Assimilation is a process by which an ethnic group makes adjustment with the majority community by adopting language, institutional framework etc. of the host community as well as by discarding those characteristics which make it distinct. In other words it is a sort of a movement towards attaining a greater "homogeneity". Sociologists view an ethnic group as an aggregate of population with distinctive biological, historical, institutional, cultural and psychological attributes. The process of assimilation may be initiated either by accepting the language or by adopting the institutional set up of the host community, or by other channels.

The indication that the process of assimilation has been set in motion can be seen with the help of finding out the degree of social interaction between the members of an ethnic group and the majority community. In the beginning this interaction would be on the reciprocal basis. The process can be precipitated if there is absence of "prejudice", "discrimination" and "value power conflict" (Gordon, 1964) from the host community against an ethnic group as well as by according some recognition to it. Simultaneously, an immigrant or ethnic group is also expected
to make certain efforts in being assimilated. An immigrant appears to be assimilated when the bonds of his native country have lost all hold on him, when he feels himself a whole-hearted citizen of his new community, when he speaks its language, adopts its ways of life and thought. One is inclined to attribute a relatively higher degree of assimilation to naturalized immigrant than to one who has retained allegiance to his place of birth. Such a situation would facilitate the "development of a sense of peoplehood".

At a given period of time, the degree of assimilation at one institutional level may be different from another institutional level. A number of scholars (Lieberson, 1963; Gordon, 1964; Taft, 1966; Simpson, 1968; Glazer and Moynihan, 1970; Punekar, 1974; Nair, 1978; Chadney, 1984; Oommen, 1986; Agnihotri, 1987; Pathy, 1988; Atal, 1989; Denton, 1989; Foddy, 1989; Jain, 1989; Mehta, 1989; Nelson and Tienda quoted by Denton, 1989; Sharma, S.L., 1989; Sharma, K.L., 1990) are of the opinion that assimilation process can be initiated with the help of common language. The interaction between the members of an ethnic group and the host community can take place only when they are able to communicate with each other. Common language not only facilitates communication but it also helps in understanding each other's way of life and thought process.
Language plays an important role in the direction of assimilation process because it provides the individual with a culturally shared set of cognitive categories that can be used for coding and decoding the information and for interpreting events. An immigrant who is able to communicate in local language is better placed in contrast to another person who does not understand the language of the host community. Similarly, if a greater number of immigrants speak local language not only with the members of the host community but also among themselves, such a situation indicates a positive step towards assimilation. The process would be further facilitated if the immigrants start sending their children to local schools where they learn not only local language but are also exposed to their way of life. The process may continue till 2nd or 3rd generation (Gordon, 1964). In short common language is a pre-requisite for the process of assimilation.

It is encouraging to note that a high proportion of Namdhari respondents (91.07 per cent) was not only able to understand the host language (Mandiyali) very well but 76.79 per cent of them could speak it quite fluently. The tabulation of the data revealed that respondents of higher caste, class background, younger in age and living in numerically local dominated areas had higher percentage of
those who were able to understand and speak Mandiyali very well. The Namdhari and local respondents were further asked to indicate the language/dialect in which they had been talking to each other. It was noted that majority of the respondents (both Namdharis and locals) preferred talking in Mandiyali with each other, but a mixed vocabulary had been used, at the time of conversation. A significant majority of the local respondents admitted that there was a change in Namdharis conversation after they came to Mandi.

A good proportion of Namdhari respondents understand and speak Mandiyali very well but a majority of them has not as yet started speaking it within their families. A few Namdhari respondents who had been also speaking Mandiyali within their family a majority of them was engaged in the occupations of higher prestige, had higher educational qualifications, earned more and was surrounded by the local neighbours.

