

## **Chapter III**

### **METHOD AND FIELDWORK**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The chapter attempts to provide detailed account of the method and fieldwork carried out during the entire research work. It also outlines the researcher's own position in relation to the research. In preview of the objectives taken for the research, the chapter presents the details regarding how the research began and how the design for procurement of information was conceptualized. It also provides details regarding selection and finalization of the field of study, approaching several agencies in the field for information procurement, accessing schools and building relations with different personnel within and outside of the schools, tools and techniques utilized in the process of investigation, methodological constraints, dilemmas and discomfort that the researcher went through during investigation processes. This also provided the researcher a chance to learn from conflicts. The intension for detailing this chapter was also to explicitly bring the subjective and objective issues inherent in the work.

#### **3.2 Initiating the inquiry: Conceptualizing and designing**

The nature of the work demanded the research to be initiated under qualitative research. This was because 'experiences' of the Meo girls were the central to the entire work. These experiences were related to their individual and collective identity, disadvantage, marginalization, exclusion, and so on. Further, it was also related to their resistance, social justice, life aspiration, world views and so on. Hence, the nature of the research and the imbedded exploration demanded the researcher to remain engraved into everyday life of the Meo girls, while being in the field. Thinking about processing the inquiry, the fundamental question that further made the researcher immerse deeply into the field was 'how to capture the true and correct experience of the Meo girls?' and 'how to unfold the meaning that could be 'true' in real sense?' These questions were very important for the researcher, because, it further pushed the researcher for deeper involvement into the thinking processes as it

highlighted the position one should take while grappling with the social research apart from the limited concern towards research.

The fact is that, the reality is not readily available somewhere ‘outside’ and also not free from certain subject position. Therefore, the researcher believed to depend upon the ‘interaction’ and ‘expression’ through which reality can be mapped, as, it is communicated within certain contextual themes. Therefore, it was futile to look for ‘complete’ reality. Rather, the researcher understand that it was more pertinent to focus on contexts in an aspiration to know the ‘whole’ reality through the voices of the participants. Hence, undoubtedly the researcher believed that it was important to observe and understand the network of relations the children are intertwined to, so as to comprehend the contextual understanding while exploring ‘experience’. The researcher also believes that observation, howsoever deeply done, rarely provides complete picture of reality because of its own limitations and concern. This is because, the everyday lived reality and related dynamics differs in different time-frames, with number of agendas and motives, that resituates and changes according to contingent, contexts and situations (Wills, 2000:2). The researcher believes that, apart from language, it also expresses in other forms, such as, gestures, self-presentations and various ‘meaning-making’ techniques, which includes personal assumptions, materials, institutional elements through which a person arrive at realities. Therefore, while collecting information, primacy was given to samples views, their meanings and stories and so on. But, at the same time, a researcher’s mapping of all events does not ensure that s/he knows the whole issues in its entirety. Therefore, the researcher tried to sort out such dilemma of capturing the ‘meaning’ of things in context of the ‘probable meaning’ for the samples as they expressed and acted for it. Corroborating this stand Weedon, (1987) says, that *‘individuals are not a fixed products of a socially constructive exercise rather he/she is again and again constituted in the discursive practices that they participate in.’* This is why, several other things such as images, metaphors, narratives, jokes, satires and so on play a vital role in meaning-making and related discourse concerning the research. Therefore, apart from verbal language of expression, the researcher tried to also map the expressive values of non-verbal language that were understood to be equally important and significant in the process

of data collection since, unstructured patterns and practices also move along the structured settings.

Thus, all the above mentioned concerns were kept in mind while carrying out this research being in the field along with pragmatically designing the aspects of research. In spite of these concerns, initially the nebulosity continued to persist throughout the period of field work. Such nebulosity was related to the confusions in the beginning as to what could be the mode of data collection? How much data would be the 'sufficient data' that will lead to analysis? What numbers of samples would be 'enough' with whom the researcher should interact? Which sample areas the researcher should begin to collect the data? and so on. However, such confusion and nebulosity also paved the ways for clearly demarcating strategies and techniques for collecting and acquiring data from the field. These doubts also led the researcher to explore more and locate some workable solution and meet the ways out for such dilemma. With the gradual advancement of the research, the initial doubts as mentioned above started to dwindle slowly while going through some of the works (Ahmad, 2016; Thapan, 2014, 2006; Ray & Raley, 2011; Sarangapani, 2003, 1997; Chanana, 1988; Erickson, 1984) relating to school education.

Some of the work such as Ahmad, (2016); Thapan, (2014 & 2006) and Sarangapani, (2003 & 1997) transformed the researcher's naïve ideas of mapping the information from the field of study in more strategic and concrete manner, as, these studies, provided a clear-cut demarcation on methods for collecting data in more systematic ways. At the same time, the researcher also matured her ideas on qualitative methods and understood that each qualitative study has its own contexts under which it is formulated and positioned. Further, the researcher also comprehended that, Ph.D. research is not just a matter of research, rather, it is also the process of learning where a problem also keeps importance. Thus, other issues of research such as issues relating to subjectivity, validity, reliability, generalizability and so on were carefully thought of and framed her research in the qualitative mode. Initially, it was decided to utilize participant observation, in-depth interaction and conversation, projective techniques and story-completion/construction as a tool for data collection. However,

with more involvement in the field work, the initial naïve idea started getting matured with the progress of the research.

As the researcher started involving herself in maturing her thought upon the field work and process of data collection techniques, a need arose that some initial understanding of ground realities are prerequisite. The researcher understood that, initial visit to the field of study, prior to actual collection of data, will drive the research work in more mature ways than just with the raw ideas. Further, it will also lead to have better understanding so as to select the issues and tools during actual data collection. Hence, the field work itself guided for shaping, re-shaping and refining of the research process and the methods to be adopted. The initial three months (from November 2015 to February 2016) in the field was more rigorous and focused and provided the researcher a thorough understanding of how to proceed further.

### **3.3 Selecting the field of study: The cultural region and district dilemma**

The idea of this research emerged when the researcher came across some of the literature and narratives relating to Meo community (Morwal, 2014, Ahmad, 2005; Mayaram, 2003, 1997; Bhatta, 1998) during my M. Phil (education) programme. It was then, that, the researcher came in contact with some of the Meo girls residing in Old Delhi in the process of data collection for M. Phil dissertation. Interaction with these girls and their struggle for education incepted the idea of the researcher to work upon the Meo girls particularly in context of their resistance, schooling and the change. The topic of this Ph.D. research study i.e. *'Breaking Boundaries and Escaping Marginality: An enquiry into Meo girls' experiences of resistance, schooling and change'* also emanated the idea, where the fieldwork should remain situated.

Locating the field of study was little difficult for the researcher as my initial dilemma was relating to inclusion and exclusion of sample area of study. Whatever good work the researcher had gone through, referred Mewat as a region which included geographical areas from three states of India i.e. Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Hence, the researcher tried to design her research from the entire Mewat region. However, Mewat emerged as a district in 2005 only from Haryana region and the boundaries of Mewat region was reduced and relocated. As a consequence, the

regions of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh from the Mewat district were excluded. Further, the area (district Mewat) remained abysmally underdeveloped in the developed state of Haryana. Thus, the dilemma was how to demarcate the sample area, since Mewat as a cultural region extends more than its geographical boundary which was reduced as just a district. However, the initial dilemma slowly eroded and faded away once it was decided that the study will be located entirely in the schools so as to understand the institutional experiences of Meo girls' that they go through in the process of their growing up and engage in their identity formation, life aspirations and world-views.

