SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The present study was undertaken to examine the nature and degree of assimilation of the Namdhari ethnic group with the host population of Mandi town in Himachal Pradesh. For the present study a synthesis of different models and theoretical frameworks was adopted for measuring the extent and degree of assimilation.

A majority of Namdhari immigrants came to Mandi prior to the partition of the country. They brought enough capital with them, therefore, did not find much difficulty in order to establish themselves. Moreover, their work ethics also helped them to be self-employed and take up different economic activities independently.

An individual's place in the society is determined through his "ascriptive" and "achieved" attributes i.e. income, occupation, property, education, family background, caste etc. which subsequently demand from him a particular behaviour pattern consistent with social class to which he belongs. The distribution of the respondents according to their caste affiliation clearly indicates that Namdhari ethnic group is almost equally divided into higher castes (Brahmins and Khatris) and lower castes (Suniyas, Ramgarhias and Chembas). Among the locals, also higher castes constitute
the majority. Brahmins and Khatris constitute bulk of the local population, whereas Rajputs and Guptas, who are almost equally divided, constitute significant minority population of the locals. Of course a few scheduled castes and other backward castes too, belong to host population but they were excluded from the sample because of their non-similarity and lack of homogeneity to the other caste groups of the host population. The Khatris, however, constitute a numerically dominant group both among locals and Namdhari.

Taking into account their living arrangement it was found that Namdhari are almost equally divided into Nuclear and Joint households. A high frequency of extended households among them can be attributed to their occupational structure as well as their status of being immigrants who find more security in living together. On the other hand, approximately 58 per cent locals lived in Nuclear households, 40 per cent in Joint and the rest were putting up in incomplete households. Such a high percentage of joint household composition of the locals clearly indicates that Mandi town is still under the impact of traditional mode of living. When the living arrangement of the two groups was compared, it was found that not only the Namdhari had a higher percentage of joint households but also on an average had a greater number of persons per household vis-a-vis the locals.
Educational background of the two groups indicates wide variation. As most of the Namdharis were engaged in business, they had only functional literacy. It is only recently that Namdharis have realized the importance of formal education and have gone for the higher education. The locals were definitely better placed in comparison with Namdharis so far as their educational qualifications were concerned. However, with regard to education among younger generations, it was noticed that both Namdharis and the locals are quite conscious about the importance of formal education; and hence are imparting education to their younger generation and no marked difference was found between the two groups under study.

As far as the occupational background of the two groups was concerned, it was found that the locals have more representation among professionals, and Namdharis, on the other hand, have more representation among industrialists and contractors. Further, there were more petty government officials, among locals and artisans among Namdharis. Under the category of petty government officials there is hardly any representation of the Namdharis. It is interesting to note that there is not a single Namdhari who acts as a labourer or casual worker. Similarly among the local respondents of higher castes we do not have anyone working as
a labourer. People living in the nearby villages and other parts of this region have assumed such positions. A good proportion of Namdharis is either retail shopkeepers or artisans. The over representation of the Namdharis in these economic activities may be attributed to their traditional work norms according to which they preferred to work independently rather than working under the control of someone else. Taking into account the different occupational activities in which Namdharis were engaged in, it becomes quite clear that most of them were self-employed. With regard to economic returns from the occupational background of both the groups we do not find marked difference between the two.

So far as the work sites were concerned it was found that in comparison to approximately 60 per cent Namdharis, most of the locals owned the place of their work. With regard to the ownership of residential accommodation it was found that more than 95 per cent of the Namdharis have purchased either the housing plots or built up houses. A few members of the Namdhar ethnic group were allotted the evacuee property vacated by Muslims. Keeping in view the quality of the construction, the houses of Namdharis are better equipped with modern facilities. All the locals owned their residential accommodation. However, houses of most of them were relatively old and lacked modern facilities as they were
built long back when modern facilities were not in vogue.

Instead of depending upon the condition of the building, we took into account the worth of the real property in the market which was influenced by a number of factors. In the absence of any reliable parameters, it was decided to ask the respondents to indicate the amount for which their property had been insured. Out of 109 local respondents, only 30 had gone for insurance whereas in the case of Namdharis, 83 respondents out of 112 had got their property insured. Confining our analysis to only those cases who got their property insured, it was found that it was the Namdhari group which had gone for insurance of higher amount.

The tabulation of the information regarding income indicated that there was a greater representation of the Namdharis in the higher income group. Further, average income of Namdharis per household was better in comparison with average income of the locals per household. However, with regard to average income per person it was found that the locals were better placed.

Regarding the acquired attributes of Namdharis and the locals, we did not find much difference between the two groups under study. However, there were some differences in
the educational and occupational background. Most of the locals were either professionals or petty government officials and most of the Namdharis were self-employed. So far as the economic returns of the two groups were concerned, Namdharis were relatively better placed with regard to per household average income but the locals were better placed with regard to average per capita income. We did not find any marked difference in the socio-economic background of the two groups under study. The socio-economic background of the two groups revealed that with the exception of artisan caste group of the Namdharis, the locals and the immigrants belonged to almost the same social class.

Inter-personal relationship among individuals living in close spatial proximity exist in almost all kinds of human settlements. But the form and content of neighbourhood interaction may differ among different communities as they may vary in their economic, ecological, cultural, demographic and physical characteristics.