According to the local respondents a large number of Namdharis, especially their younger generation had started speaking in Mandiyali. But the locals felt that Namdharis had adopted Mandiyali dialect from business point of view only, for establishing a rapport with their customers.
The process of assimilation may follow different directions. It may start with picking up the artifacts, dress, food etc. of the locals. Ogburn (1953) is of the opinion that material aspect of culture can be adopted easily than the non-material aspect. Gordon (1964) is of the view that the process would be facilitated if the immigrants stop having links with their place of origin and adopt local cultural traits. Physical proximity would further facilitate the process. As the sequential order is a debatable issue, therefore we have not followed any model propagated by the scholars. We however feel that to understand the process of assimilation, it is better to start with those areas in which the immigrants have started picking up the local way of life. It is quite probable that immigrants quickly adopt certain practices of the local community whereas in certain other areas they may continue with their old practices. An attempt will be made in this chapter to find out the extent to which they have adopted local practices. Another aspect which needs attention in the process of assimilation refers to the reaction of the local community with regard to removing of certain prejudices against the immigrants. The process would get an impetus if the immigrants as well as the local develop close network of relations where they extend helping hand to each other. In short, the discussion in this chapter has been divided into three sub processes: adaptation; removal of
irritants and mutual co-operation. Under the sub-process of adaptation, we shall take up food habits, dress, schooling and organizational participation. Irritants refer to social distance, prejudices and discrimination. It would also account for violent protest against the immigrants. The last section would deal with mutual give and take type of relationship between these communities.

ADAPTATION

Human beings have the capability to adopt the new social, cultural milieu. It is this characteristic of the human beings which helps them to be accepted even in an alien culture. Under this sub-process of assimilation, we shall discuss food habits, dress, schooling and organizational participation. It is assumed that adaptation on these aspects of human life would facilitate the process of assimilation.

Food-habits People living in different geographical areas eat different types of food which may be attributed to availability or non-availability of certain commodities. With the recent developments in Science and technology, transportation and communication revolution, the association between a particular geographical area and specific food
stuff does not hold true. The social scientist is not very much interested in what people eat but he is more interested in the customs and traditions which are associated with food i.e. who are the persons with whom one can share food, the way food is eaten, the table manners etc. Further, eating same type of food and in the same manner would facilitate people to come close to each other than those who have different food habits.

To be accepted in the local community, the immigrants not only try to discard certain food habits which make them conspicuous but also try to accept certain food habits which would facilitate greater interaction with the host community. It is in this context that an attempt has been made to find out the level of assimilation between the locals and Namdharis. It is encouraging to note that approximately 97 per cent Namdhari respondents had eaten local Mandiyali dishes and a significant majority (approximately 89 per cent) had liked and relished them. It was further admitted by approximately 80 per cent Namdhari respondents that they/their wives knew cooking Mandiyali food and had been cooking it occasionally in their kitchens. Approximately 76 per cent Namdhari respondents identified certain food habits such as eating Bhat (Rice) Sepu Bari, Badana, Jhol, Babru, Roru and few other typical local dishes which they had picked
up from the host community. The respondents who have started eating local dishes have not completely discarded their previous food habits. Nevertheless, they have started eating not only the local dishes but also the manner in which the local people eat. A few respondents have even identified certain food stuff and habits e.g. drinking Shardayee, which they have discarded after coming to Mandi. Further the data revealed that respondents with high caste and class background had greater representation among those who have picked up local food habits.

**Dress** In the initial stages, immigrants may continue with their traditional dress for convenience or for maintaining its "extrinsic cultural traits". However, with the passage of time they may start putting on local dress due to environmental needs or to identify themselves with the host community. To what an extent Namdharis had maintained their extrinsic cultural identity? The respondents were specifically asked whether they had been putting on their traditional dresses. With the exception of only six respondents, all replied in affirmative. It was further noted that more than 60 per cent respondents had been putting on their traditional dresses at all times whereas rest put it on special occasion. It is important to highlight here that with the exception of only three respondents, everyone of them had
been putting on typical Namdhari Pagari (turban) at all times. It is the manner in which they tie their white turban (Pagari) which makes them distinct from other Sikhs. The religious dictates demand from a Namdhari to put on white turban regularly, and when they visit their Guru or Gurudwaras they must be in their traditional dress. The tabulation of the data revealed that a high percentage of Namdharis who was more particular in wearing their traditional dresses was older in age, had less educational qualifications and belonged to lower caste group.

The question pertaining to dress was further extended and respondents were asked to indicate whether their younger generation put on traditional dress. With the exception of only 7 respondents, all replied in affirmative. However, it was noted that in approximately 90 per cent Namdhari households, younger generations had not been putting on their traditional dress everyday but they did so on special occasions. Changes in their dress, though slow, are discernible in the younger generation who wear traditional Namdhari dress on special occasions only. Keeping in view this trend it can be predicted that total change in dress would take place in the third or fourth generation.