### **3.4 Finalizing the site and entering the field**

The most thought-provoking decision for the researcher was the selection of the site for fieldwork. This was because Mewat is both- the cultural region, as well as, newly carved district which came into being in 2005. However, when the research was proposed, the researcher thought to incorporate Mewat as a cultural region in her study. But, Mewat had by then already become a district and therefore, it created a dilemma for the researcher to decide for selecting the site for the fieldwork i.e. to go for Mewat as a cultural region or as a district. However, this initial dilemma remained short-lived as finalizing and locating the field area got materialized, when the researcher got her appointment and posted in Nuh sub-division of Mewat district. After joining the job at college of teacher education in Nuh sub-division, the researcher came in contact with the locals- officials, students, parents and community members, which made it easier for the researcher to finalize the sample geographical areas and consecutively make rapport with the samples for further exploration. Having been familiarized with the geographical area of Mewat district, the researcher, decided to locate her study in the schools located in Mewat district. The reason of restricting the sample geographical areas within Mewat district was also because it was difficult to manage extended time for the field work from the three states. Thus, the nature of the study, the timeframe at Ph.D. research and pragmatic insight led to the selection of sample geographical area within Mewat. In the process of decision making, the documentary analysis relating to Mewat guided immensely in the selection of the site for the fieldworks. However, the researcher found it very difficult

to locate the records relating to Meos community especially the education of the Meo girls, as the available data from any agency, was neither comprehensive, nor, adequate, which could help much in context of my research. Therefore, visit in-person to different sub-divisions within Mewat, became essential, so as to begin the fieldwork. Most of these visits to the sub-divisions were made possible with the help of colleagues, friends and acquaintances, who were working in the area. Further, one of the friends who had accredited several Madarsas with Open Basic Education of National Institute of Open Schooling in the entire region of Mewat, helped the researcher to acquaint the field of work. These visits were more meaningful for the researcher, as, it provided to understand the people, their behavior, the demographic setup of the areas and so on. These understanding otherwise were missing as a result of the inadequate governmental and other such records. Further, the visit made the researcher realize that ‘visiting the field’ does not guarantee ‘accessing the information’ needed for the research. The people the researcher met in the beginning posed several questions such as, who am the researcher looking for? Why does the researcher want information? What the researcher going to do with information? and so on. They also instructed the researcher not to stay late in the area, as the area is unsafe for girls, and it is not good for the researcher, being a girl to stay late in the area. They also advised the researcher not to hire shared taxi for commuting in the area from one place to another, as the driver of the taxis plying in the area cannot be trusted. Many people also instructed the researcher not to eat or drink anything from the person, unless the researcher know and trust them well.

The next task was to decide the sub-divisions where schools as a ‘site’ could be located. To make it more convenient certain criteria was made which led to the selection of sub-divisions where schools as a site could be located. These criteria were as follows:

1. It was decided to choose one school from the district headquarter. This decision was taken for two major reasons. Firstly, because the researcher was placed at the district headquarter and hence, access and extending time in the school could be easy. Secondly, to understand the nuances of approach to the administrative heads could be feasible.

2. It was further decided to compare the existing educational scenario of Meo girls within the other sub-divisions of Mewat and selection of the sample area should be decided on the basis of distinctive features emerging out of the existing data with regard to Meo girl children.
3. It was also decided that the other sub-divisions chosen as a site should have proximity to other states so as to understand the impact of the geographical areas upon the identity, experiences, everyday lived experiences and world views of Meo girl children.

### **3.5 Rationalizing the site and approaching agencies working in the field**

Comparing the entire sub-divisions of Mewat in contexts of demographic profile, population ratio, mortality rates, education of girls, proximity to other states, political underpinnings and so on, led me to decide three sub-divisions, where school as a site could be located. The first criteria led to the selection of district headquarter- Nuh from where one school as a site of exploration was finalized to be taken. The other two criteria suggested that Touru sub-division has proximity to Delhi, whereas, Punhana sub-division has proximity to Rajasthan. Further they reflect distinctive educational and other scenario with regard to Meo girls. Therefore, both these sub-divisions were decided to be taken as sample sub-division, from where, school as a site could be chosen for exploration. Hence, three schools from among the three sub-divisions (Taoru, Nuh, Punhana) were decided to be taken for exploration. Separate chapter (Understanding the Field) has been formulated to give detailed outline of the sample sub-divisions.

### **3.6 Approaching and accessing the sample schools**

Once the finalization of the sub-divisions was over, there was another dilemma of choosing the representative schools from these sub-divisions. It was a daunting task as the nature of the study revolved round the Meo girls. The understanding on the basis of secondary sources, as well as, the researcher's initial visit to the sample area suggested that locating representative school having greater number of Meo girls is quite a daunting task. Further, during the initial three months period of pilot visit, the researcher had developed my rapport with many officials of the schools, NGOs

working in the field and the community members. As stated earlier, since the researcher had been placed in the district headquarter, approaching the district education officials had become quite easy. However, the rapport did not serve the purpose of finalizing of the sample schools. Therefore, from the district education office, the researcher collected documents relating to school education, primarily, the list of schools in the sample areas, and, the Annual Reports on Education (2014-15 & 2015-16), published by Haryana School Shiksha Parishad under Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha abhiyan, Haryana. The list of schools and reports provided the researcher ample understanding upon locating the sample schools from the site. Further, it guided the researcher to devise certain criteria for choosing the sample schools from the three sample sub-divisions. Thus, the researcher formulated the following criteria, so as to finalize, and, choose the sample schools as a site.

- It was decided that those schools, where Meo girl students will be enrolled in larger number, as compared to boys, will be selected from each sample sub-division.
- Looking to the time constraint and difficult geographical tract, it was decided that such school shall be chosen, which could be approachable and permission from the principal in terms of spending time and interaction with the samples should not be an issue.
- It was further decided, that, at least one co-educational school should be chosen in order to understand the cultural impact upon the world view of the Meo girls.

Thus, the parameters formulated, guided the researcher to initially shortlist nine schools from the entire sample sub-divisions. After the identification of these schools was over, the researcher visited these schools for final selection on the basis of requirements of the study. The researcher visited these schools and met the teachers, as well as, the principal of the schools, who further helped in finalizing of the sample schools. Some of the schools were not serving the purpose of the researcher, as, there was lesser number of Meo girls enrolled in the school and that too were quite irregular in coming to school. Some of the schools did not grant me permission for longer stay and interaction for my research work. Some other did not suit my requirement. There were 2 schools which neither denied nor granted me permission. The principal of



these schools did not respond to the researcher's repeated call. Finally, three schools suited my requirement and were selected as sample schools as a site. Thus, it was the purposive sampling that led to the selection of sample schools.

**Table 3.1: Category of sampling schools**

Sample Area	Taoru	Nuh	Punhana
Category of Sample School	GS-1	Co-Ed MMS 1	GS-2

### 3.7 Profile of the sample schools

(a) *GS-1* is a government school for girls recognized and affiliated to the State Board of Secondary Education. In Taoru, there are 57 schools in totality. Out of these 57 schools, 45 are middle school, 5 are high schools and 7 are secondary schools. Further, there are 5 schools for girls at middle level, and 1 each girls' school are there at middle and secondary level. Thus, in totality there are 7 girls' schools catering to all the school going girls of Taoru. Further, no exclusive boys' school exists in Taoru at high and secondary level. However, 4 co-educational schools at high level and 6 co-educational schools exist at secondary level in Taoru. The breakup of the schools in Taoru is given below (table 3.2).