The respondents were asked to indicate their preferences regarding the type of locality in which they would like to live. A significant percentage of the locals not only indicated their preferences for the neighbours of their own community but a majority of them had even preferred
construction in the areas dominated by the locals. The host respondents who had indicated their preference for the local neighbours, a majority of them was less educated, and engaged in low prestige occupations. So far as the Namdhari respondents were concerned, they preferred to live in localities where both Namdharis and locals were living together. However, with regard to actual physical neighbourhood it was found that a majority of Namdharis was putting up in those localities which were numerically dominated by the Namdhari population e.g. Ramnagar and Palace Colony. Nevertheless, a significant minority group of Namdharis was also found to be residing in areas dominated by the locals, though they had a tendency to live in a cluster of houses in such localities.

To find out network of relations between the neighbours, the respondents were asked, "had they approached the neighbours of other community in case of an emergency"? It was found that in comparison to the locals, Namdharis were more open in approaching and seeking help from the neighbours of other community in case there was an emergent need. Irrespective of their ethnic affinity, the respondents who had lower class background were more open in approaching the neighbours of other community.
To find out the quality of interaction between the two groups of respondents, they were asked to indicate the frequency of their visits to each other's homes. It is encouraging to note that a significant majority of the Namdharis and locals had been visiting each other's houses. However, in comparison to the locals, Namdharis were more frequently visiting the locals' houses. It was found that both Namdharis and local respondents who had higher class background and those who were young were more liberal in visiting each other's houses. At the caste level it was noted that in contrast to lower caste Namdharis, Namdharis of higher castes were more open in visiting houses of the locals. Similarly among the locals, Khatris and Brahmins were more liberal in visiting Namdhari houses. Further, residence also played a positive role in facilitating such visits i.e. such visits were more common in localities which were numerically dominated by the locals.

To what an extent Namdharis were being treated at par with the locals or to find out the extent of their being accepted as equals, we asked the respondents, whether eatables were exchanged with the members of other community. It was found that a significant majority of Namdharis exchanged eatables with the local neighbours. Such Namdhari respondents had higher caste and class background and their
exchanges were restricted to the locals of the same socio-economic background. However, at the caste level, Guptas among the locals were found to be exchanging eatables more frequently as compared to other caste groups.

After neighbours, family and kinsmen, friends come under the primary group network of relations. To find out the social network of relationship between Namdharis and the locals, Namdhari respondents were specifically asked to name three of their best friends in that order. The background of the person who was named first was tabulated. It was found that approximately 36 per cent of the Namdhari respondents had friends from the host population and 30 per cent had their best friends from their own community. It was strange to note that a good proportion of Namdhari respondents (25.89 per cent) was not able to identify any person either from their own community or from the host community who came up to their definition of best friend and it was for this reason that they did not identify any person as their best friend. It was however noted that Namdharis who belonged to higher castes, were not educated and were in the higher income range had best friends from the host community.

Instead of qualifying the word friend as 'best friend' both Namdharis and the local respondents were further asked
whether they had any friend from the other community. In comparison to only 48.62 per cent locals, 93.95 per cent Namdharis contended that they had friends from the other community. A high percentage of the locals did not identify Namdharis in their friendship circle as they had a large number of other local friends because of their large population. Namdharis on the other hand being numerically a small group interact both with their own people as well as local community and hence have given a more encouraging response. The Namdharis and local respondents who had identified members of the other community as their friends were having higher educational qualifications and were younger in age. The question on friendship was further extended and respondents were asked to indicate the number of their friends from the other community. In comparison to very few locals, a large percentage of Namdharis maintained that they had more than five friends from the other community. The high percentage of Namdharis having friends from the other community may be attributed to the fact that they generally being businessmen interact more with the locals.

It was noted that only a few friends from both the communities meet daily but a majority of them occasionally interact with each other. It was further found that market
was the main meeting place of the friends from both the communities. It was encouraging to note that approximately one-third met each other at their residence implying that their friendship was accepted by their family members.

As has been stated earlier, individuals seek help from friends when their family and kinsmen fail to provide such assistance i.e. friendship acts as a second line of defence. The data revealed that a significant percentage of Namdharis and the locals had helped their friends from the other community. However, in comparison to locals, a large number of Namdharis had been helping the friends among the locals. The reciprocal exchange of service and help included domestic, medical, financial, administrative, political, social, business matters and during emergency e.g. accident, fire, illness, death etc. As a testimony of their strong friendship ties, some of the locals helped their Namdharis friends during communal riots of October, 1984.

Taking into account the above description, it can be concluded that inspite of willingness on the part of both the communities to live in mixed localities, a majority of the Namdharis and local population found to be residentially segregated from each other. We also noticed that Namdharis and local respondents were interacting with each other on
different fronts and carrying out various neighbouring, inter-personal and friendly activities. Factors such as higher class and caste of the respondents, younger age and physical neighbourhood played an important role in facilitating greater interaction.

Namdhari have been living at Mandi for the last more than four decades and it was encouraging to note that a majority of the Namdhari and locals invited the members of the other community at their marriage functions. The tabulation of the data further revealed that in such interaction, higher caste, class and neighbourhood variables contributed positively.

A majority of the local and Namdhari respondents has only formal participation on marriage occasions of each other. Only in some individual cases it was noted that they had extended a helping hand on such occasions. As only vegetarian food is served during the marriage ceremonies of both Namdhari and locals, neither the locals nor the Namdhari have any inhibition regarding eating together.