The process of assimilation can be precipitated if the
Namdharis after discarding their conspicuous traditional dress start putting on certain local dresses. It is in this context that Namdharis were asked, whether they had picked up certain local dresses. It was noted that there was no typical local dress of the town, so there was no question of Namdharis picking up local dresses. However, Namdharis, especially their younger generations had started discarding their traditional dresses and wearing modern clothes like the locals. But they are still continuing with their typical Namdhari Pagari (turban).

Schooling The exposure to school plays an important role in facilitating greater interaction and the process of assimilation. The educational institutions perform several functions both for the individual and for society. Among these are the transmission of cultural values and the integration of diverse groups into the society. The formal education is a major agency for transforming a diverse and sometimes divided community into one bound together by a shared language and a sense of identity. "The schools have done much for integrating million of immigrants" (Selznick, 1981). To maintain their ethnic identity the immigrants abstain themselves from the schooling system of the host society and send their children to their own educational
institutions. Obviously it reinforces their ethnic identity but at the cost of assimilation.

The Namdhari of Mandi Town had also been running their own school in the Ramnagar locality. The school was named after the late Namdhari Guru Partap Singh for maintaining ethnic integrity of Namdhari immigrants. Before we identify the actual number of Namdhari households who were sending their children to Partap School, the respondents were asked to indicate whether they were in the favour of separate educational institutions for Namdhari children. Approximately 34 per cent replied in affirmative. The respondents who had indicated their preferences for separate school for Namdhari children, a majority of them were older in age, and belonged to lower class and caste background. Further, a higher percentage of such respondents was concentrated in localities numerically dominated by Namdharis.

The data however revealed that a minority group (18.39 per cent) of the total Namdhari households had been sending their children exclusively to their own Namdhari school. Another group of Namdharis (18.39 per cent) were sending a few children to their Namdhari school and other children to local schools which clearly indicates that these respondents
were not biased in favour of Namdhari school. The very fact that Namdharis were sending their children to other schools indicates that they had no reservation against the local schools as well as the possibility of their younger generation being exposed to local influence. They were sending a few children to Namdhari school either because it was located near their residence, fee was nominal or because of their desire that their children should be taught Punjabi language which is not taught in other schools. When the background of these households was explored, it was noted that a higher proportion of them belonged to lower caste and class. Further these households were located in those areas where Namdharis had over representation. Conversely, those households of Namdharis which were sending their children to schools other than Namdhari school had middle and higher socio-economic background.

Organizational Participation Organizations are social units deliberately constructed and reconstructed to seek specific goals. By coordinating a large number of human actions the organizations create a powerful social tool. Modern civilization depends largely on organizations as the most rational and efficient form of social grouping. Modern organizations fulfil a greater variety of societal and personal needs involving a greater proportion of its citizens and affecting
a larger segment of their lives. "The strength of ethnic attitudes, belief and interests leads the individuals towards empathy with and participation in the ethnic collectivities. The ethnic organizations and media serve to affirm the socio-cultural identity of their members and promote their interests on the basis of shared concerns and mutual help. Such a participative experience then serves to reinforce the individuals' self-identification with their ethnic group and creates obstacles in the process of assimilation with the host society" (Rastogi, 1986).

There were two main ethnic organizations of Namdharis at Mandi Town i.e. Namdhari Vidyak Jatha and Namdhari Sangat. Each and every Namdhari upto the age of 45 years is expected to be a member of Namdhari Vidyak Jatha and elders are supposed to be associated with the activities of Namdhari Sangat. Both these organizations had been formed for carrying out religious propaganda and various other associated activities. However, Namdhari Vidyak Jatha had been specifically educating and socializing Namdhari youths regarding the historical and cultural background of Namdhari sect, its code of conduct etc. This organization had also been organizing various social and cultural functions from time to time. The Namdhari Vidyak Jatha had its women wing too which was known as Istri Vidyak Jatha. It was further
noted that with the exception of only few, every Namdhari had been participating in the activities of these two organizations quite actively. The Namdharis had not only been making generous donations to these two ethnic organizations but rendering their services too. In addition to these two ethnic organizations, a few Namdharis had been associated with Namdhari Caste Panchayat and Partap Co-operative Society. The former was a Judicial body (See Chapter III) and latter had been helping the Namdhari community by giving loans and utensils etc. at the time of need. There was another formal body of Namdharis i.e Partap School Committee which had been looking after the Partap School affairs.