**Table 3.2: School status in Taoru sub-division (as on May, 2016)**

Schools	Middle				High				Secondary				Total
	B	G	Co-ed	Total	B	G	Co-ed	total	B	G	Co-ed	total	
Taoru	24	5	16	45	0	1	4	5	0	1	6	7	57

Source: Haryana district administration (B-Boys; G-Girls, Co-ed- Co-educational)

The sample school is a secondary school catering to the girls of secondary classes. It is located geographically within a radius of a 3 km area of the Taoru sub-division of Mewat and are situated in a largely lower class Meo neighbourhood. It provides affordable education to children from both- the Meo community, as well as, non-Meo community of the neighbourhood. Since, the population of the non-Meo community in the suburbs are higher than the Meo girls, therefore, they out number girls from the Meo community. Further, most of the girls coming to the school belong to rural areas. Out of total non-Meo girl children, around one-third children belong to scheduled castes. At the time, when the field work was conducted, there was only one section for

each secondary classes. This shows that the number of school girls coming to school were lesser in number. This may be attributed to the gender parity index of India, whereby; the trends shows that, with the increasing stages of classes, the number of girls decreases (See table-3.3). In case of this sample school, the same seems to be true.

**Table 3.3: Gender parity Index for all categories of students**

Level/ Year	Primary (I-V)	Upper Primary (VI-VIII)	Elementary (I-VIII)	Secondary (IX-X)	Senior Secondary (XI-XII)	(IX-XII)	Higher Education
2011-12	1.01	0.99	1.00	0.93	0.92	0.93	0.88
2012-13	1.02	1.05	1.03	0.96	0.94	0.99	0.89
2013-14	1.03	1.08	1.04	1.00	0.98	1.00	0.92
2014-15	1.03	1.09	1.05	1.01	0.99	1.01	0.92

Source: Education Statistics at a glance, table 24, Ministry of Human Resource Development, GOI

In every class, the register shows that there are 50-60 girl students are enrolled. However, at no point of time during the visit and field work, more than 40% of the girls were available. The number of male teachers was higher than the female teacher even in the case the school being a girls' school. However, no teacher from the Meo community was found in this school. The teaching methodologies utilized by the teachers are traditional and redundant failing to excite enthusiasm towards learning among the girl students. Due to poor infrastructure available in the school, the sitting arrangement for the girls was made on the floor.

*(b) CoEd-MMS* is a co-educational model school run as a satellite campus by the Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad in district headquarter-Nuh. This school provides education from the primary level up to the secondary level at present in a rented building. The school is being run in a rented building as its own campus is under construction and will come up by the end of 2019. The school started with 15 children in 2009, whereas, the present strength of the students in the school is 500, that are completely from the Meo community. Out of this, around 50% students are Meo girls. Thus, the school is having equal ratio of Meo boys and girls mostly coming from the neighbouring area except around 24 students coming from far places to this school as the school has developed better educational reputation in the suburb within

lesser time after its establishment. The school has 25 teachers out of which there are 12 female teachers. 5 teachers in the school belong to Meo community among which 2 teacher are female from Meo community. The school is attached with the college of Education run by Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad. The school does not have regular principal rather one of the teacher educators is looking after the day to-day administration of the school and has been made principal in-charge of the school by the Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad. Within Nuh, there are 91 schools. Out of these, there are 32 schools for boys, 21 schools for girls and 38 schools catering to both boys and girls together. As in case of Taoru, Nuh is also having 1 school each at high and secondary level for girls. This again shows that the chances of attaining higher classes are quite bleak, even in the district headquarter-Nuh as highest number of schools cater only up to middle level (See table 3.4).

**Table 3.4: School status in district headquarter Nuh sub-division (as on May, 2016)**

Schools	Middle				High				Secondary				Total
	Tehsil	B	G	Co-ed	Total	B	G	Co-ed	total	B	G	Co-ed	
Nuh	28	19	18	65	3	1	13	17	1	1	7	9	91

Source: Haryana district administration (B-Boys; G-Girls, Co-ed- Co-educational)

(c) **GS-3** is a government girls' school up to secondary classes and is located in Punhana sample area. The school is recognized and affiliated to the State Board of Secondary Education. In Punhana, there are 71 schools in totality. Out of these, 16 schools are exclusive girls' schools. However, at middle level there are only one school and at secondary level there 2 schools for girls (See table 3.5). This again can be attired to the same reason as mentioned earlier that with the increase in stages, the number of girls' enrolment decreases. This sample school has enrolment of around 300 students to show. However, during the time of stay for field work, the researcher never found more than 50-70 girls in the campus. The students come from the poor economic background, basically, from lower middle and poor class Meo families. The school has quite infrequent teachers. Those who come to school, rarely visit the class, and, teach. Those who teach, are ill equipped with poor teaching methodology and enthusiasm for teaching. Their interaction with the Meo girl students suggested, that,

they have lost their sparkle and desire of teaching and come to school for the sake of coming and drawing monthly salary.

**Table 3.5: School status in Punhana sub-division (as on May, 2016)**

Schools	Middle				High				Secondary				Total
	B	G	Co-ed	Total	B	G	Co-ed	Total	B	G	Co-ed	total	
Punhana	26	13	13	52	0	1	9	10	0	2	7	9	71

Source: Haryana district administration (B-Boys; G-Girls, Co-ed- Co-educational)

### 3.8 Sample subjects

The sample subjects consisted, primarily, of Meo girls student, their parents, teachers and community members. They were chosen in the following manners:

- From each school, 20 sample Meo girls student were interacted with, constituting a total of 60 students in totality from 3 schools.
- 6 teachers from each school making it to 18 teachers, constituted the sample of teachers. The teachers consisted from both the sexes-male and female. While selecting teachers, it was kept in mind that the teachers should have a minimum of 3 years teaching experience in the same school. This was done as it was believed that the teachers may have some sort of experience of teaching, as well as exposure to the ground realities.
- A total of 48 parents (16 from each sample school), either single or both, constituted the sample parents. The purpose of the research was explained to them and according to their convenience, interactions were made with them.
- 15 community members (5 from each sample geographical areas) were interacted on the basis of focus group discussion. A total of 3 FGDs were made in the three sample sub-divisions. Focus group discussion with each of the three groups was made once only.

**Table: 3.6: Cumulative Sampling Matrix**

Category of sample/Areas	No of School	Meo girls Student	Teachers	Parents	Community members	Total
Taoru	01	20	06	16	05	47
Nuh	01	20	06	16	05	47
Punhana	01	20	06	16	05	47
<b>Total</b>	<b>03</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>141</b>

**Total:** 03 Schools; 60 Meo girl students; 18 Teachers; 48 Parents; 15 Community members = 141

### **3.9 Deriving the initial sense: Pilot study**

On the basis of literature reviews, it was found that education among the Meo community, especially, among the Meo girls are extremely worrisome as it relates to their abysmal formal schooling. However, while meeting with Meo girl children the researcher found that they have keen desire to study. Thus, the researcher concluded that several issues raised in the secondary sources had their basis in hunch, ideas and assumptions of the authors. Very few empirical studies (Ahmad, 2016; Hayat, 2013) found specific understanding upon the educational experiences of girls- Muslims in general and Meo girls in particular, in the process of their growing up. Thus, the researcher tried to verify issues so as to understand its relevancy and authenticity. For this verification, the researcher did a pilot visit to the schools. Pilot visit was felt to be essential before finalization of the tools for an in-depth exploration and data collection. The researcher believed that pilot visit provides a valid understanding and first-hand experience upon several issues, as well as, in the formulation of necessary tools for data collection. Thus, keeping in mind the above mentioned rationale, pilot visit to the area and sample school was conducted from November 2015 to February 2016.