To be accepted in the local community the immigrants not only try to discard certain practices which make them conspicuous but also try to accept certain practices which
would facilitate greater interaction with the host community. Similarly, the local community keeping in view the new exigencies, discards certain practices which may be time consuming and may accept new practices which have become the fashion of the day and in certain cases they also accept certain practices of the immigrant community.

Approximately one-fifth of the Namdharis and more than one-third of the local respondents admitted that they had discarded some of their marriage practices. Namdharis have identified these practices like folksongs sung at the time of the marriage, few dishes and certain marriage practices which they have discarded after coming to Mandi. Similarly, a few Namdharis also identified certain practices such as local food, dowry system, reception parties etc. which they had picked up from the host community. It is interesting to note that only a few vocal and relatively better placed Namdharis reacted to the question and were able to identify the practices which they had discarded and the practices of the locals which they had picked up. The very fact that a majority of the Namdharis though continuing with old practices had not resented acceptance of certain marriage practices of the locals by a few relatively better placed Namdharis, indicated a positive direction in the process of assimilation.
The locals have also identified certain discarded practices like traditional Shenai Badan, elaborate engagement ceremony, ladies sangeet and town endogamy. They were also of the opinion that certain practices like dowry system, caste endogamy, elaborate feasts, time spent on the marriage etc. were not being observed with that much of sanctity. If we look at their responses, it becomes clear that the type of marriage practices which have been discarded and the rigidity of observing certain customs which has been lax cannot be attributed to their interaction with the immigrant Namdharis but is due to over all changes taking place in Himachal Pradesh. On the other hand when they were asked to identify new practices which they have picked up, they identify certain practices like marriage being performed in the temples and the marriage ceremonies not being that elaborate but simpler. These respondents attributed these changes to Namdharis. Namdharis generally celebrated their marriages at their Gurudwara and they were simple religious affair, the locals picked up their good points and instead of Gurudwara they started marrying in the temples. This trend though limited to a few local respondents, is a positive indication of assimilation. However, we notice that Namdharis were picking up bad practices of the locals which the locals tend to discard. This may be attributed to the fact that a
majority of the locals is continuing with their old practices. Namdharis due to their enthusiasm to be acceptable and being absorbed in the local community, have picked up the common practices of the local people such as dowry and community lunch.

Once the marital assimilation takes place, assimilation at other level would follow automatically. It is for this reason that we asked the respondents to indicate not only their opinion in favour of inter-community marriages but also whether they would like to take or give their daughters to other community. A significant proportion of Namdharis as well as of the local respondents was in favour of inter-community marriages. The majority of these respondents in both the groups who favoured inter-community marriages were highly educated and belonged to higher castes. Both among Namdharis and locals the Khatris were more in favour of inter-community marriages.

If we limit our analysis to respondents who have indicated favourable opinion for inter-community marriages, it was encouraging to note that the locals did not suffer from any superiority complex. Approximately 94 per cent of such respondents would be willing to accept and give daughters. Though a majority of the Namdharis would give and
take daughters from local community, there was a significant number of the Namdharis who preferred to accept the daughters of the local community but had some reservations in giving daughters to the locals. The significant minority group, no doubt, indicated positive opinion in favour of inter-community marriages yet showing reservations to accept inter-community marriages on equal footing.

Since 1947 when Namdharis started coming to Mandi ten inter-community marriages have taken place. In five cases local girls have been married to the Namdhari boys and in equal number Namdhari girls have accepted local boys as their husbands. It is interesting to note here that all these ten marriages were not arranged by the parents but were based on mutual volition i.e. love relationship between the partners. Though there was a little hesitation in the beginning from the families concerned yet not only the families but the communities also accepted such alliances. It is significant to point out that all the inter-community marriages which have taken place so far, are confined to higher castes among the locals as well as among Namdharis with the exception of only one.

The above analysis helps us to conclude that marital assimilation at the inter-community level is facilitated by
the caste and class variables i.e. Namdhari of higher castes are being accepted more in comparison with Namdhari of lower castes. Similarly Namdhari who are better educated and economically well-placed are more acceptable to the locals for marital relations rather than Namdhari of lower class and lower occupations.

Realising the importance of the event of birth in the family following marriage, we decided to probe the nature and extent of inter-community network of relations. Regarding inter-community interaction on such occasions, in comparison to locals, very high percentage of Namdhari respondents have extended birthday invitations to the members of the other community. It is important to highlight here that Namdhari respondents who extended such invitations to locals come from upper and upper middle classes and concentrated in areas numerically dominated by the locals. When the background factors of the locals who extended invitations to the Namdhari were explored, it was noted that they belonged to lower middle class. It is interesting to note that upper and upper middle classes of the locals were conspicuous in not extending such invitations to the Namdhari whereas it was the upper and upper middle class of the Namdhari who extended such invitations to the locals on birthdays. Such a discrepancy may be attributed to the fact that the upper
classes of the local respondents consider such events as only familial affairs and extend invitations to only kins and close friends. However, the lower middle classes of the locals because of their business dealing with the Namdharis had greater reciprocal interaction on such occasions.

The Namdhari respondents further admitted that it was only after coming to Mandi that they started celebrating birthday functions in an elaborate manner. The Namdharis felt that as they were invited by the locals on such occasions, they also extended reciprocal hospitality. A sense of reciprocity has prompted them to imitate the practices of the locals which is an encouraging sign of assimilation.