In addition to participating in their own ethnic organizations, Namdharis also participate in the local organizations with a view to make adaptation with the local community. What was the proportion of Namdharis who participated in the local organizations? Further, what was the nature of their participation? Was it only a formal one or they actively participated? Such an exercise has been made with an assumption that Namdharis whose organizational participation is limited to their own ethnic organization, would have greater integration within themselves. On the other hand, Namdharis who were having dual organizational participation would be better placed with regard to the
process of assimilation than those who have organizational participation in their own ethnic organizations exclusively.

It was found that only a minority (32 per cent) of Namdhari respondents had been the members of various formal and informal local organizations i.e. social, political, religious, sports, recreational and professional. Taking into account their organizational participation, it is quite obvious that Namdharis have been participating in varied types of local organizational activities such as social, political, religious, sports, recreational and professional. So far as the extent of their participation is concerned, it was found that Namdharis had been making financial contributions to the local organizations from time to time. However, a majority of the Namdharis had only formal participation in the form of their physical presence during the meeting but were not active either in the decision making process or rendering other services with the exception of a few cases who rendered all possible help and co-operation. In short, their passive organizational participation had not as yet reached a stage which was very conducive for their assimilation.

An attempt was also made to find out the reactions of the local respondents regarding Namdharis participation in
the local organizations. An overwhelming majority of the local respondents confirmed that Namdhari participation is limited to their passive participation i.e. making some financial contributions and their physical presence. Organizational participation was further probed by asking the local respondents with regard to their participation in the organizations of Namdhari. It was noticed that only a few local respondents (17.43 per cent) have made financial contribution to Namdhari organizations and not a single local respondent participated either actively or passively in such organizations. The lack of reciprocity on the part of the local respondents is attributed to the fact that Namdhari organizations are meant for the members of their own ethnic group. It does not however mean that the host community does not have any concern for the Namdharis. Recently "A Save Parminder Committee" has been instituted to raise funds for meeting medical expenses of Mr. Parminder Singh, a Namdheri boy. As the boy's family was not in a position to meet the expenses, Namdharis and Locals have united and come to the rescue of a Namdheri young boy aged 9 years who is suffering from Thalessemia (a rare genetic blood disorder in the blood). Such a humane gesture on the part of local community is a positive indication depicting the development of a sense of belongingness for each other.
The process of assimilation cannot be precipitated as long as the resistance and non-acceptance continue from either side. The immigrants are ready to assimilate sometime but they feel frustrated due to non-acceptance by the host society (Kannan, 1978). On the other hand, the internal integration of the ethnic community also abstain its members from the activities of the host society at the cost of assimilation process (Desai, 1963).

IRRITANTS

Another sub-process of assimilation would be the removal of irritants between the immigrants and the host community. It implies that removal of discrimination against the ethnic group would further facilitate the process of assimilation. On the other hand, if the host community maintains social distance, and discriminate against the ethnic group or indulges in violent behaviour pattern and fosters grouses against the immigrants, assimilation process would be jeopardized.

An attempt was made to find out, whether the host community and immigrants maintain social distance from each other? If yes, what could be the plausible factors responsible for such a situation?
Approximately 57 per cent local and 51 per cent Namdhari respondents felt that members of the other community had been maintaining social distance from each other. The tabulation of the data revealed that a higher percentage of the local respondents who were engaged in the occupations of lower prestige and who had less educational qualifications, perceived that Namdharis had been maintaining distance from them. At the caste level, Rajputs were more vocal and held Namdharis responsible for maintaining distance from them.

Taking into account the perception of Namdharis, it was noted that a higher percentage of Namdhari respondents who were engaged in the occupations of higher prestige and had higher education, felt that locals had been maintaining distance from them. The subjective observations made by the local and Namdhari respondents reveal contradictory background of the respondents who perceived that the other community was maintaining social distance.

In the case of the local respondents, most of them had lower middle class status. It was this group among the locals which felt threatened by the improvement in the class status of the Namdharis. They indicated that Namdharis buy goods from the shops of Namdharis only. They abused Namdharis of
being conservative, secretive and fanatic. They further opined that due to different social, cultural and religious background, Namdharis were maintaining a distinctive identity.