Taoru is located in the north-west of the Mewat district and has proximity to developed area of Gurgaon (now Gurugram), Rewari and Rajasthan. The inhabitants of Taoru have better access of educational institutions in their neighbouring areas. The district headquarter, Nuh is situated almost in the middle of Taoru and Punhana and has also seen the opening of the Mewat Model School under the aegis of Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad who is bringing up its campus in Salahedi. Another sample area, Punhana is located in the south-east of the Mewat district. The details with regard to the demographic profile of the sample area have been made another chapter (Chapter IV) for comprehensive understanding.

During the pilot visit the researcher wanted to have through understanding of the area, its demographic profile, working of the people, day-today life of the inhabitants, their work profile, regularity of the girls children coming to the school and so on. Keeping this in mind, the researcher wanted to approach some of the NGOs which are working not only in the field of education, but, also have developed community relationship. Therefore, the researcher tried to look for some good NGOs working in the area in the

field of education and with the community. Though several NGOs were working in Mewat, but not all were having good work and intervention. The researcher found 'SRF Foundation' that was working with a project of Udaan in Mewat. Further, there was another NGO- Mewat Educational Organization that was located in Punhana and was working with the Meo children. Both these NGOs were having good work and intervention. The researcher was able to convince these NGOs (SRF Foundation and Mewat Educational Organization) to help the researcher facilitate my work. These NGOs helped the researcher to acquaint with their educational work that they had done in the field and also provided the researcher to understand the demographic profile of the sample areas in more comprehensive manner. However, these NGOs who were working in the area have their limitations of working within the framework of their objectives, and, were not interacting with the community on regular basis. But, their liaison with the community members helped the researcher in approaching the community members especially in Taoru and Punhana sample areas. In Nuh, since the researcher was already posted, hence, good relations with the children, parents and the community members developed. It was here, that the researcher, actually entered the field and, consequently the research work began to be advanced and started getting shaped up.

### **3.10: Final collection of data**

The fieldwork and final round of data collection was completed in almost sixteen months from April 2016 to August 2017. While proposing the research, it had been decided, that, final round of data will be collected from April 2016 to December 2016 as per the schedule which the researcher had prepared for myself. However, with the advancement of research during actual data gathering phase, the researcher realized that data collected in the eight months since April 2016 is insufficient and it was realized that more data is needed. The researcher further realized that field work that relates to human being and depends upon interaction with different stages of human sample then anticipation many times fails. The researcher learnt from her immature decision and timeframe that was provided for the data collection at the time of proposing the research. Therefore, the researcher decided to continue with the field work and data collection so that the researcher may have sufficient data so as to feel

comfortable during data analysis. Hence, the final phase of field work and data collection continued till August 2016. The experience gained during field work and data collection helped me in understanding the distinction between ‘what people think’, ‘what they say’ and ‘what they do’ and also, ‘what they say they ought to have been done’. During final fieldwork and data collection, the respondents were encouraged to reconstruct their understanding with respect to Meo girl students.

### **3.11: Tools and techniques**

#### ***(a) Semi-Structured Interviews:***

The other task was to decide and prepare tools for data gathering. In the earlier research, the researcher had utilized semi-structured interviews, in which, the researcher had asked open ended questions on the basis of referral points. The researcher believed that semi-structured interview schedules helped in analyzing in detail, the perception of the Meo girls and how they make sense of their experiences. In fact, the objectives taken for exploration in the present research needed a flexible data collection instrument. Thus, semi-structured interview schedule was best suited for the exploration. This is because, this type of interviews, allows the researcher and the participants to engage in continued conversation and dialogue with flexibility of modifying the original question as per the response. Smith and Osborn, (2003) says that this type of tools also provides the opportunity to the researcher to probe remarkable areas which arise during the conversation. Further, the researcher are often guided by the set of important aspects in the interview schedule rather than dictated by it. Finally, the significant aspects of the entire interview processes were to elicit important information from the samples in contexts of the objectives of the research. By using semi-structured interview, the researcher was thus free to probe the interest and concerns of the respondents. It gave the researcher an opportunity to enter psycho-social world of the respondents and elicit desired information. Their sharing of issues was relevant for fulfilling the objectives of my research. Further, the researcher treated the respondents as experiential experts who had maximum opportunity to share their story. On the other hand, by utilizing semi-structured interview, the researcher, minimized the risk of subjectivity, as the choice of words

were carefully selected which allowed the free flowing information from the sample respondents.

Thus, the understanding developed on the basis of literature reviews and the pilot visit led to the formulation of the referral points for Meo girl students in a carefully designed manner. It included themes in context of family, school and neighborhood ranging from their identities, experiences, how pedagogic practices shape their life aspirations, world-view and meaning-making about the self and the others, role of parents and community, facilities provided at home and school, how schooling and everyday lived experiences influence their perception, their expectation from education; contest and opportunity for upward mobility through education; expectation from types of education and so on. Thus, the researcher clearly defined a set of themes in the schedule, so as to gain the unbiased views from the respondents. It provided the opportunity to the researcher, to explore the opinions of the Meo girl children. The basic purpose was to unearth the perceptions of the respondents with regard to the entire aspects taken up in the objectives of the study. After demarcating the referral points, it was duly validated. For validation, it was circulated to six experts in the field of education, four in the field of language and three experts who had worked with the Meo children in Mewat. Based on the experts' comments, the referral points were accordingly rectified. Finally it was tested for reliability on 15 Meo girl children who were not included in the final sample. After the pilot testing of the referral points, the repetitive referral points were deleted and others were simplified (See appendix- II).

***(b) Informal interactions and interview:***

For collecting data from the teachers and parents, the researcher came to the conclusion that interaction with teachers and parents would be appropriate in the form of Informal interactions. Kalve (1996) says that going through the elaboration and clarification, often helps to address the issues of exploration. However, it was also decided to demarcate the referral points for interaction with the respondent teachers and parents. Thus, the informal interaction based on the referral points focused upon 'general opinion regarding education of the Meo girl children; reasons pertaining to access & opportunity; economic hardship; socio-cultural aspects and its impact on



education of Meo girl children; impact of political development on education of Meo girl children; perception with regard to their equality, in-equality, security, freedom, curricular adjustment & maladjustment; discrimination; perception regarding educational performance of Meo girl students; impact of curricular and co-curricular activities; perception regarding educational opportunity structure; load of household chores leading to their dropouts; their expectation from education; contest and opportunity for upward mobility through education; expectation from types of education; the behavioural perception of teachers and administrators and the general environment in and around the school and so on (See appendix-II).

***(c) Focus Group Discussions:***

For the community members, it was decided to conduct focus group discussions which Fontana and Fray (2000) described as *'one of the most powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow human beings and is made the basis for the primary data collection strategy in a qualitative project'* (p.645). Merton & Kendall, (1946) says that this qualitative interview strategy have its roots in sociology. Krueger, (1994) asserts that it *'provides unique information that can be generated from respondents'*. Further, this strategy produces data and insights that would be *'less accessible without the interaction found in a group'* (Morgan, 1997, p. 2). A total of 3 FGDs were conducted with the community members. The researcher contacted the community members and fixed time for their interaction. In Mewat, it is easier to have such group discussion with the community members as most of the time they remain at their home or to the nearby tea stall where they spend time in groups after their agricultural work. Thus, the community members were informed for the discussion prior to the visit and the motive of the discussion was explained to them. According to fixed timing of their convenience, the FGD was conducted. The point of reference focused upon *'their opinion and contribution towards educating the Meo girl children; educational access & opportunity in the Mewat district; financial constraints; impact of socio-cultural tradition and political development upon education of Meo girl children; their perception towards equality, in-equality, security, freedom of Meo girl children, perception with regard to educational opportunity for Meo girls in the*

district; their expectation from education; the behavioural perception of teachers and administrators and so on (See appendix-II).