The above findings help us to conclude that respondents with higher caste background had been interacting more in comparison to respondents who had lower caste background. The Khatri caste was a dominant group both among Namdharis and locals, therefore it was quite obvious that Khatris of both the communities would be interacting more in comparison to other castes. The second factor which had been facilitating assimilation was class variable. The respondents of both the communities who had higher class background had been interacting more whereas members of lower
class had confined themselves to their own group. The factor such as neighbourhood numerically dominated by the local had also played important role in facilitating greater interaction between the members of two communities. The interaction between the Namdharis and locals had been helping both of them to understand each other's point of view resulting into Namdharis picking up locals' customs, norms and values and discarding their own. However, it was a two way process in which it was found that locals had also started discarding their own customs, norms and values and picking up some of the practices of the immigrant group.

Religion as the basis of ethnicity needs no argument, and observance of religious practices helps in keeping their identities, which nevertheless creates problems for assimilation. An attempt was made to find out whether Namdharis and locals had entered into the societal network of religious institutions of each others or abstained from it.

Namdharis are not supposed to build up place of worship at home but perform all their religious activities in Gurudwara only. However in approximately one-fourth of the Namdhari households, informal place of worship was found in the shape of religious photographs of Gurus and Hindu Gods Goddesses. This may be attributed to local influence, as in
each and every local household a formal place of worship had been built up to perform different kind of religious activities.

To find out Namdharis participation in religious activities of the host population, a set of questions was asked. It was found that majority of the Namdharis believed in local deities and visited their temples quite often. It was also found that respondents with higher caste and class background and those who were concentrated in the neighbourhood dominated by the locals had more faith in the religious institutions of the host society. It does not however mean that they have started disassociating themselves from their own religious activities. They regularly visited their Gurudwara, paid cess and maintained their identity by wearing a particular dress.

It was further found that with the exception of only a few cases, inter-religious or festival participation was quite formal on part of both locals and Namdharis. The religious or festival invitations were generally forwarded through community organizations and not at individual level therefore participation from both sides was at organizational level only. In addition to religious congregations, a majority of the Namdhari respondents had been participating
in the local fairs too. The findings of the study revealed that higher caste and class background, younger age and neighbourhood numerically dominated by the locals had facilitated Namdhari participation in the local fairs of Mandi. The nature of participation in the local fairs was quite formal on the part of Namdhairs.

Taking into consideration the above results, it can be concluded that "peaceful exploratory" contact is going on at religious front also. The two groups are participating in each others' religious institutions but mainly at organizational level. However in comparison to locals, Namdharis' participation is more in the religious institutions of the host society, but not at the cost of their internal integration. The neighbourhood numerically dominated by the locals, high caste and class background have facilitated greater religious interaction between the two groups under study.

Amongst Namdharis, religion and politics are intermingled. It would be wrong to deny that religious revivalization and political emancipation were in any way separated from the basic tenets of Namdhari sect. The political life of the Namdharis is regulated by their religious head, Guru, Suba and Caste Panchayat etc. It was
interesting to note that more than 83 per cent Namdhari respondents had been approaching their Caste Panchayat in case of dispute involving Namdharis. The data further revealed that even in the case of dispute involving Namdharis and locals, approximately 72 per cent didn't go to the court but settled their dispute through mediators. The large number of Namdharis still settling their disputes through Caste Panchayat and mediator may be attributed to the fact they were still following the dictates of their Guru by which they were supposed to boycott the formal institutions including judiciary.

The Namdharis are in the process of being absorbed in the national stream. It was encouraging to note that a significant majority of Namdhari respondents had voted in the last election. This proved that they were quite aware of their voting right and played active role in choosing their leaders. However, as far as the decision to cast a vote was concerned approximately 55 per cent did not make independent rational decision but voted according to the decision of the Guru Maharaj. It was further noted that for approximately 62 per cent Namdhari respondents, "Party" had been the main consideration while casting vote whereas for approximately 22 per cent, "Individual" had been the main consideration. The rest 16 per cent respondents had been giving due weightage
to both party and individual.

It is important to highlight here that as per the dictates of their Gurus, a majority of the Namdharis in the past had been casting their vote in the favour of Congress party. However, during the recently concluded elections, Guru did not interfere and remained indifferent resulting into a high percentage of Namdharis exercising their franchise in the favour of Bharatiya Janta Party.

Approximately 45 per cent of the Namdhari respondents further maintained that interests of the Namdharis are not well-represented in Mandi; and inspite of their repeated requests Punjabi language and particular dress for the Namdhari children had not been introduced in the local schools. Administrative, social, political discrimination and prejudices were also practised against them. In order to represent their interests, approximately 75 per cent Namdhari respondents favoured reserved seat for Namdharis in the Municipal Committee of Mandi. On the other hand, a majority of the local respondents did not mind having elected a Namdhari as their representative.

The above description helps us to conclude that Namdharis were quite aware of their voting right and majority
of them had been exercising their franchise in different elections. However, Namdharis still recognized "Guru" (hereditary chief); "Subaji" (territorial head); "Caste Panchayat" (council of elders) etc. These informal institutions played an important role in the life of Namdharis, though mostly with lower class and caste background, in comparison to those who had higher class and caste background. A large number of Namdharis adhered to their informal political institutions. For maintaining ethnic solidarity and representation of their interests, a majority of these respondents was in the favour of a reserved seat for Namdharis in Municipal Committee of Mandi.

Assimilation process is a sort of movement towards attaining a greater "homogeneity". The process may be initiated either by accepting the language, by adapting institutional setup of the host community or through other channels. At a given period of time, the degree of assimilation at one institutional level may be different from another institutional level. 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. This interaction 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 processes.

