with Lieut. Hunt as second in command on the right and about twenty irregular horses entertained by the General himself on the extreme right were deployed to face the village of Khaireka. Few irregular horses were kept ready to cut off any one of the besieged as and when anyone attempted to escape across the village of Mirpur on the further bank of the Ghaggar. The embankments of both villages were taken into possession, though the Bhatti fought bravely but were driven back into the villages. The villagers fought from house to house and fired from every conceivable cover.\textsuperscript{32}

On the other hand, the British removed the roofs of the houses so as to enable to get at those who were firing from the interior. Lieut Walcott charged from the artillery resulting in killing of several persons. There was a good deal of hand to hand hard fighting, but after the lapse of about two hours both the villages fell into their possession.\textsuperscript{33} The nine persons managed to escape over the village embankment towards the villages of Mirpur but were immediately pursued by the Irregular Cavalry on the right resulting in the death of five persons while four were taken prisoners. About 250 were killed and 18 wounded persons were made prisoners. The loss of the British was slight, with six killed and 33

\textsuperscript{32} Ojha, \textit{Op. CIT}, P. 446

\textsuperscript{33} Yadav, \textit{Op. CIT}, P. 64
wounded. The destruction was so immense that the Lambard of all the surrounding villages attended to them and the villagers brought water and supplies for the force. The British contingent then entered Sirsa on 20th June.34

Risaldar Shamsuddin Khan had already requested the Maharaja of Bikaner to send a troop of soldiers to his assistance. A contingent of 800 men comprising sawars, shutur-sawars and infantry and two guns dispatched by Maharaja Sardar Singh of Bikaner, who himself was then encamping at Bhandra, joined the British force at Sirsa.35 The contingent of Bikaner consisted of Rajputs, the Jats, the Brahmins, the Sikhs and others. The mutineers had made massive arrangement to defend Sirsa Parjana and a resist the British onslaught. They fought battles at several places but the superiority of the British forces crushed them and occupied the town of Sirsa which it found nearly deserted. Similarly for it, they had to struggle hard in the village of Jodhka also.36 A large number of old persons, women and children were mercilessly massacred in this region. General Van Courtland had to stay for more than a fortnight at Sirsa to maintain law and order and re-establish the British authority over this region.37 The British General deputing Mr. J.H. Oliver as Superintendent

34 Marx, Engels, The First War of Independence, 1857-89 (Moscow, 1978), P. 71
35 Wilson, Op. CIT, P. 64
36 Haryana District Gazetteers, Sirsa, Chandigarh 1988, P. 35
37 Ambala Division, Journal Political File No. 44, Haryana Archives Panchkula, P. 2
of Bhatiana District, Left Sirsa on July 8 and Marched for Hisar via Fatehabad. The taking of about twenty days in suppressing this historical movement in Sirsa town and its adjoining villages is an ample proof of at what large scale, the massco of this region had put up a stiff resistance to the British.³⁸

With the uprising the revolution of 1857 many people of Sirsa became martyrs as is clear from the following table 2.

**TABLE- 2**

**NO. OF MARTYRS UPTO JULY 8, 1857**³⁹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dated</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Dead</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17.06.1857</td>
<td>Battle with in Odhan courtlands</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.06.1857</td>
<td>Battle with in Khaireka courtlands</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.06.1857</td>
<td>The British attacked the village Chhatrayan</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.06.1857</td>
<td>Battle with Courtlands in Kharia village</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08.07.1857</td>
<td>They had to struggle hard in the village of Jodhka</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear from the table that while struggling with the Britishers many people of Sirsa became Martyrs. The British severely punished the people who participated in it. After uprising of the movement, Mr. J.H. Oliver re-established Sirsa tehsil to Bhatiana district.

³⁸ Hisar Division, *Principal Matters, File No. 37, Hisar Archives*, P. 882
³⁹ *Ibid*, P. 883
The organization of the Bhatiana district was at once re-established and in a short time things reverted to the former state. The Superintendent Mr. J.H. Oliver, took steps immediately to re-establish the thanas and tehsils and to reorganize the custom line, and in a short time things were again in a working order. The inhabitants soon began to return to their homes in the town of Sirsa. Cattle and furniture were recovered from the surrounding villages and all property recognized was restored to the claimants. Lala Fateh Chand, treasurer of Sirsa, replenished the treasury by loans and helped the British in setting the town in order and in calling the inhabitants. For some time precious little was done towards punishing persons found taking an active part in the uprising. Moreover, it was then very difficult for anyone to come forward and give evidence or information in anyway Mr. J.H. Oliver therefore, mollified the excited feelings of the people with grit and energy for a while and restrained them from rising again.