***(d) Observation: Participant and non-participant***

Both- participant and non-participant observations were made in the field. Actually, the work every day began with the observations whenever the researcher visited the site. Sometimes it was spontaneous, while at other times it remained planned. It helped the researcher in analyzing, restructuring, strengthening and improving the specific sections of my research study and the strategy of further exploration. Several observations were made in the field, which helped the researcher in getting an insight of the world of Meo girl children and their social environment, as well as, their relations with teachers, peers and environment within and outside school. Sometimes, the researcher also observed the activities of the school, the reaction of Meo girls towards their teachers and peers while waiting for the formal interaction with the samples. Apart from these, observation in the child's family provided an opportunity to the researcher to comprehend the social position of Meo girls within their family in the process of their reaction towards their family members. Observations helped the researcher to generate holistic idea in context of the objectives of the study, which were often not possible in the formal processes of interaction. Separate field notes were prepared for recording every day observations. Initially, the observations were made in the form of pointers of events, reactions, gestures and so on. During the initial days of observation, every evening, each observation was coded and elaborate description was prepared every day. With the passage of times in the field, the researcher started taking direct notes of the observation. Thus, the observation helped the researcher in examining and cross checking the other data collected by the researcher (See appendix-IV).

***(e) Listening the voices of the Meo girls***

A major challenge before the researcher was how to interact with the sample children, map their perceptions and experiences while being in the field. Several strategies were tried upon, and finally, the researcher devised a strategy to address this issue by listening the voices of the respondents on several issues of exploration. Actually, listening did not work just a technique of data collection, rather, it strengthened my

relation with the respondents. The respondents many times spoke in different mode ranging from complain to pleading to vetting to gossiping. However, since the researcher was a patient listener therefore, the respondents used to speak more and more once they were interacted. In the process of listening, the researcher and as an individual developed the sense of maintaining confidentiality of the respondents. While listening, the researcher always remained conscious that my personal thought and views should not come in between the conversations. It also made me comprehend the gaps between factual understanding, and hearsay, upon which responses of many of the samples were based. However, this was the everyday reality which guided the peoples thoughts into action and not just the factual understanding.

***(f) Projective writing***

Comprehending the worldviews of Meo girls was another major challenge to record. Though, the general conversation and interaction provided much understanding, but, still the researcher remained unsatisfied that it only have provided the views of the Meo girl children which were specifically asked. It has not given the chance to the samples to come out of their closet to respond their heartfelt desire what they wanted to put forward. Therefore, the researcher decided to use projective writing to record much attentive and focused worldviews of the sample Meo girl children. Then there was a challenge that the worldview often remains dynamic and hence it should be analyzed in tandem, and not in isolation for better understanding. Therefore, one broader open ended question in a theatrical workshop mode- where the children are involved in continuous conversation upon some specified aspects, was provided to the sample Meo girls to respond. The workshop started with the general discussion and conversation involving the sample Meo girls. Once the sample girls were in their full enthusiasm of discussing and putting their heartfelt desire, they were provided a broader question (*'If I had to change one in relation to home, school and society then...'*) and asked to write their views on the piece of paper. One small hour workshops in each sample areas with the available samples were conducted to record the data. (See appendix- III & VI)

### ***(g) Conversations***

Many times informal conversations with the respondents were also valuable and making sense in categorizing different aspects. These conversations were manually recorded and helped in substantiating data collected from other sources, as well as, identifying it with observation. It also helped eradicate my personal biases and perceptions, while observing and analyzing the data. The issues raised during the conversations always guided the researcher direction to analyze the researcher's own thoughts and interact in a more comprehensive and appropriate manner. Therefore, the records of the conversation were maintained by the researcher and while writing the report it was consulted for corroboration the existing data. For example, when the researcher visited the sample school in Nuh and had conversation with the principal for data collection, the principal asked for prior permission from my institute and wished to see the referral points as to what the researcher exactly want to explore. Such conversation was also recorded by the researcher in the note-pad so that the researcher should not forget to carry the formal letter while visiting the sample school for data collection. Thus, conversation was central to understand various nuances and relating to the respondents.

### **3.12: Difficulties faced during data collection**

Since, the study involved purposive sample, therefore, locating school that serve the researcher purpose was a tedious task. However, once the sample school was finalized, the first round of problem was sorted out.

The second major problem that the researcher encountered was related to recording the responses from the respondents. The dilemma was pertaining to how to select the relevant response out of several responses. This dilemma remained in the beginning phase of data collection and hence, the researcher recorded all the responses manually. These were recorded in pointers and later elaborated in the evening before retiring to the bed. However, the above mentioned dilemma remained short lived as while elaborating and going through the objectives of the research the researcher understood the distinction between relevant and irrelevant information.

The next difficult task was handling and processing the huge data collected during the entire fieldwork that extended for around sixteen months. There were several aspects that were recorded from the field. Going through these aspects of the entire data multiple times was a tedious job. Therefore, the difficulty was related to what to incorporate and what to leave out. This difficulty was sorted out once a master sheet of responses were prepared and categorized according to objectives on the one side and sample respondents on the other. Afterward, the data was read out and placed according to these categories. Similar and dissimilar responses were recorded with whatever number of times it was occurred.

### **3.13: Processing the data**

Process information collected from the field and administering the data was not only a tedious task, but, was very difficult in the beginning. This is because, the data was multiple, collected in points, and hence after, elaborate description was made for every points so collected, in descriptive form. Therefore, going through the description again and again was a tedious task. For processing the data in the beginning, the very first task was to categorize the data according to the respondents. Once categorization on the basis of respondents was done, the data was further read out, so as to categorize, each category of sample responses, in objective wise category. Once the researcher finished working on these categories, the next task in the processing of data was to prepare master-sheets, where the main points from each category was enlisted. Separate sheets were prepared for the teachers, Meo girl students, parents and community members (See appendix- V). From each category, main points were read out again and again and were enlisted in the master sheet so prepared. This process was done for all the respondents separately. Similarly, a separate master sheet was prepared for the observations made at different places and main observations were enlisted. Enlisting the observations in master sheet synchronized the scattered data at one place and provided the opportunity to read the responses holistically and made it easier to analyze according to the objectives of the study. Going through the master sheet again and again, similar and dissimilar points started to emerge. Further, it became easier to generate headings and sub-headings for the report writing. Once these activities of categorization completed through above

mentioned processes, the same were, finally, analyzed. While analyzing, emphasis was placed on the existing points of reference according to the objectives of the study. While reporting, the researcher decided to report the research work in narratives and descriptive forms, separately on the emergent themes, besides reporting the overall findings relating to the research. Therefore, a flexible standard of categories were used that adjusted the data for each category. Returning back to verbatim helped the researcher to cross check and analyze the '*thoroughness for interrogating the data*' (Barbour, 2001, p. 116) which allowed for enhanced discussion. After analysis and interpreting the data, a cumulative discussion of the result has also been done.