So far as the Namdharī respondents were concerned, it was noted that a majority of them with upper middle class background felt aggrieved in not being accepted by the local community. As they have improved in their socio-economic position, their expectations are different from other Namdharis who have not as yet moved up the economic ladder. Those among Namdharī respondents who perceived that locals were maintaining social distance from them, complained that members of the local community treat them as outsiders and intruders. They further perceived that locals were maintaining social and psychological distance from them and they were ignored and discriminated in domestic, business and administrative affairs.

To countercheck the subjective perception of Namdharis and local respondents they were further asked to indicate whether they maintained any distance from the other community.

The data revealed that in comparison to only 6.25 per
cent Namdharis, 36.61 per cent local respondents admitted that they had been maintaining distance from the members of other community. When background of such respondents was explored it was found that among locals a high percentage of Rajputs had been maintaining distance from Namdharis. At the class level, tabulation of the data revealed over representation of local respondents who were engaged in the occupations of higher prestige and belonged to higher income group had been maintaining distance from Namdharis. In short, the upper class of the local community has not granted recognition to the Namdharis as yet, hence maintains social distance. Local, maintained that unreliable, insincere, non-friendly, separatist and materialist attitude of the Namdharis had prompted them to keep distance from the members of Namdharis community. The locals felt that Namdharis were the social parasites who had not contributed or given any benefits to the host community.

Only a small percentage of the Namdharis admitted that they had been maintaining distance from the locals. They were doing so to avoid free interaction in order to maintain their identity and vegetarian social values. However, an overwhelming majority of Namdharis contended that they would like to have free interaction with the locals, hence on their own part they are not maintaining any social distance.
After discussing the subjective perceptions of both the communities regarding social distance, an effort was made to identify the existence of unpalatable traditions and ways of life which might be an obstacle in the process of assimilation. Approximately 24 per cent local and 35 per cent Namdhaṛi respondents admitted the existence of certain traditions and ways of life of the other community which were unpalatable to them. The locals identified that Punjabi culture, non-Sanatani values, marriage and death ceremonies, dress, food habits, external appearance, women's exploitation, fundamentalist, fanatic, rigid, orthodox, anti-national, separatist, narrowmindedness and materialist attitude of the Namdharis were not palatable to them. On the other hand Namdharis identified certain unpalatable traditions and practices like non-vegetarian food habits, use of intoxicants, marriage and death ceremonies, courtship and certain superstitions of the locals which were responsible for the maintenance of social distance.

The background of the respondents who had identified unpalatable traditions and ways of life was further explored. It was found that irrespective of their ethnic affinity, these respondents were mainly with higher class background. At caste level, Rajputs were in higher percentage among
locals who identified the unpalatable traditions and way of life of Namdharis. On the other hand among Namdharis, high percentage of such respondents was from the lower caste.

To probe further, Namdharis and local respondents were asked to identify their own traditions and ways of life which were not palatable to the other community.

In comparison to only two Namdharis, thirteen local respondents identified certain traditions and ways of life of their own which according to them were not palatable to the members of the other community. Locals confirmed the contention of Namdharis that their local traditions and practices like food habits, use of intoxicants, marriage and death ceremonies and Sanatani values were not palatable to the Namdharis. On the other hand Namdharis contended that some of their traditions and practices e.g. marriage-death ceremonies and day to day disciplined life were not palatable to the locals.

Assimilation does not take place until the immigrant is able to function in the host society without encountering prejudiced attitude or discriminatory behaviour. This implies that in daily life he is able to find a place in the community on the basis of his individual merits without an
invidious or qualifying reference to his racial origin or to his cultural inheritance.

To what an extent Namdharis encountered prejudices or discriminatory behaviour in the host society, a set of questions were put to them. Approximately 50 per cent Namdhari respondents maintained that they had been encountering prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory behaviour in daily affairs of life. Namdharis contended that the locals not only felt jealous of them but treated them as third class citizens at Mandi. Social, administrative, political discrimination were practised against them. Among the Namdhari respondents who felt discrimination and prejudiced attitudes in the host society, a high percentage of them belonged to higher class background. At the caste level there was over representation of lower castes.