It is encouraging to note that a high proportion of Namdhari respondents was not only able to understand the host language very well but a majority of them was able to speak it quite fluently. It was further noted that a majority of the respondents both Namdharis and locals preferred talking in Mandiyali with each other with mixed vocabulary. However, with the exception of a few, a majority of the Namdhairs has not yet started speaking Mandiyali within their families. The data revealed that respondents of higher caste and class background, younger in age and living in areas numerically dominated by the locals had higher percentage of those Namdharis who were able to understand and speak Mandiyali very well.

The process of assimilation may follow different directions. It may start with picking up the artifacts, dress, food etc. of the locals. People living in different geographical areas eat different types of food which may be attributed to availability or non-availability of certain commodities. Eating same type of food in the same manner would facilitate people to come closer to each other than those who have different food habits. To be accepted in the
local community, the immigrants not only try to accept certain food habits for facilitating greater interaction with the host community but discard certain food habits which make them conspicuous. It was encouraging to note that a significant majority of Namdhari had eaten and relished Mandiyali dishes and a majority of them/their wives knew cooking Mandiyali food and had been cooking it occasionally in their kitchens. A majority of the Namdhari further identified certain typical local food habits 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 which they have discarded after coming to Mandi. Data further revealed that among those who have picked up local food habits, a majority of them had higher class and caste background.

In the initial stages immigrants may continue with their traditional dress for convenience or for maintaining its extrinsic cultural traits. In the case of Namdhari it was found that with the exception of only six respondents, each and every Namdhari respondent had been wearing traditional dress and a majority of them had been wearing it at
all times. The Namdhari respondents who were more particular in wearing their dresses, were mostly older in age, had less educational qualifications and belonged to lower caste group. It was noted that there was no typical local dress of the town, so there was no question of Namdharis picking up local dress. However, Namdharis especially their younger generations had started discarding their traditional dresses and quite often wear modern clothes with their typical Namdhari Pagari (turban). A significant majority of Namdharis of younger generation wear their traditional dress on special occasions only.

The exposure to schooling system plays an important role in facilitating greater interaciton and the process of assimilation. The Namdharis of Mandi had been running their own school and approximately 34 per cent respondents favoured separate educational institutions for their children. 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 schools. Another group of Namdharis (18.39 per cent) was sending a few children to their Namdhari school and other children to local schools and a majority of them (63.4 per cent) was sending their children to the local and public schools. When background of those respondents who were sending their children to Namdhari
schools was explored, it was found 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.

Among the Namdharis, there were two main ethnic organizations at Mandi i.e. Namdhari Vidyak Jatha and Namdhari Sangat. Each and every Namdhari up to the age of 45 years was a member of Namdhari Vidyak Jatha and persons of older age-group were associated with the activities of Namdhari Sangat. Besides these two ethnic organizations, a few Namdharis were associated with Namdhari Caste Panchayat, Partap Co-operative Society and Partap School Committee. In addition to participating in their own ethnic organizations, a few Namdhari respondents had also been the members of various formal and informal local organizations i.e. political, social, religious, sports, recreation and professional with a view to adapt to the local community. 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, their passive kind of organizational participation has not as yet reached a stage which is very conducive for their assimilation. On the other hand very few locals made financial contributions to Namdharis and not a single local
A respondent participated actively or passively in the Namdhari organizations because 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 Namdharis. Recently a "Save Parminder Committee" was instituted to raise funds for meeting medical expenses of Parminder Singh, a Namdhari 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 Namdhari young boy.

The elimination of irritants between the immigrant and host community also facilitate the process of assimilation. Attempt has been made to find out the factors responsible for jeopardizing the assimilation process. The subjective observations made by the local and Namdhari respondents revealed that members of both the communities had been maintaining distance from each other. In the case of local respondents who contended that Namdharis were maintaining distance from them, a majority of them had lower middle class background. In contrast to this, Namdhari respondents who perceived that locals were maintaining social distance from them, mostly belonged to upper middle class background.

After having discussed subjective perception regarding social distance being maintained by both the communities, an effort was made to identify the existence of any unpalatable
tradition and way of life which might be an obstacle in the process of assimilation as perceived by the respondents. A minority group of both Namdhari and locals admitted the existence of certain traditions and way of life of the other community which were unpalatable to them.

An immigrant can be considered assimilated if he participates in the host society without encountering prejudices in the common life. To what an extent Namdha'irs had encountered with prejudices or discriminatory behaviour in the host society? Approximately 50 per cent Namdhari respondents maintained that they had been encountering prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory behaviour in all the ordinary affairs of life. A high percentage of such respondents belonged to higher class but lower caste background. A majority of the respondents either identified business rivalry or Punjab Problem as the main irritant for discriminatory behaviour and prejudiced attitudes. A majority of the Namdhars further admitted that they had taken different remedial steps to eliminate discrimination and prejudices and such respondents were mainly younger in age and had higher caste and class background.

The negative outlook of the host community may not be exhibited every time in the shape of overt hostility against
the immigrant ethnic group and may remain simmering. Namdharis were asked whether there was any incident in which local people had joined hands against them, a majority of them specified October, 1984 riots as the main incident.

The prejudiced behaviour and discriminatory attitudes may be exercised both by host and ethnic 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. The data revealed that almost equal percentage of Namdharis and locals (25.89 per cent and 25.69 per cent respectively) had complaints against the members of each other’s community.