After the uprising was crushed, the British severely punished the people who participated in it. The property belonging to the Nawab of Rania was confiscated and adjusted against the damages committed by him (Table-3). Both Nur Samad Khan and Ghulam Ali Khan were tried and hanged and all the family pensions including life stipends to the wife

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40 Wilson, Op. CIT, P. 109
41 Private Papers- Lala Fateh Chand, Op.CIT, 15 March 1866, P. 80
and mother of the Nawab were finally confiscated. Besides it, the
Nawab’s relatives and allies, Nawab Wazir Khan, Amir Ali Khan, Suba
Khan and Umrao Khan were hanged at Hisar. Ali Khan, Causin of Nur
Samad, was sentenced to life imprisonment.\textsuperscript{42}

**TABLE- 3** \textsuperscript{43}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE SUMS RECOVERED FROM THE NAWAB:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total :</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above collection adjusted as below :

| (a) | Amount refunded to the Treasurer on account of advance made to the Nawab by order of Capt. Robertson prior to the mutiny for the protection of the town of Sirsa | Rs. 550-00-00 |
| (b) | Amount paid in adjustment of inefficient balance on his account. | Rs. 40-00-00 |
| (c) | Amount awarded towards the compensation of property to the people blundered by him during the mutiny | Rs. 23-14-10 |
| Total : | | Rs. 613-14-10\textsuperscript{44} |

\textsuperscript{42} *Haryana District Gazetteers- Sirsa (Chandigarh 1988)*, P. 35

\textsuperscript{43} Deputy Commissioner Sirsa to the Commissioner, Hisar, 23 September 1859, No. 434, HSA

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid, 435 (HAS)
In addition to the above mentioned punishment and penalties on the Bhatti Chief, the twenty peons of the custom office and the four gun carrier sepoys were sentenced to seven years’ exile;\(^{45}\) thirty-six persons including Hira Singh, Khote Singh, Man Singh, Mana, Rahim Ali, Budhoo, Gani Khan, Man Khan and others were sentenced to life imprisonment; Cammudin Khan alongwith five others was sentenced to ten years imprisonment and one person was punished with fourteen years jail. All the prisoners sentenced to above ten years imprisonment were transported to the Andamans. About 133 persons were hanged and their property was confiscated.\(^{46}\) There is a popular legend in the town that the other prisoners were kept within the barbed wire enclosure in the round presently known as Jail ground where at present the old bus stand, the post office, the telephone exchange and the nearby houses are located. They were tried and punished. A huge fine was levied on several people. Moreover, the proprietary rights over the villages viz Odhan, Chhatrayan, Khaireka and Jodhka were abolished. Thereafter Sirsa alongwith Hisar, Rohtak districts and a part of Jhajjar comprising Hisar Division was included in Punjab in February 1858.\(^{47}\)

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\(^{46}\) Yadav, *Op. CIT*, P. 12

Keeping in view the help rendered by the Bikaner ruler, the British Government awarded a Khillat and granted Tibbi Pargana containing 41 villages from Sirsa district to the Maharaja on April 11, 1861 Risaldar Shamsuddin Khan was killed in an action at Bellali in Haryana during the course of the uprising. The British Government, therefore, honoured his son Clamer-ud-din Khan by granting a Sanad with a Khillat. Similarly, Baba Janaki Das of Rori saved the lives of 17 Europeans, for which he was granted a cash award of rupees Two thousand and 100 bighas of land in maufi in perpetuity. He was also made a Darbari and received a chair in the Lieutenant Government’s Darbar.\(^{48}\)

For rendering service to the British Government by laying a private Camel Dak between Hisar and Sirsa to give timely information of movements of the uprising. Lala Fateh Chand was granted a seat in the lieut\(^{49}\) Government Darbar. These rewards, considered inadequate as they were, in proportion to the services rendered by Baba Janaki Das and Lala Fateh Chand, the British Government further granted 1000 acres of land in proprietorship of Fazilka Tehsil to each of Janaki Das and Ram Sukh Das son of Fateh Chand in 1877. The ownership of village Chhatrayan was assigned as a reward to the Suthars of village Risaliya.\(^{50}\)

\(^{48}\) Ojha, *Op. CIT*, P. 453

\(^{49}\) Deputy Commissioner, Hisar, *File No. A/6-7, Acc.No. 139*, HSA.