The Namdhari respondents were further asked to identify the factors responsible for discrimination and prejudices against them. A majority of the respondents identified either business rivalry or Punjab problem as the main irritants for discriminatory behaviour and prejudices against them. There were however nine respondents who identified different cultural background of the two communities as the main factor responsible for discrimination and prejudices.
The business rivalry had not only been the main irritant for discrimination and prejudices at inter-community level but at intra-community level too. Therefore Punjab problem could be the main reason for local discrimination and prejudices against Namdharis. The Namdharis due to their physical appearance (beard, hairs and turban) resemble Sikhs although they are entirely different from them and have nothing to do with the Punjab problem (See Chapter III for difference).

Majority of the Namdham respondents who identified Punjab problem as the main factor responsible for prejudices and discrimination against them were older in age and belonged to higher caste and class background. Contrary to the expectation it was found that majority of the respondents who attributed business rivalry as the main factor responsible for discrimination and prejudices were younger in age and belonged to lower caste and class background.

The background of respondents who attributed different cultural background as the main factor responsible for prejudices and discrimination was tabulated. The data revealed that a higher percentage of such respondents belonged to higher income group, were engaged in occupations of higher prestige and had higher educational qualifications. In comparison to higher castes, over representation of lower
caste Namdharis identified different cultural background as the main factor responsible for discrimination and prejudices against them.

The Namdhari respondents were further asked whether they had taken any remedial steps to eliminate such discrimination and prejudices. Approximately 65 per cent respondents replied in affirmative and maintained that for elimination of prejudices and discrimination they had been interacting with locals as much as it was possible. They mentioned that they had not only been participating in local functions but had been inviting the locals too in their social and cultural gatherings. Namdharis believed that love and affection, co-operation, financial contributions to the host organizations and institutions, compromise in the conflicting situations and educative propaganda (making the host population aware of the similarities between Namdharis and Locals) were some of the steps being taken by them for bridging the gap and eliminating prejudices and discrimination. The tabulation of the data revealed that respondents who had taken such remedial steps, majority of them were younger in age, belonged to higher income group, engaged in the occupations of higher prestige and had higher educational qualifications. At caste level, higher caste Namdharis had taken such steps. Further, a high percentage of
respondents who had taken such remedial steps to eliminate prejudices and discrimination was concentrated in localities numerically dominated by the locals.

Although only 50 per cent of the Namdhari respondents have perceived that the members of the local community were indulging in discriminatory behaviour against them, the situation was not very conducive for their being assimilated. It is however, encouraging to note that immigrants are taking constructive steps to eliminate such irritants. The process of assimilation would be facilitated if the locals could take such reconciliatory steps.

Maintenance of social distance due to mistrust, certain prejudices and biases and indulgence in discriminatory behaviour at all available occasions on the part of the local community not only acts as an obstacle in the process of assimilation but would also indicate a deep-rooted hatred against the immigrants. The negative outlook of the host community may not be exhibited in the shape of overt hostility against the immigrant ethnic group and may remain simmering. As and when some incidents take place or some safety valve is provided, the pent up feelings may burst out and take the form of violence against the immigrants. The existence of irritants leading to hostility and conflict may prove to be anti-thesis of assimilation.
The Namdharis respondents were asked whether there was any incident in which local people had joined hands against them. Approximately 63 per cent replied in affirmative and a majority of them specified October, 1984 riots as the main incident depicting communal frenzy, loot and destruction in which local people had joined hands against them. After the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India by two Sikh body guards, there was a large scale violence against Sikhs in different parts of India. At Mandi also property of Namdharis was looted and destroyed. There were, however, a few other occasions too in which local people had reacted against them e.g. Bhoot Nath Temple dispute, dispute with landlords, dispute pertaining to renting of State Bank building etc. The Namdharis further maintained that even in the day to day life minor incidents result into mobilisation of locals against them. Namdhari respondents living in localities numerically dominated by the locals were more vociferous in reacting to the question. It may be because of the fact that they were the most vulnerable targets of such hostilities.

On the other hand local respondents were also asked whether there was any occasion when they had dispute with Namdharis? With the exception of only three respondents, the rest denied the existence of any overt hostility against
Namdharis. The respondents who replied in affirmative identified Bhoot Nath Temple controversy, Himachal Observer Article controversy (Article pertains to October, 1984 riots) and a few legal battles concerning land and property as the main disputes with Namdharis.

The prejudiced behaviour and discriminatory attitudes may be exercised both by host and immigrant population towards each other resulting into simmering ill will. The respondents, both Namdharis and locals were asked to indicate if they had any complaint against each other. This exercise was done to identify the irritants between the two communities which might have not been highlighted by them. Further with the help of such a question we could find out the extent of mistrust and prejudices against each other which may prove to be obstacles in the process of assimilation.

