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THE AHIRWAL REGION : A HISTORICAL UNIQUE IDENTITY

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The Ahirs of Haryana reside in the area, which is popularly known as Ahirwal. Ahirwal or the abode of Ahirs includes the northern and the western part of Gurgaon district, the whole of the Mahendergarh district, a part of Jhajjar Tehsil of Rohtak district and some parts of the Bhiwani district. The area extends to Behror, Mundhwar, Bansur and Kotkasim in Rajasthan¹.

The Ahirs, an important caste of agriculturists and breeders of cattle, which at the census of 1901 numbered 9,806,475, are spread throughout India particularly in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, West Bengal and Haryana. They are known by different names in different parts of the country.²

This area is dominated by the vitriolic and hard-working Ahirs, who have shown their courage and patriotism at the hour of the need. The other important castes are the pastoral Gujras, the stalwart Punjabis with their zest of life, the Rajputs known as traditional aristocrats, the minority of Brahmins, traditionally



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accepted as high in the social status, dynamic Jats and the important and upcoming Harijans. These are the principal communities, which dominate social, economic and political life of Ahirwal.

Ahirwati, also called 'Hirwati' (the language of Ahirs) is Spoken³ in Ahirwal. Rewari may be considered as the centre of Ahirwati speaking area. It represents the connecting link between Mewati and three other dialects⁴ Bangaru, Bagri and Shekhawati.

The Ahirwal region is generally a plain area particularly the northern and the eastern part, however, in the south some residual hills of the Aravali chain show the topography of undulating character. Some hills in the northern part rising 500 to 700 feet above the plains⁵, form a marked feature. They provide natural meadows for the animals and land beauty to the area breaking the monotony of plains. In the southern region, these hill ranges contain a number of rich minerals. The Dhosi hill touches a height of about 2100 feet above the sea level. This hill is a sacred place for pilgrimage.⁶

Mostly common wild animals like cat, fox, wolf and mangoose are found in this area. The hare is plentiful in all the parts. In the hills, various kinds of deer are occasionally found. Birds of diverse variety are found everywhere including the peacock, partridge, quail, pigeon and anlope.⁷

The area is inadequately wooded and some parts are practically bare of trees. The Kikar (*Acacia arabica*) is found all over the area. Neem (*Malia azadirachta*) is generally found in and around village sites where Pipal (*ficus religion*) is also a frequent occurrence. Shisham (*Dalibergia Sissoo*) is seen planted along the roads and railway lines. Jharbari⁸ (*zizyphus numilaria*) abounds all over the area.



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Gurgaon is the most important town of this region, mainly because of its close proximity to Delhi. Industrial units of different types have been set up in recent years and many more are coming up. The industrial estate at Gurgaon has almost been completed.⁹

Rewari is the hub of the life and culture of Ahirwal. The politics of Ahirwal revolves around Rewari. This town is of great importance due to a close network of railway line of Metre gauge from where they take off variously towards Delhi, Hisar, Pilani, Ringus and Bandi Kuin. Its main market constructed in 1854¹⁰, is quite big and beautiful. There are many industrial units, mostly manufacturing brass and kansi utensils. Raja Rawat who ruled Rewari, named it after his daughter Rewari.

Narnaul the derivation of the name of this city is related in three ways¹¹

- (a) Its name was Mahar Naul i.e. "the forest of tigers", because numerous tigers were found here.
- (b) Its name was Narnaul, Nar meaning ' Woman' in the local and Naul 'Beautiful, because it is said that the women of this city were beautiful.
- (c) Its name was Nag-naul i.e., when the city was founded, a mangoose was seen fighting with a serpent hence the name from Naga' a snake and newala, 'a mongoose'.

The town is also a centre for the local trade. It has a large sarai constructed by Rai Mukand and Rai kaith during the reign of Shah jahan. At present, the town of Narnaul is the administrative head-quarter of Mahendergarh district.



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Mahendergarh is said that the town was founded by Malik Mahdud Khan, a servant of Babar¹² and was inhabited in the beginning by Brahimins, however, at present the Ahirs dominate.