### **3.14: Handling ethical issues**

In the qualitative research, especially in context of research utilizing ethno-methodology, ethical considerations, such as, confidentiality, safety and well-being of the respondents remain prime concern of the researcher in the entire process of data collection. Since the major informants were girl children, hence, the researcher maintained the confidentiality of the respondents. Even in the process of report writing, the confidentiality of the respondents has been maintained and their original identity has not been disclosed. In the beginning, many Meo girls respondents were little apprehensive to disclose the information, however, with the development of personal bonding such apprehensions faded away. They came to realize that the information provided by them will remain a secret with me and will not be disclosed. Once this realization came to them even those children wanted to interact who were not included in the sample. The researcher also assured them, that, their participation would not put them in any kind of trouble, awkward situation, pain or injuries. The respondents were also assured that their revelation of perceptions and experiences which will be published as a report will hide their identification and complete anonymity will be maintained. Thus, the identity of the respondents has been disguised in writing the report so as to maintain their confidentiality and do justice with the ethical issue.

### **3.15 Understanding the Field**

It is essential for a researcher to understand the field of study, so as to do the analysis of the result, more comprehensively. Since the research was carried out in Mewat,

which has remained historically distinct in several aspects, hence, the cluster of Meos inhabited the areas also varied tremendously. A thorough understanding of the field was also essential because, Meos populated sample field of study, reflected no set pattern or uniformity, either, in terms of geographical tracts, or, across different indicators, reflected on the basis of existing literatures. Therefore, the researcher comprehended it essential, to have a proper understanding of the field, so that, decision for choosing a few representative sample field of study should be proper. Since, the existing literature showed variation in the literacy rates of Meos in general and Meo girls in particular, therefore, the researcher formulated certain criteria (p.70-71) so as to select the sample field of study. These criteria provided a guideline to the researcher to proceed in choosing the field of study. The criteria were formulated with the conviction that selection of sample schools, from the entire Mewat districts, would provide a wider context, and, a deeper understanding to address the concerns of the research with regard to Meo girls.

Against the backdrop of the objectives of the research, and to build a comprehensive understanding upon how historico-political, socio-cultural and economic contexts, shape the perception and identities of the Meos girl child, three schools, from socio-spatially located field were selected:

1. Taoru
2. Nuh
3. Punhana

The present chapter gives a comprehensive sense of the field of study. The researcher oriented, shaped and reconstructed her understanding, and, made a sense of the social world, across the entire field of study, through interactions of the people of these areas. Through this chapter an attempt has been made to provide a detailed account of the demographic profile of the field of study as well as the life of the people inhabiting the field. For tracing the history of the field, the researcher has tried to explore numerous texts, such as books, governmental records, electoral records, baseline survey reports, articles and so on. However, the researcher realized that many official records are inadequate, and, do not provide the data comprehensively. It was thought, that, if these data is tried to be collected, it would be a new research.

Therefore, the researcher tried to understand the field on the basis of both- the available literature and peoples' reconstruction of understanding of the field. The chapter presents the larger picture of the field, through a brief examination of the demographic, socio-economic, political and educational profile of Meos in Mewat.

### **3.16 Socio-historical profile of Mewat and the Meos**

The cultural area of Mewat, in actuality, was a huge region, which extends from south of Sohna town, which is located around 65 kilometers south-west of Delhi to Bharatpur and Alwar in Rajasthan. The area makes a triangle and cover large parts of Gurgaon<sup>1</sup> and Faridabad districts in the present day Indian state of Haryana, and, the former princely states of Alwar and Bharatpur in Rajasthan (Singh, 1994: 360; see Map:1). However, reducing it from a region, it was made an independent district by dividing Gurgaon and Faridabad on April 4, 2005. It was carved out as a district, almost after three decades of formation of Haryana state, i.e., on 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1966. These areas are a part of the Indo-Gangetic plain and the Aravali zones. The terrain of the area is undulating- sloping from south to North- in reverse to the general direction of flow of the perennial rivers passing through the neighboring plains of Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. Mewat, as a region has two distinct areas: a south- western hilly and undulating tract area; and a sandy area.

The people residing this entire region are known as Meos which is used for the Muslim peasant caste, and, makes a distinct cultural community. This peasant caste converted and embraced Islam from Hinduism fold. Actually, the term 'Mewat' itself has been derived from the term 'Meo', who retained many of their earlier socio-culture and religious traditions. The word 'Meo' has been derived from the word 'Meds' as Cunningham<sup>2</sup>, (1918) says, that "*the Meds and Mandas, as they are called by the Muslim writers, are most certainly the representatives of the Mandrueni who lived in the Mandus river, to the south of Oxus*". Further, Crooke<sup>3</sup> (1896) argues that the term Mewati refers to the residents of Mewat. The population of Meos before partition was almost 8,000,000 of which after partition 2,000,000 moved to Pakistan and the remaining 6,000,000 remained in India (Singh, 1994: 360).



### **3.17 The transformation of the resisting community**

Meos remained a freedom loving community who had never accepted the suzerainty of any of the Mughal rulers or the British masters, and, always resisted to come under sway of any of these powers. Many among Meos, claim that their ancestors were high caste Hindu Rajput or warrior descent. This is why, it is found, that, many of them still have retained their Hindu caste names, and, also equally celebrate, both, Muslim and Hindu festivals, though these have been liquidated in recent years. Fyzee<sup>4</sup> (1974) considers them as the amphibious community who are neither wholly Muslim nor wholly Hindus, as till 1947, they did not follow Islamic culture except male circumcision and burying the dead. Hunter<sup>5</sup> (1908) suggests that in the eleventh century AD during the period of Mahmud of Ghazni, they converted to Islam. Further, after the defeat of Hasan Khan Mewati by Balban in the year 1290 AD, majority of Mewatis converted to Islam. However, Rajasthan district gazetteer<sup>6</sup> (1971) mentioning Cunningham (1918) suggests, that, the conversion of Mewatis did not take place till the reign of Firoz Shah Tughlaq in 14<sup>th</sup> Century. Later during the reign of Aurangzeb, the Meos voluntarily accepted Islam because of their interest in the politics of the capital (Singh, 1994: 360). Some of the other studies (Channing<sup>7</sup>, 1882; Harris<sup>8</sup>, 1907) suggest, that, the majority of the Meos, are the descendants of lower Hindu caste converts, who, claimed to their Rajput ancestry alongside their gradual Islamization, so as to enhance their social standing, and, still feel pride in retaining it. In actuality, they belonged to many different castes, and, not just to that of the Rajput (Aggrawal<sup>9</sup>, 1969).

### **3.18 Traditional customs and the Meos**

Many Meos, still follow the 'gotra'<sup>10</sup> system, prevalent in the Hindus, and, avoid marrying in the same 'gotra', as followed in the Hindus. Actually, the community is divided into three *bans*<sup>11</sup> which are further divided into fourteen *pals*<sup>12</sup>. These fourteen pals, are, further sub divided into, 52 *gotras*. The Meos still maintains village level, pal level, and gotra level exogamy (Jamous<sup>13</sup>, 2002). They do not marry a woman of the same pal or gotra, a women belonging to the village of his mother or father's mother village, a women undergoing *iddat*<sup>14</sup>, sister of wife during the lifetime, a women whose relation can be traced through consanguineal kinship, and,

any women whose relationship is close to trace. Further, marriage was avoided into mother's mother's, father's mother's, married daughter's and married sister's gotras. However, such restrictions have been liquidated in recent years, and, restrictions on marriage in one's own village, mothers and father's mother's village, are not strictly followed. Similarly, recent practices of marriage also suggests, that, self gotra exogamy is followed, and, there are also some instances, where, it is found, that, *sagotra*<sup>15</sup> marriage is practiced among the educated urban Meos. Further, the Meos normally follows monogamy, and, the age of marriage, has considerably increased. The married women perform *singar*<sup>16</sup>, but, the unmarried girls abstain from it. When the girl attains the marriageable age, '*ghar dikhai*<sup>17</sup>, for '*sagai*<sup>18</sup>, begins. When the marriage is agreed by the groom's parents, the father of the girl pays one rupee each to boy's father and the family's '*nai*<sup>19</sup>, as '*neg*<sup>20</sup>. The marriage calendar beings in the hindi month of '*chait*<sup>21</sup>. After a week or so, both the girl and the boy go to the potters' house in the respective villages with some fellow women and draw a sign of '*swastik*<sup>22</sup>, on a potter's wheel and gives a gift of grain, sugar and cash to potter's wife. This custom is known as '*chak nautana*<sup>23</sup>. This is followed by calling of '*swasti*<sup>24</sup>, by the girl's father and other customs are followed such as '*menhdi*<sup>25</sup>, '*tel ban nautana*<sup>26</sup>, '*peendi ka neg*<sup>27</sup>, '*batna*<sup>28</sup>, '*mando*<sup>29</sup>, and so on. After marriage post delivery rituals are followed strictly, as, in the hindu system, such as, *god-bharna*<sup>30</sup>, *satmasa*<sup>31</sup>, *Chhatti*<sup>32</sup> and so on. Actually, the Meos amalgamated the religious customs and traditions of the two religions.