The tabulation of the data revealed that almost equal percentage of Namdharis and locals (25.89 per cent and 25.69 per cent respectively) had complaints against each other. The Namdharis felt that locals were destructive, unfriendly, unreliable, jealous and selfish by nature and had been discriminating against them. The Namdhari respondents complained that it was not good on the part of locals to treat them as terrorists and pass bad remarks. Further,
Namdharis were also quite critical of October, 1984 riots when they became the victims of communal frenzy, loot and destruction.

On the other hand the local respondents maintained that Namdharis were fanatic, secretive, cunning, selfish, shrewd, materialistic and suffered from superiority complex. The local respondents complained that Namdharis had flourished in business and trade and built palaces, pushed back the local population by adopting unfair means. The locals were critical of Namdharis for their greed to acquire more and more property and buy out the local interests.

Even the local media has depicted Namdharis as intruders and undesirable elements in Mandi township. Namdhari sect has always remained isolated, closed clan with almost firm resolve to develop no relations with the place and people where they had run their trade and earned huge profits. In short, locals had seen the Namdharis only as exploiters and "heartless mercenaries" who took hardly any interest in the welfare of the town (Himachal Observer, Nov. 1984).

The ethnic population becomes the easy targets in the times of upheavals when animosities find some "controlled ventilation". The Namdharis of Mandi had already suffered
from the spontaneous outburst of anger and hatred during October, 1984 riots. Therefore they were specifically asked what worried them most in their life at Mandi? Approximately 64 per cent Namdharis maintained that nothing worried them at Mandi. There were however approximately 33 per cent respondents who feared that terrorism in Punjab might backlash on them repeating October, 1984 like situation. A few respondents, keeping in view the happening of October, 1984, felt that there was hardly a chance for them to expand their business interests in Mandi resulting into stagnation in their business and trade activities. Majority of the Namdharis who were worried due to one reason or the other were younger in age and belonged to high class and were concentrated in numerically local dominated localities.

The hostile, unfavourable, prejudiced and discriminatory behaviour on the part of host society towards an ethnic population not only creates hurdles in the process of assimilation but sometimes forces the members of an ethnic group to migrate somewhere else. The Namdharis were asked to indicate, whether they had ever thought of leaving Mandi? Approximately 30 per cent replied in affirmative and attributed October, 1984 riots as the main reason for it. During the riots, a good proportion of
Namdharis had left Mandi for safer places. They, however, returned when peace was restored. Nevertheless there are a few families which have allowed some of their members to remain at safer places and have started business activities there, so that in case of need they could also migrate to such places. In addition to these, there was one respondent who had planned to migrate from Mandi because he could not adjust himself here, and another had been planning to leave because all of his relatives were living outside Mandi. A high percentage of those who had been planning to leave the town were engaged in the occupations of higher prestige, had higher educational qualifications and belonged to higher income group. At caste level in comparison to lower caste Namdharis, a higher percentage of higher castes Namdharis were planning to migrate from Mandi.

Such thinking on their part can be attributed to the fact that it was this section of Namdharis which was the main victim of October, 1984 riots. It does not however mean that Namdharis as an ethnic group is suffering from fear psychosis. A majority of them has never thought of leaving Mandi even though they had also some grouse against the host community. They were living in Mandi for the last 40 years, had business interests, and some of them had developed close association with the members of the host community. In
certain cases even remedial steps were being taken to remove the irritants.

A relationship involves a series of interaction between two persons or categories of people, assimilation is its final product. The relationships are social connections between two or more persons, it however does not imply that relations involved must be close or cordial. They may be friendly or hostile, close or distant, deep or superficial. Therefore nature of relationship is decisive in the process of assimilation. Assimilation naturally takes place most rapidly where relationship is primary that is more intimate.

**CO-OPERATION**

An attempt is made in the last section of this chapter to identify the positive steps being taken by both the communities for the smooth assimilation of the immigrants. In this section we would take up mutual help and cooperation extended to each other to highlight positive indicators of assimilation.

The respondents, both Namdhari and Locals, were asked, whether there had been any occasion when they received help from the members of the other community? The data revealed that in comparison to 15.60 per cent locals, 50.89 per cent Namdhari respondents admitted that they had been
helped by the members of the other community. Namdhari respondents had admitted that during October, 1984 riots, a good number of locals came to their rescue even at the cost of earning a bad name from their community.