\(^{50}\) File No. A/6 II, Acc. No. 140 (HSA), *Haryana State Archives*, P. 9
The main fighting force during the uprising had consisted of the lower strata of the society viz. Peasants, Custom Peons, the gun carrier sepoys, the sepoys of Haryana Battalion etc. though sometimes led by the Bhattis, the mughals etc. The socio-economic change enforced in the traditional and conventional life of this region made them discontented and rise against the British. Thus in district of Sirsa at least it was nothing short a popular movement.\textsuperscript{51}

General Van Courtlandt, while re-establishing British hegemony over this region, mercilessly butchered several persons apart from setting many villages on fire razing to the ground. A considerable number of heroic persons of this region were transported to the Andamans besides the death sentence imposed on the Bhatti Chief. The heroic deeds, sufferings and sacrifices made by the patriotic persons of Sirsa and its adjoining area in the historic first war of independence are evidently second to none in the annals of India.\textsuperscript{52}

After resumption of the Bhatiana district in June, 1857. General Van Courtlandt appointed J.H. Oliver, Assistant Superintendent of Fazilka, to act for Captain Robertson as Superintendent of the District. He was allowed to draw the usual acting allowance. He also worked as collector of the customs in the District from 3 July to 24 September 1857

\textsuperscript{51} File No. A/6 II, Acc. No. 139 (HSA), \textit{Haryana State Archives}, P. 8
\textsuperscript{52} Hisar Division, Principal Matters, File No. 46, \textit{Haryana State Archives}, P. 950
for which he was granted an allowance of Rs. 250 per month. Major Marsden, Deputy Commissioner of Ferozepore, was assigned the charge of duties of Commissioner and Judge of Sirsa, in addition to his other work and was paid an allowance of Rs. 300 per month. After resumption of charge of the district by Captain Robertson, J.H. Oliver returned to his former post as Assistant Superintendent in Fazilka in October 1857. He was again appointed to officiate as Superintendent of the Bhatiana District on July 13, 1858 when Captain Robertson proceeded on leave.

The revolt of 1857 inflicted a severe Jolt to the British administration in India and made its reorganization quite essential. The Act of Parliament in 1858 transformed the power to govern from the East India Company to the British Crown. Under the Act, government was to be carried on as usual by the Governor-General who was also given the title of Viceroy or Crown’s personal representative. In February 1858, the region of Haryana was ceded from the North-West Province and annexed into the Punjab Province. Haryana was divided into two Divisions-Delhi and Hisar. The Delhi Division comprised Delhi, Gurgaon and Panipat districts while Hisar Division consisted of Hisar, Rohtak and

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53 Hisar Division, Principal Matters, File No. 41, Haryana State Archives, P. 90
54 J. Cave Brown, Op. CIT, P. 275
55 Gazetteers of Sirsa, Op. CIT, P.38
56 Proceeding of the Foreign Department, Political (Sukb), 30 December 1859, No. 1782, National Archives of India.P.12
Sirsä districts. In each district the Deputy Commissioner or District Officer was vested with the Powers of a Magistrate, Collector and Civil Judge under whom functioned a general staff of Assistants. Extra assistants and Indian officers who acted subordinately to him in all departments.\(^5^7\) Over each circle of Districts or Division was appointed a Commissioner who would be the Session Judge for criminal trials and would also be sole appellate and controlling authority in every branch of the administration. The Commissioners of Divisions were again subordinated to the Judicial and Financial Commissioners at Lahore in their respective departments which were placed under the general supervision of the Chief Commissioner of the Province Punjab.\(^5^8\)

The Bhatiana District was re-christioned as the Sirsa district and J.H. Oliver, who was Superintendent of the Bhatiana district was appointed the first Deputy Commissioner of the district. He was allowed to draw a salary of Rs. 1500 per month. He was also appointed Marriage Registrar in the district to register the marriages.\(^5^9\)

Small pox was a sort of epidemic in those days and many children fell victim to it. Therefore, J.H. Oliver appointed two vaccinators at the salary of Rs. 10 each per month for the winter for a period of six months