### **3.19 Tablighi movement and ramification**

The area saw some socio-religious movement such as '*tablighi*<sup>33</sup> *movement*' that was started by Maulana Muhammad Ilyas since 1940's (Sikand<sup>34</sup>, 2002; Singh, 1994;). This was started so as to promote Islam and familiarize Meos community with the rule of the Shariat. This movement launched an attack on widely practiced customs and traditions among Meos that were not in consonance with Islamic traditions and encouraged the Meos to follow more Islamic practices than before. On the contrary, the Hindus also do not consider them as kshatriyas as they slowly and gradually accepted to follow Islam with full fervor. The greater Islamic consciousness among the Meos has enabled them to view themselves as a part of the Muslim community in

the larger Indian society (Aggrawal<sup>35</sup>, 1969). The works of the tablighi movement brought some chasm between the Meos community, and, the Hindu peasant communities, such as, Gujars, Yadavas and Jats settled in the adjacent areas. Such chasm was further increased with the current political development recently. This is why, the area which had not seen any religious clashes so far, witnessed, some incidents of clash recently, which was based on religious chasm in the area.

All these customs and traditions practiced among Meos, makes them a distinct community because such system is not followed in Islam. Further, in marriages among Muslims, there is no such restriction as followed by the Meos. Rest of the practices of marriage are the same as followed in Islam, such as, residence after marriage is patrilocal, divorce and remarriage is permitted in the same manner as permitted in Islam, children are the liabilities of father and so on.

### **3.20 Meos men and women**

Most of the Meos follows nuclear family, though, there are instances of extended family also. As far as the right to property is concerned, male equigeniture is the rule of law and the succession is done through the eldest son. The property received by the female becomes the absolute property of the husband. A Meo woman, who becomes a widow, cannot retain property of the husband in lieu of her dowry. Sharma, & Vanjani<sup>36</sup>, (1990) says that the intensity and duration of women's work among Meos are remarkable. Men usually keeps playing cards sitting in a group, smoking hukkah and so on, whereas, at any time women will be seen working for the family. Involvement in household chores often leaves the girls away from schooling. This is why it is common to see little girls (six to eight years) involved in nurturing the entire household chores while their mothers working in the fields. Among the attairs, the Meo men usually wear *tehmad*, *kameez*, *pehna* and *phenta* and *khes* (thick cotton clothes wrapper). The women usually wear *khoosni*, *kameez*; *loogra* and *janani*; *hansli*, *pacheli*, *angoothi*, *paijab*, *payal*, *chhalla*, *gathia*, *nevri*, *kare*, and such other ornaments in legs.

The women usually remain involved in going to the agricultural field twice a day so as to reap, collect and then carry the huge head-loads of fodder to the home for animals. During the winter seasons the usual work hour for women extends to six-

hours to collect firewood that is the main source of fuel. Often they are seen at the wells bathing and washing their children, animals and clothes. Since the areas have scarcity of water, therefore, mostly, twice a day, they carry ceramic pots on their heads so as to collect water from the well to their home for drinking, cooking and cleaning. Due to their poor economic conditions many Meos women even work in someone's other fields as mazdoors. Thus, Meo women involve themselves in agriculture, animal husbandry, collection of fuel and so on and contribute to the family income, but do not control the expenditure in the family. All these suggest the low position of Meo women among the community.

Within themselves, the Meos communicate in pure Mewati, which is a dialect of Rajasthani and belong to Indo-Aryan language of Indo-European origin (Grierson<sup>37</sup>, 1916). However, the dialects of Meos of Mathura, Bharatpur and Alwar have the influence of Brij-bhasha, whereas, the Meos of Faridabad and Haryana they speak simple Haryanvi and Hindustani and use Devnagri and Urdu script. They cherish Urdu as their mother tongue and want their children to learn it in school as a subject and desire to learn Hindi as their first language. However, Bhatt<sup>38</sup>, (1998) says that in spite of Urdu being recognized as a regional language in India and it difficult to understand why government schools in Mewat do not accedes to the demand of the community.

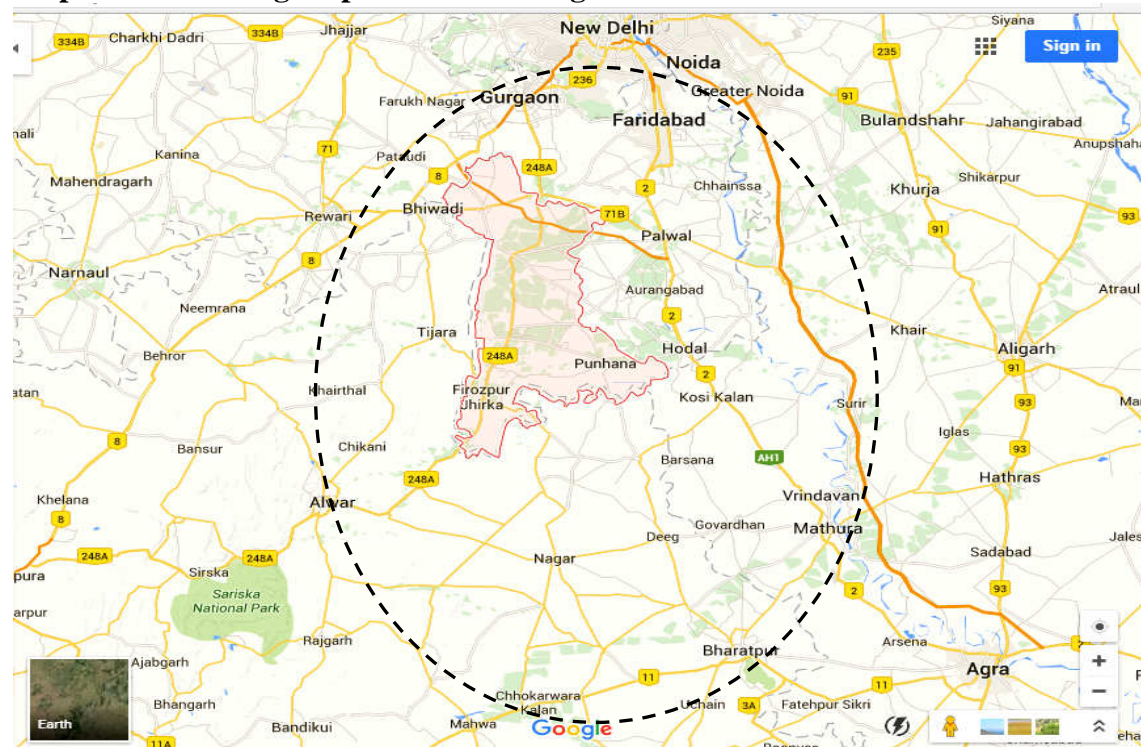
In general, Meos in the entire regions are extremely poor and depend mostly on the rain fed small farms. They mainly cultivate wheat, maize, sugarcane and mustard. The women equally work in agriculture except ploughing. Thus, largely the Meos supplements their income by involving themselves in agriculture and animal husbandry. Since the region had faced severe drought, at regular intervals, therefore, it has led majority of Meos deep into financial debt at the hands of Jain and Hindu Bania moneylenders. The Meos follows the traditional caste panchayat system that settles the intra-community disputes.

