CHAPTER III

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
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Before dealing with the socio-cultural background of the population of the towns under study, it is useful to know their historical background in order to have an idea about the previous population types and their spatial distribution. Socio-ecological studies demand historical insight to determine the functional importance of a town and to know how population types change with the changes in the economic order.

A. HISTORY OF GORAYA

About 400 years ago, Goraya was a small village inhabited by twenty households of Dhillon Jats whose origin is traced to the Majha * region. Near the village, there was a small pond surrounded by a cluster of trees where the sixth guru of the Sikhs, Guru Hargobind Sahib, is said to have stayed on his way to village Mao near Phillaur. At that time, the Ramgarhia community of a nearby village welcomed him. According to the religious book, Sri Suraj Parkash, this happened around 1623 A.D. (Punjabi Tribune, February 27, 1979). During those days, visitors were looted even during the day time. People reported the matter to the Guru who said that they should start a langar (common kitchen) at

* It is a natural region of Punjab between the Beas and the Ravi rivers.
that place. They obeyed him and since then, looting and arson greatly decreased. The Guru was impressed by their courtesy and blessed them saying that their village would be another Delhi. From that time, people started calling the village as 'Guru Aya' (The Guru came) which was later distorted to 'Goraya'. It is also said that since then, the population began to increase.

According to another legend, a Ramgarhia saint used to meditate there and became very famous. This was around 1858 A.D. Then the Ramgarhia population from nearby villages started settling there. The temple is called 'Kutia Mandir' where a festival is held every year. Some people believe that it was this saint who blessed this village to become another Delhi. Thus the town got a sacred significance in some way.

The old village is situated at a higher level. On the eastern side of the village, there is a pucea (bricks and mortar) gateway whereas on its western side, there is only a kachha (bricks and mud). The Jagirdar of Bada Pind, a village about two kilometers away, wanted that the Sardar of this village should pay malia (land revenue) to him. But the Sardar of this village refused to oblige him. As a result, there was a constant fight between them and the attacks used to come from the eastern side towards which Bada Pind is situated. The people of 'Patti Rao' used to defend the village.* All this stopped with the

* As pointed out by S. Samund Singh, the oldest person from among the descendants of the Jats who first shifted to Goraya.
annexation of Punjab by the Britishers.

All the houses are built of burnt bricks and most of them have a large enclosure for livestock. In the centre of the village, the size of the houses is small. The inner lanes laid with bricks are narrow whereas the outside lanes, paved or unpaved, are broad. The village is divided into five pattis. Each patti is named after the son of the Sardar who was a Jat*. Some argue that 'Patti Jhewer' draws its name from the caste of the same name as this caste was in preponderance here. Each patti used to have its own well for fetching water. Since its inception, the number of households has swelled from 20 to 1281 (in 1979).

The village has been dominated by Jats from the very beginning. A few Muslim households were also there though at present, there is only one Muslim household located near the periphery of the village. With the partition, Arora, Khatri, and Sansi castes came to settle in this village. The Scheduled Castes are residing towards the western side of the settlement.

The areas developed after the partition are towards the eastern side of the village. When industry was established along the main transport route, the Grand Trunk Road, the Scheduled Caste people refused to work on the farms. This annoyed the villagers who invited the

* As pointed out by S. Samund Singh, the oldest person from among the descendants of the Jats who first shifted to Goraya.
Scheduled Caste workers from the village Langri. They were provided with land for houses too. This locality is towards the southern side of the village. The other areas which developed gradually are along the transport routes. The railway station was established in 1857. The postal service started in 1936 while telephone exchange with merely twenty connections started functioning in 1957. In 1973, a full-fledged police station was established there.

Around 1923, some poor but hard-working Ramgarhia families started manufacturing chaff-cutters with the help of traditional tools. To meet the demand, they also started manufacturing cane-crushing machines during 1928-29. Earlier, these machines were imported but the local manufacturing improved upon the quality of the imported products. With the passage of time, they started using advanced technology and the product started acquiring popularity in the national market. The installations of electricity in 1934 provided a real impetus to industry. This induced the manufacturing units at the villages such as Bada Pind and Mahala to shift to this place. The availability of infra-structure also attracted them. This in turn resulted in a steep rise in the land price. On their return from Burma in 1935, some Ramgarhia families of the area started manufacturing electric goods there. At present, in addition to agricultural implements, motor-spare parts, ball-bearings, and certain electric goods are manufactured here. The goods manufactured at Goraya not
only save but also earn a good amount of foreign exchange. It is for this reason that Goraya is called the 'Coventry of India'.