\(^5^8\) Gurmukh Nihal Singh, *Landmarks in Indian Constitutional and National Development* (Delhi 1963), P. 61

\(^5^9\) Foreign (C), 19 November 1857, NO. 534 and K.W. 535 National Archives Delhi, P. 3
every year. These vaccinators moved with the camp of the District Officers and vaccinated the children in the presence of the officers.\textsuperscript{60}

After the reorganisation of the affairs of the district, the Deputy Commissioner ordered the citizens to surrender their arms. This campaign continued in the district from 16 November 1859 to 30 January 1860 and weekly progress reports were dispatched to the higher authorities. The government had become over conscious and took precautionary measures lest another upsurge like that of 1857 should break out again.

The Sirsa district had following Deputy Commissioners to administrator the district.\textsuperscript{61}

1. J.H. Oliver (1858-68)
2. Colonel Dwyer (1869-70)
3. Melvill (1870-73)
4. Wakefield (14873-77)
5. Captain H. Lawrence (1877-80)
6. Trafford (1880-83)
7. Major Wood (1883-84)

In 1884, the District was relegated to the status of sub-division and merged into the Hisar District. The sub-division including Dabwali Tehsil was henceforth governed by the Sub-Divisional officer subordinated to

\textsuperscript{60} Principal Matters, Hisar Division, Bundle No. 471, Haryana State Archives, P. 80

\textsuperscript{61} J. Wilson, Final Report of the Revision of Settlement of the Sirsa District in the Punjab (Calcutta 1884), P. 40
the Deputy Commissioner of Hisar. The tehsil of Abohar and Fazilka were merged into Ferozepore district.\textsuperscript{62}

Sirsap being the headquarters of the district, had a good court and treasury, police office and lines, a church appropriately named St. John’s in the wilderness a small station garden, and a few bungalows. There was also a small fort with a high mud wall and a deep ditch, prepared after the revolt of 1857 as a place of refuge for the European residents in times of danger.\textsuperscript{63} The small fort with a high mud wall still can be seen and it is used as District Jail now. Inside the town wall there were a municipal hall, a district school, a Gurudwara supported by the Sikhs and a large masonry building called the Katra built by the Treasurer, Fateh Chand, as a market place. In 1882 Rewari-Bhatinda branch of the Rajputatana-Malwa Railway was constructed via Sirsa. Sirsa having rail links with major towns and cities of North India, flourished as a famous commercial centre resulting into development of its trade.\textsuperscript{64}

So, it can generally be inferred that agitation of 1857 was very aggressive in Sirsa area. Very serious efforts were made to unsettle the British administration in the Bhiwani, Hisar and Fatehabad area. Mohammad Azam, Shahbaz Beg, Hukam Chand Jain, Mujir Beg, Noor

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\textsuperscript{62} Private Papers- Copies of Testimonials of Lala Fateh Chand Treasurer, Sirsa dated April 1870 also Wilson, Op. CIT, P. 193

\textsuperscript{63} The Imperial Gazetteers of India, Vol. XXIII, Delhi 1908, P. 46

\textsuperscript{64} Wilson, Op. CIT, P. 65
Mohammad Khan etc. were leaving the agitation in these towns whereas farmers and labourers were leaving the struggle in rural area.

So, after the failure of mutiny of 1857, Haryana area was out off from North West state (Presently Uttar Pradesh) and merged with Punjab in Feb. 1858. Immediately, the Punjab Govt. enforced the rules as prevalent in Punjab. At that time, Ambala, Thanesar, Uklana were under Punjab. Patiala, Jind, Lahore, Dadri and Jhajjar were Desi state. Sirsa, Fatehabad, Hisar, Hansi, Rohtak, Panipat, Uklana, Narnaul were under North West state merger with Hisar and Dabwali tehsils. 31 villages were merged with Ferozepore. During merged with Punjab, the rule of Punjabi Govt. was prevalent in Sirsa. After the failure of mutiny of 1857, there were significant changes in administration affairs but after dissolution of Sirsa tehsil in 1884, there was no significant political development or activity in the area for the next 36 years. Around 1920, when the role of congress party and Mahatma Gandhi started, the political activities and development also started in Sirsa area on a big scale after a long full. The detailed study of the mutiny will be done in the next chapter.