Pataudi town is 18 miles to the west of Gurgaon. Previously it was a small princely state. Only in 1950, it was merged with Gurgaon district. The attraction of the town is the palace of the late Nawab of Pataudi.

While summing it up, it can be said that the Ahirs who are scattered all over India, have a significant concentration in the southern part of Haryana and are inclined towards agriculture and defence services.

The Ahirs of Haryana who are known as 'Yadavas' or 'Raos' have a better social status as compared to the Ahirs of the rest of India. The Ahirs of Haryana outshine their brother Ahirs of other states because of their better economic status and moreover because of their concentration in a limited tract. The Ahirs of Haryana reside in the area, which is popularly known as Ahirwal. This area is dominated by the vitriolic and hard-working Ahirs, who have shown their courage and patriotism at the hour of the need. The Ahirwal, 'the abode of Ahirs', is the cultural heartland of the Ahirs, situated in the southern part of Haryana.



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1. (a) Densil Ibbeston, *Punjab Castes*, Delhi, B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1974, p. 252.
 - (b) K.C. Yadav, *Haryana studies in History and Culture*, Kurukshetra University Press, 1968, p. 43.
 - (c) D.C. Verma, *Haryana*, New Delhi, National, 1975, pp. 58-59.
 - (d) Ahirwal was divided into two sub-regions before the merger of Pepsu in Punjab. One part was in Punjab in which Rewari and Gurgaon assembly constituencies were included and the other part was in Pepsu covering Kanina, Mahendergarh, Ateli, Narnaul and Nangal Chaudhary assembly constituencies . This situation remained upto 1956 when Mahendergarh was also merged into Punjab.
2. The Ahirs of Uttar Pradesh call themselves as Nand Vanshi or Yaduvanshi. In Bihar they are known as Golla and Gopa. The Gujarati Ahirs call themselves Air Brahims or Abhiria Brahiims. The Rajasthani Ahirs are called as Yadavas. The Ahirs of Maharasthtra style themselves as Gavali and Gopala. In West Bengal they are known as Gopas, Pal and Ghosh. The Madrasi Ahirs use the title of Aiyar and Konar. M.S.A. Rao, *Social Movements and Social Transformation*, Delhi, MacMillan, 1979, p. 194.



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3. The number of speakers of Ahirwati was reported to be as following in 1908
Follows in 1908.

Gurgaon	-	159900
Pataudi state	-	19000
Delhi	-	18694
Jhajjar	-	71470
South Nabha	-	43881
Narnaul of Patiala	-	<u>136000</u>
Total		<u>448945</u>

Sources : G.A. Grierson, Linguistic Survey of India Vol, IX, PartII, Varanasi, Motilal Banarsi Dass, 1906, p.60.

4. Mewati is properly speaking, the language of Mewat, the abode of the Meos. The home of Bangaru may be defined as a line passing through Fatehabad, Hisar and Bhiwani. The boundary of standard Bagri is in the north east corner of the Bikaner and the northern part of Hisar district. There is, however, no hard and fast division between the Bagri and Bangaru, Shekhawati is spoken in Jhunjhunu and Churu. op. cit., pp.,4 & 147.
5. Census of India, op.cit., No. 3, p. 3
6. It is believed that the Pandavas while wandering in banishment had to scale this hillock. At present it is known for a well, called Chander Kiip, whose water is considered to be sacred. A fair is held here on 'Somavati Amavas'. Ibid., No. 19, p.3.
7. Ibid., No. 3, p. 5.



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8. It is a multi-purpose tree, its leaves are fed to the cattle, its fruit is eaten, its thorny branches are used for fencing and as fuel and its root is used for tanning. It is also used for cleaning the teeth by the villagers. op.cit., No. 19, p. 6.
9. Gurgaon District, Handbook No. 3, op.cit., p.7.
10. Mahendergarh District, Handbook No. 19, op cit., p. 7.
11. H.B.W. Garrick, Report of a Tour in Punjab and Rajputana in 1883-84, Vol. XXIII, Archaeological Survey of India, Calcutta, Superintendent of Government Printing, 1887, p. 27.
12. Punjab District Census Handbook, No. 19, op.cit., p.7.