The migration of the Ramgarhias and the establishment of industries at this place resulted in population increase. In 1971, this village was given the status of an urban area. The Village Panchayat ceased functioning in 1973 and in its place the Notified Area Committee with nominated members started functioning there in August 1976. Most of the nominated members are traders and manufacturers.

The immigrant Ramgarhia population has come from the villages of Bada Pind, Bundala, Atta, Rurka Kalan, and so on. Ramgarhias, especially those belonging to the Sehmby and Ghatrora clans, have brought this town on the industrial map of India.

The total population, which was only a few hundred earlier, rose to 6000 in 1971. The main economic activity involving manufacture, repair, and service is dominated by the Ramgarhias. The industrial workers belong mostly to the Scheduled Castes and a few to the Backward Castes. The cultivation is in the hands of Jats whereas trade is in the hands of Brahmins, Khatris, and Aroras. A few Jats from the nearby villages have arhti (commission agent) shops in the grain market. They come only at the harvest season and go back to their villages after the grain is sold. A few manufacturing units are owned by Brahmin, Jats, and others.
To sum up, it can be said that the town has a sacred value attached to it. It started as an agricultural village dominated by a cultivating caste, the Jats, and rose to the level of a manufacturing urban area. The shift in the economic base is because of the hard labour put in by the Ramgarhias who belong to an artisan caste. Besides, the rise in the population is due to the influx of migrants who are attracted from the nearby villages by its industry. Obviously, it is the artisan caste (Population type) which is associated with the economic base of the town.

B. HISTORY OF NURMAHAL

Nurmahal is said to have been built at the site of a town called Kot Kahlur which was destroyed by a Hindu ruler around 1300 A.D. (Punjab Gazetteer, 1888: 288). The modern town grew under the fostering care of Nur Jahan, the consort of the Emperor Jahangir, who was said to have been brought up here. She got the imperial Sarai (inn) constructed between 1619-21 A.D. by Zakariya Khan, the Nazim of Subah of Jullundur, and brought about the settlement of a few Muslim families in the new town. In 1738-39 A.D., Nadir Shah exacted a ransom of three lakh rupees from Nurmahal, which gave a serious set-back to its prosperity. In 1756-57 A.D., Ahmed Shah demanded a similar sum and the people who were not in a position to pay this huge amount, were plundered and slaughtered under his orders while the town was burnt. Almost immediately
afterwards, Punjab became independent of Delhi and Nurmahal was seized by the Ahluwalia Misal of the Sikhs and was held by Sardar Kaur Singh and his descendants for the Kapurthala chief. Some historians are of the view that before coming into the hands of Ahluwalia Sikhs, the town was held by Talwan Rajputs (Punjab Gazetteer, 1904: 298).

The Sarai is 551 feet square and includes an octagonal tower at the corner. The whole front is divided into panels ornamented with sculpture, but the relief is low and workmanship is coarse. The western gate known as Lahori Gate is a double-storeyed building with a front of red sand-stone. There is a similar gateway towards the eastern side known as Delhi Gate, but it is now only a mass of ruins and all the stone facing has disappeared. Towards the north side of the courtyard, there is a masjid and a well in the centre. The emperor's apartment formed the centre of the south block but all its beauty is now concealed under the white wash. At present the Sarai houses a high school, the police station, the municipal committee office, and a PWD rest house.

Towards the north-eastern side of the town, there is the tomb of Shah Fateh Ali built around 1660-61 A.D. Shah Fateh Ali, also known as Chishti Farukhi Sheikh, belonged to Sausand in Phagwara. He was also called a Qadria Faqir of the Ahl-i-Hadis (Punjab Gazetteer, 1888: 133; Abdul Rashid, 1910: 186). Towards the north of the Sarai, there is another shrine called Mohammaden Faqir's
Takia. It is built near a well popularly known as the Ganges and is believed to be related in some way to the holy river of the Hindus thus giving it a sacred character.

The houses are built mostly of burnt bricks. The older ones are made of smaller bricks while the new ones of bigger bricks. The gates of old buildings display craft work and carvings for embellishment. Even on the doors, various designs can be seen. The lanes are narrow and are laid by bricks. The houses do not have verandahs and are mostly double-storeyed.