The ethnic population becomes the easy target when animosities find some "controlled ventilation". The Namdharis of Mandi had already suffered a lot by the spontaneous outburst of anger and hatred during October, 1984 riots. Therefore Namdharis were specifically asked what things worry them most in their life here at Mandi. Although a majority of them maintained that nothing worried them at Mandi, there were a few who feared that terrorism in Punjab might have a backlash on them repeating October, 1984 situation. The Namdharis who were worried due to
one reason or the other, were mostly younger in age and belonged to high class and an over representation of such respondents was concentrated in localities numerically dominated by the locals.

A significant minority group of Namdhari respondents had even decided to leave the town after October, 1984 riots. During the riots, a good proportion of Namdharis had left Mandi for safer places. They however returned when peace was restored.

The respondents, both Namdharis and locals, were asked whether there was any occasion when they had received help from the members of other community. The data revealed that more than 50 per cent Namdhari respondents had been helped by the members of local community. Namdhari respondents had admitted that even during October, 1984 riots, a good number of locals came to their rescue even at the cost of earning a bad name from their own community. On the other hand, a few locals had also been helped by the Namdharis in the day to day life.

After having discussed the sub-processes of assimilation, we were interested to know the subjective perception of Namdhari respondents regarding their over all
acceptance in the host community. For the said purpose they were asked to indicate whether their decision to settle at Mandi was right or wrong. With the exception of only eleven, all the Namdhari respondents believed that it was a good decision. Their positive response clearly indicates that despite a few irritants, the nature of social interaction Namdharis have with local community is congenial which is an encouraging sign for assimilation.

It is interesting to note that respondents from both the communities have identified common steps for providing greater homogeneity between Namdharis and locals. The steps identified were (1) greater interaction at individual as well as at the community level (ii) Joint councils to sort out different issues (iii) co-operation at voluntary organizational level (iv) cordial relations at primary group level and marital relations.

Taking into account the commonality of their perception, it can be concluded that though Namdharis maintained a distinct identity, the process of assimilation was going in the right direction.
The results of our study do not support different models as well as sequence of changes advocated by number of scholars as discussed in the first chapter. Our result as indicate that depending upon the conditions of immigration as well as the attitudes of the host community, the process of assimilation may be initiated either at the institutional level or at the inter-personal level or both the levels. However, interaction which facilitates the process of assimilation of an ethnic group starts at the formal level.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The above noted summary helps us to conclude that the process of assimilation has already been set in motion between the members of Namdhari ethnic group and the host population of Mandi. However, the degree or level of assimilation not only varies at the individual level but also at the institutional level.

The first step that had facilitated inter-communication between the two groups was that the Namdharis had picked up host language. The members of Namdhari ethnic group were not only able to understand the host language (Mandiyali) very well but both Namdharis and locals preferred talking in Mandiyali with each other in their day to day conversation, which is an encouraging sign of assimilation. The results of our study are quite consistent with a number

The process of assimilation has been further facilitated as the younger generation of Namdharis were exposed to local schools where they learned not only local language/dialect but were also exposed to their way of life. Various scholars (Duncan, 1933; Lieberson, 1963; Gordon, 1964; Gore, 1970; Selznick, 1981; Tuch, 1989; Singh, Kelvin quoted by Sharma, K.N., 1989 and Smith, M.G. quoted by Sharma, K.N., 1989; Sharma, K.L., 1990) have also argued that the exposure to schooling system played an important role in facilitating greater interaction and the process of assimilation.

To be accepted in the local community, the Namdhari immigrants have not only tried to discard conspicuous food habits of their own but have picked up certain local food habits too. This gesture on the part of Namdharis was not only facilitating greater interaction from the host community but had brought the two communities closer to each other. As only vegetarian food was served during the different
ceremonies of both Namdharis and locals neither the locals nor the Namdharis had any inhibition regarding eating together. A number of studies (Gordon, 1964; Punekar, 1974; Nair, 1978; Agnihotri, 1987; Atal, 1989; Sharma, S.L., 1989; Sharma, K.L., 1990) support our analysis that eating same type of food in the same manner facilitates people to come closer to each other; and such behavioural pattern would precipitate the process of assimilation.

Namdharis are living at Mandi for the last four decades and it has been quite a usual practice in the town that Namdharis and locals invite each other during their marriage and birth-day functions. The Namdharis and locals though continuing with their old practices have also accepted certain marriage practices of each other. With regard to marital assimilation, only ten inter-community marriages have taken place so far. However, all ten marriages were not arranged by the parents but were based on mutual volition or love relationship. Though there was a little hesitation in the beginning from the families concerned, not only the families but the communities have also accepted such alliances which is a very positive sign for assimilation. Further it is only after coming to Mandi that Namdharis have also started celebrating birthday functions in an elaborate manner. A sense of reciprocity and imitation on the part of
the two communities is a positive sign for assimilation (Duncan, 1933; Zubrzycki, 1960; Gordon, 1964; Taft, 1966; Muir, 1988; Atal, 1989; Smith quoted by Sharma, K.N., 1989 and Sharma, K.L., 1990).

Namdharis are not supposed to build places of worship at homes but perform all their religious activities in Gurudwara only. In imitation of the locals, Namdharis have also started building up places of worship in their houses to perform different religious activities. The religious and festive participation is though quite formal on the part of both Namdharis and locals, yet a large number of Namdharis do participate in the religious congregation of locals and take part in local fairs and festivals. Further with the exception of only a few Namdharis, all of them believe in Hindu Gods Goddesses and local deities and a majority of them quite often had been paying visits to local temples and deities.