When background of the respondents was explored it was found that among the locals who were helped by the Namdharis, a higher percentage of them was younger in age, had higher educational qualifications and was engaged in the occupations of higher prestige. At the caste level, majority of the Guptas had received help from the Namdharis. In case of Namdharis, majority of the older respondents and those with occupations of higher prestige were helped by the locals. Higher caste Namdhari respondents had over representation in receiving help from locals. Further, Namdhari respondents living in areas numerically dominated by the locals had a higher representation among the recipients of help from the local community.

To probe further, Namdhari and the locals were asked to indicate, whether they had ever helped the members of the other community? The information is likely to reinforce the preceding discussion under which it was stated that more Namdharis than the locals received help from the other community. In comparison to 22.02 per cent local, 57.14 per
cent Namdhari respondents had helped the members of other community.

The results indicate that reciprocal relations are emerging between Namdharis and the locals. A higher percentage of Namdharis admitted that they received help from the locals. Similarly, a higher percentage of them further confirmed that they had helped the locals at a number of occasions. It becomes obvious that give and take type of relationships are emerging at the individual level which is a positive indication of assimilation. The reciprocal exchange of help between Namdharis and the locals include domestic, medical, financial, administrative, political, social, legal in business matters and during emergency. In addition the members of both the communities had helped each other in earning livelihood and arranging for accommodation and working sites etc.

It is important to highlight here that local respondents who rendered such help to Namdharis belonged to higher social class and older age-group. At caste level, Guptas had the over representation among such respondents who helped Namdharis. On the other hand when background of Namdharis who helped the locals was explored it was noted that they belonged to higher social class and younger age-group. In contrast to lower caste Namdharis, a higher
percentage of higher caste Namdharis helped the locals. Further, Namdhari respondents living in areas numerically dominated by the locals had a higher representation among the Namdharis in helping the locals in contrast to Namdharis living in areas numerically dominated by Namdharis.

After having discussed the three sub-processes of assimilation, we were interested to know the subjective perception of Namdhari respondents regarding their overall acceptance in the host society. They were asked to indicate whether their decision to settle at Mandi was a right or a wrong decision. Such an enquiry was based on the assumption that if they were really being discriminated, and having problems with the locals, they would repent over their decision in choosing Mandi as a place of their settlement. Conversely if there were not any unsurmountable obstacles, then such negative thinking would be absent.

With the exception of only eleven, all the Namdhari respondents believed that it was a right decision to settle at Mandi. Their positive response clearly indicates that inspite of the presence of a few irritants, the nature of social interaction Namdharis have within their own ethnic group and with local community is quite congenial. There were, however, a few respondents who maintained that from the business point of view, Mandi townshin had reached a saturation point and
hence the chances of expansion were meagre. Those who had given negative response were the individuals who had either suffered during October, 1984 riots or were the victims of other sort of discrimination from the locals. However, the overall picture is quite encouraging regarding the assimilation with the host society.

The respondents, both Namdharis and locals were also asked to suggest some steps which would help the relations between the members of two communities.

The Namdhari respondents believed that for relations to be cordial the irritants like prejudices, discrimination and jealousy must be eliminated. There should be a greater interaction between the two communities at institutional and primary group level. Joint functions should be organised and Mohalla Committees should be formed. The members of both the groups should have joint participation in each others’ functions and social gatherings. In addition to this, members of both the communities should initiate marital relations with each other.

On the other hand, the local respondents believed that for making cordial relations, there should be greater interaction, co-operation, cultural exchanges, reciprocal participation in the social gatherings and functions and
marital relations between the members of two communities. In addition to this, joint councils should be formed and welfare schemes should be started jointly.

It is interesting to note that respondents from both the communities had identified common steps for promoting greater homogeneity between Namdhari and the Local Community. The steps identified were (i) greater interaction at the individual as well as at the community level in the shape of reciprocal participation in each other's social functions; (ii) joint councils to sort out different issues; (iii) cooperation at the voluntary organizational level; and (iv) promotion of cordial relations at the primary group level which should be further cemented by having inter-community marital relations.

Taking into account the commonality of their perception it can be concluded that despite Namdharis maintaining their distinct identity, the process of assimilation was going in the right direction.