Before the partition of the country, the Muslims occupied an important place and were the major land owning section. With the partition of the country in 1947, the Muslims were replaced by the Hindus and the Sikhs who had migrated from Pakistan. Consequently, there was a drop of population by 1530 between 1941 and 1951. The decrease in population was due to the larger exit of Muslims at the time of partition (Census of India, 1951: 216).

The main occupation of the people was agriculture and trade. The Muslim agriculturists were succeeded by the Hindus, Brahmins, and Khatris. The trade was by and large in the hands of the Khatris who control it till today. The present Muslim carpet weavers, come from Uttar Pradesh and keep shifting within the town according to the wages.

During the pre-partition period, the houses of the Muslims were on the periphery of the town while the Hindus
were residing in the centre.* However, three Muslim households, the big landlords, had their residence in the centre. The houses of the Scheduled Castes were on the north eastern side of the town. New settlements of Scheduled Castes emerged with the expansion of the population due to migration from West Pakistan. One basti (colony) of Scheduled Castes is occupied by the migrants of the village Tandowali who fled to the present place around 1938 because of a disease which infested their original village. Another basti (colony) of Scheduled Castes, mostly of the Ad-dharmis, owes its origin (1960) to the allotment of a piece of land by a big Brahmin landlord to his servants. The Balmiki (scavengers) population is residing towards the southern side of the town.

In the beginning, the Purana Bazar was the only business centre and grain market of this town. With the construction of a new grain market (1940) away from the main residential area and the reorganization of land (Murabbabandi, 1952), the old market place (Purana Bazar) lost its importance. On the other hand, the 'Lamba Bazar' became the centre of all the retail trade activities. The Khatri population has kept the trade base of the town alive. The displaced population especially the Aroras, have provided a boon to its trading activities.

The railway station, which is at a distance of one

* As narrated by Dr. Rudra Dutt, an old man residing at Nurmahal. He has a thorough knowledge of the history of the town.
kilometer from the town, was constructed during the British rule and the postal services were also made available. The bus stand was constructed around 1974 by the municipal committee. At present Nurmahal is connected with Phillaur and Nakodar by rail and metalled road, and with Talwan and Jullundur by metalled road.

The first bank to be established in the town was the Lakshmi Commercial Bank in 1966. Later, the Punjab National Bank opened a branch there. At present, the town has six branches of different banks. Besides these, there are two cooperative societies. There is a college for girls; the boys have to go to Nakodar or Phagwara for college education. In addition, a few private elementary schools, two high schools, one each for boys and girls, are located here. There is a government hospital with 14 beds. Also, there are two private nursing homes maintained by qualified staff. There is a veterinary hospital run by the government. Offices of panchayat samiti and sub-tehsil are also situated in the town.

The town is under the administration of a Municipal Committee whose decisions are executed by an executive officer, a government employee. Each ward of the town is represented by one member.

To sum up, it may be noted that this town has been, throughout its history, a trade town which has passed through many vicissitudes between ruination and re-establishment. The major trade function was always
maintained by Khatris. The trade activities further flourished with the settlement of Aroras who came to the town after the partition of the country. Nurmahal is an important trade centre of wheat and carpets (District Census Handbook, 1971, Part XA-B).

C. A COMPARISON

The history of Goraya and Nurmahal reveals that Goraya was established by the Jats who migrated from the Majha region of Punjab and Nurmahal by the Muslim rulers. Goraya owes its name to the visit of Guru Hargobind Sahib and Nurmahal draws its name from Nurjahan, consort of the Mughal emperor Jahangir. Whereas the economy of Goraya has never been shattered, the economy of Nurmahal has been occasionally damaged in the past by the Muslim invaders. The Muslim cultivators of Nurmahal have been replaced by Hindu businessmen after the partition in 1947. The refugees who to a considerable extent replaced the Muslim population in Nurmahal were mainly traders and contributed significantly to the growth of the town. The trading activities in Nurmahal are dominated by the Khatris and the Aroras. In Goraya, the cultivators are Jats, manufacturers are mostly Ramgarhias, and the traders are Aroras and Brahmins. The rise in population of Goraya owes itself to the migration of Ramgarhias from the nearby villages as well as to that of the refugees who came to settle here after the partition. Goraya was declared an urban area only in 1971 whereas Nurmahal, throughout its history, has had the status of a town.