The political life of Namdharis is still regulated by their Guru (hereditary religious head), Subaji (territorial head) and caste Panchayat (Council of elders). However, Namdharis are now in the process of being absorbed in the national stream if we look at their participation in the formal political organizations. The recently concluded elections help us to conclude that Namdharis are not only quite aware of their voting right but an overwhelming
majority of them has accepted the political change this time in the favour of Bharatiya Janta Party. Namdharis' awareness regarding their voting right and vote for change in the recently concluded elections may be attributed to their greater interaction with the host population. The greater participation on the part of ethnic population in the formal and informal institutions of the host society is quite an encouraging sign of assimilation (Burgess, 1921; Duncan, 1933; Zubrzycki, 1960; Dahl, 1961; Gordon, 1964; Wolfinger, 1965; Taft, 1966; Richardson, 1967; Rex, 1967; Glazer and Moynihan, 1970; Greeley, 1976; Alexander, 1980; Atal, 1989; Sharma, K.N., 1989; Smith quoted by Sharma, K.N., 1989; Sharma, K.L., 1990).

The results of the study further indicate that interpersonal friendship is emerging between the members of two communities. A significant percentage of Namdharis and locals had been helping their friends from the other community in day to day life. As a testimony of their strong friendship, locals helped their Namdhari friends during the October, 1984 riots. A number of scholars (Duncan, 1933; Zubrzycki, 1960; Gordon, 1964; Taft, 1966; Wakil, 1981; Muir, 1988; Atal, 1989; Ayalon, 1989; Gans quoted by Ayalon, 1989; Smith quoted by Sharma, K.N., 1989; Sharma, K.L., 1990) believe that emergence of friendly ties facilitates people to come closer
to each other and precipitate the process of assimilation.

After having identified the areas in which Namdharis and locals have made adaptation to each other's way of life, let us now take up the factors which have facilitated the process of assimilation.

Consistent with the findings of Tuch (1988), results of our study indicate that higher educational qualifications, higher occupational prestige, higher income, younger age and higher caste background facilitate greater interaction between the members of two communities, which precipitates the process of assimilation. The findings of our study support (Zubrzycki, 1960; Lieberson, 1963; Gordon, 1964; Rex, 1967; Gore, 1970; Agnihotri, 1987; Tuch, 1988; Atal, 1989; Denton, 1989; Nelson and Tienda quoted by Denton, 1989) that individuals who live in ethnic colonies are less assimilated than those who are residing outside their ethnic colonies. Hence, dispersed neighbourhood has facilitated assimilation.

Hinde (1979) is of the view that greater interaction always leads to personal network of relationships. The interaction between Namdharis and locals through different channels and institutions as discussed earlier had been helping both of them to understand each other's point of view resulting into personal network of social relations. In
short, greater interaction between the members of two communities have brought them closer to each other and this factor is precipitating the process of assimilation.

There remains, however, a number of areas in which assimilation has been tardy, and a number of factors can be held responsible for slowing down the process of assimilation.

Inspite of willingness on the part of both the communities to live in the mixed neighbourhood, Namdharis and locals were found to be residentially segregated. Such a situation facilitates greater intra-group cohesion but at the cost of their being assimilated in the host community. The residential segregation of the Namdharis may be attributed to a number of factors. Namdhari immigrants after coming to Mandi were allotted the evacuee property of the Muslims mainly at Ramnagar locality, therefore a large number of them were inhabited there. Secondly, earlier batch of Namdhari immigrants helped the later immigrants to settle down nearby who preferred to live because of the socio-cultural similarities. Thirdly, the main township was already occupied by the locals, and Namdharis were forced to build up their own colonies. Lastly, when new localities were developed at Mandi, it was noticed that Namdharis also started building houses alongwith the locals. However, these Namdharis had
built up their houses in a cluster to have greater interaction among themselves as well as for security reasons. A number of scholars (Zubrzycki*, 1960; Lieberson, 1963; Gordon, 1964; Rex, 1967; Gore, 1970; Agnihotri, 1987; Tuch, 1988; Atal, 1989; Denton, 1989; Nelson and Tienda quoted by Denton, 1989) believe that residential segregation enables the population to maintain its peculiar traits and group structure but creates obstacles in the process of assimilation.

The members of two communities are of course interacting with each other on different fronts and carrying out various neighbouring, inter-personal and social activities. However, these activities on the part of both Namdharis and locals are at the formal level with the exception of a few individuals. Namdharis and locals in the cultural domain by and large tend to preserve their own identity. They do not fully identify themselves with each other and maintain distance in different spheres of day to day life, with the result that a majority of both locals and Namdharis has only formal participation in each other's ceremonies. It is only in some individual cases that their participation is of informal type to an extent of extending help on such occasions. This might possibly keep the population away from acculturating influences and reinforce

On the economic front, Namdharis have developed "economic enclaves". It was admitted by both the locals and Namdharis that Namdharis preferred to go to the shops of their own community and it was only when some commodities were not available they bought them from the host community. Further they had maintained Partap Co-operative Society which was extending financial help and other types of assistance to the members of Namdhari ethnic group and rarely a member of Namdhari ethnic group sought financial support from other institutions. These economic enclaves were resented by the host community. Such a situation not only created hurdles in their assimilation but host population also perceived the Namdharis as their economic rivals. Gore, 1970; Chauhan, 1988; Denton, 1989; Nelson and Tienda quoted by Denton, 1989; Zhoumin, 1989; Sharma, K.L., 1990; believe that economic enclaves open different opportunities for the members of ethnic group which offer a positive alternative to assimilation. Such economic enclaves according to a number of scholars (Sharma, K.L., 1988; Brown, 1989; Jayawardena quoted
by Jain, 1989; Sharma, S.L., 1989) are not only resented by the host community but create conflict between the host and the ethnic population.

No doubt, a good number of Namdhari children have started attending the local schools and colleges yet Namdharis were running their own school up to High School level managed by Partap Schools Committee. Maintenance of such institutions helped the Namdharis to train their children in Panjabi language as well as reinforcing their ethnic attributes. Nevertheless, it created problems for such children to be accepted by their peers of the host community. Our findings here are quite consistent with results of a number of studies (Gore, 1970; Selznick, 1981; Atal, 1989; Singh, Kelvin quoted by Sharma, K.N., 1989; Sharma, K.I., 1990).

On marital front, inspite of willingness on the part of both the communities to accept partners from each other and a few cases of inter-community marriages, Namdharis and locals had some reservations regarding the inter-community marital alliances. These reservations were attributed to the fact that Namdharis did not want to loose their identity whereas the locals felt that the way of life pursued by Namdharis was different from that of theirs. A number of scholars (Burgess, 1921; Duncan, 1933; Zubrzycki, 1960; Dahl,
1961; Gordon, 1964; Gore, 1970; Punekar, 1974; Kannan, 1978; Nair, 1978; Fisher, 1980; Siddique, 1983; Sharma, K.L., 1985, 1988; Alba quoted by Ayalon, 1989; Buchignani, 1989; Denton, 1989; Sharma, S.L., 1989) believe that highest degree of assimilation occurs through inter-community conjugal relations. The inter-community marriages are the clear indicator of change in the ethnic boundaries. These scholars believe that complete assimilation by which one particular ethnic group loses its identity can take place only through inter-community conjugal relations.

On religious front, Namdharis form a distinctly cohesive sect which maintains little intercourse with anybody outside the group. This sect displays a considerable degree of totalism in dominating the lives of its members. The members of this sect believe in the institution of Guru and give due respect to him. Whatever the Guru says, they religiously adhere to that. Namdharis have their own Gurudwara at Mandi where they perform all their religious activities. The members of Namdharis sect are quite punctilious in attending service in their Gurudwara, paying cess and in observing the taboos on food, drink and personal deportment with the help of which they are able to retain, no doubt, their distinct identity; but their religious distinctiveness is creating hurdles in their being completely assimilated.
The physical attributes of Namdharis (hair, beard, and dress) also make them quite distinct from the host population. According to their religious tenets, each and every Namdhari is obliged to retain his distinct physical attributes (hair, beard and dress). A number of scholars (Park, 1921; Simpson, 1968; Agnihotri, 1987; Greeley, 1988; Muir, 1988; Tuch, 1988; Atal, 1989; Denton, 1989; Jain, 1989; Melson and Tienda quoted by Denton, 1989; Sharma, K.L., 1990) have also held that distinct physical attributes continue to be an important factor adversely affecting the process of assimilation.

In local religious ceremonies, Namdharis have started participating, nevertheless only at formal level, indicating a greater tolerance of others' religious practices whereas the locals have failed to come up with such a gesture. Religious non-tolerance or lack reciprocity on the part of locals is creating obstacles in the assimilation process.

There are two main ethnic organizations of Namdharis at Mandi i.e. Namdhari Vidyak Jatha and Namdhari Sangat. Each and every Namdhari was a member of these ethnic organizations. The very fact that Namdharis were maintaining the religio-political and ethnic associations, was creating hurdles in their being accepted by the host population. These associations acted as seminaries, reinforcing the ethnic

Another major hurdle in the process of assimilation can be attributed to the prevalence of discriminatory and prejudiced attitudes against the Namdharis amongst the host population. The host population treated them as outsiders, terrorists and undesirable elements. The prevalence of such prejudices against the Namdharis can be attributed to the happenings in Punjab where Sikh extremists are indulging in different type of atrocities against the Hindus. Additionally, the host population treat the Namdharis as their economic competitors and are jealous over their economic prosperity. A number of scholars (Kannan, 1978; Schermerhorn, 1978; Sharma, K.L., 1988; Chauhan, 1988; Brown, 1989; Denton, 1989; Jayawarden quoted by Jain, 1989; Sharma, K.N. 1989; Sharma, S.L. 1989; Shiv Kumar, 1989) have also concluded that immigrants will have a normal life and chances
of their assimilation are always greater as long as immigrants are not discriminated or prejudiced and perceived by the locals as they competitors.

Keeping in view the above analysis it may be concluded that assimilation of Namdharis is taking place at the formal level only. Despite the existence of a few irritants, it was observed that a number of positive facilitating conditions were precipitating the process of assimilation at the interpersonal level. Namdharis who were younger in age, had higher educational qualifications, employed in occupations of higher prestige, had higher income, belonged to higher castes and were living in dispersed neighbourhoods were relatively more assimilated. It can thus be concluded that with removal of irritants and creation of positive facilitating conditions, the process of assimilation will be initiated first at formal level, and precipitated only when relations are established at the informal level.