### **3.21 The geographical divide: Mewat and the population distribution**

The information upon the number of Meos and their population distribution is inadequate as well as incomplete as after 1931, no census has been carried out due to constitutional commitment in the post independent India. Singh<sup>39</sup> (1994) mentions,

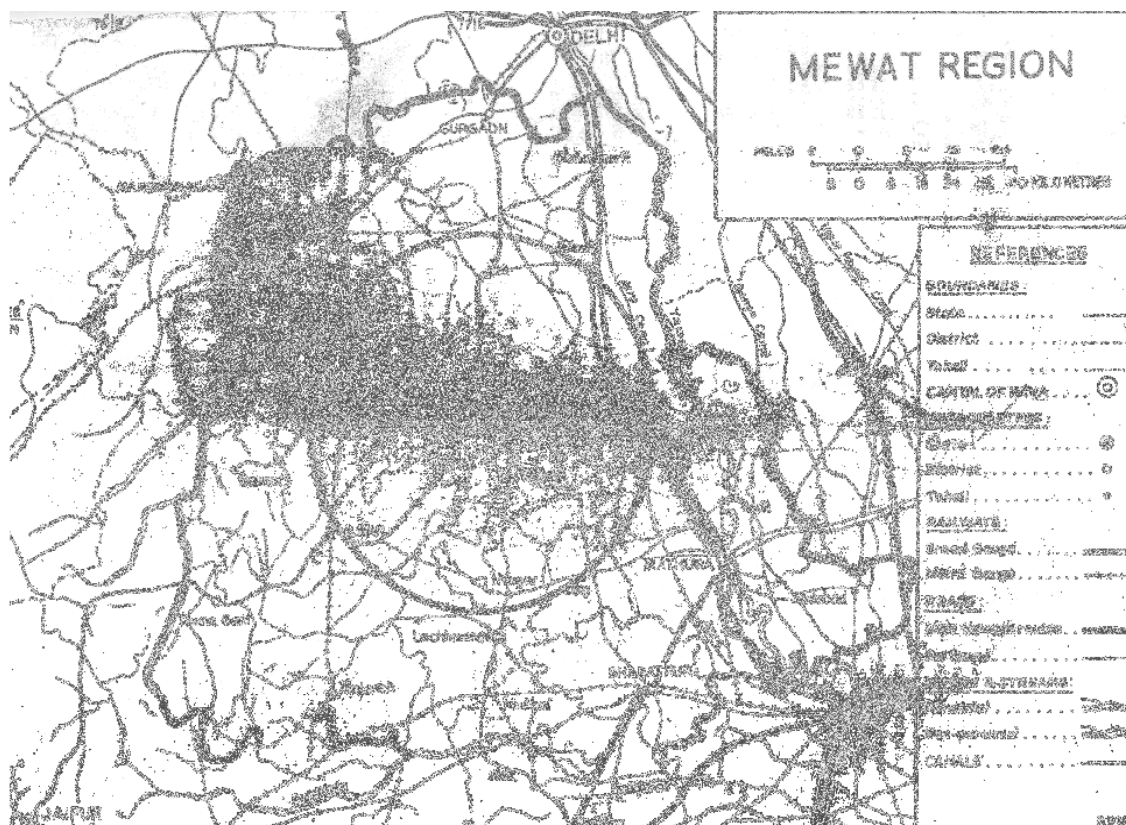
that, there were almost 8,50,000 members of the Meos community residing in the Mewat region<sup>40</sup>. Out of this total population of Meos of the entire region of Mewat, around 4,50,000 Meos lived in Haryana and 4,00,000 in Rajasthan. However, some of the baseline survey and census 2011 throws some light on the population of Meos in Mewat but, this is limited to the newly carved Mewat district only.

**Map- 3.1 Mewat region prior to becoming a district**



The district of Mewat has been carved out as the twentieth district of Haryana from the Gurgaon and Hathin block of Faridabad on 4<sup>th</sup> April, 2005. When it was carved out as a district, it had 3 sub-divisions<sup>41</sup>, 5 Tehsils and 5 blocks<sup>42</sup>. Nuh was the district headquarters. The district had 531 villages when it was carved out as a district, in which, 490 villages were inhabited by the Meos, whereas, 41 villages were uninhabited (GOI<sup>43</sup>, 2008). However, in 2008, Hathin sub-division was carved out of Mewat district, which left it with, four blocks (Taoru, Nuh, Punhana and Firozpur Jhirka); 431 villages and 297 panchayats (Census, 2011).

### Map- 3.2. Mewat region



Source: Baseline survey of Mewat, Srijan (2000)

The baseline survey of Mewat<sup>44</sup> (2008:02) says that, when the district was carved out in 2004, the total population of Mewat was 9.94 lakhs. Majority of the population was rural and constituted almost 95.36%, leaving only 4.64% as urban population (2001 census). However, later in 2008, Hathin sub-division was shifted to new district, Palwal, leaving it with 4 blocks, that comprised of, Nuh, Taoru, Firozpur Jhirka and Punhana blocks. At present Mewat occupies almost 1507 square kilometer (Census, 2011). After rescheduling the boundary and carving out of the Hathin sub-division from Mewat, the total population of Mewat became 1.089 million constituting 571,162 male and 518,101 female populations (Census, 2011). The rural concentration, though reduced (88.61%) as compared to 2001 census, but, it still shows that majority of population are rural and only 12% are the urban population (Census 2011). The sex ratio of Mewat is 907 per female to 1000 male. The literacy rate among female is 36.60%, which is abysmally low as compared to national and state level which is 65.46 and 65.94 respectively (Census, 2011). Among the Meos males,

it is 69.94%, which is also low as compared to national as well as state level which is 82.14% and 84.06% respectively as according to census, 2011.

**Map- 3.3 Present district map of Mewat**



According to 2001 census, the maximum concentration of the population was in the Punhana Tehsil (24.42%) followed by Firozpur Jhirka (21.42%), Taoru (20.81%), Hathin (20.51%) and Nuh (12.69%). Even according to census of 2011, the concentration of population has remained the same in hierarchy except, that, Firozpur Jhirka became the highest concentrated tehsil, whereas, Punhana became the second, and, Nuh as the least concentrated among all the four tehsils.

**Table 3.7: Population of Meos in Rural Mewat (1991)**

Mewat Region	Population	Muslims	Proportion: Meos to Muslims	Meos
<b>Haryana</b> Comprising of Hathin, Nuh, Forzpur Jhirka	6,44,586	4,48,536	75	3,36,402
<b>Rajasthan</b> Comprising of Kishangarhbas, Tijara, Alwar rural, Ramgarh, Lacchamangarh, Pahari, Kaman, Nagar, Deeg	14,06,480	3,94,873	65	2,56,667
<b>Total</b>	<b>20,51,066</b>	<b>8,43,409</b>	-	<b>5,93,069</b>

Source: Census of India, 1991

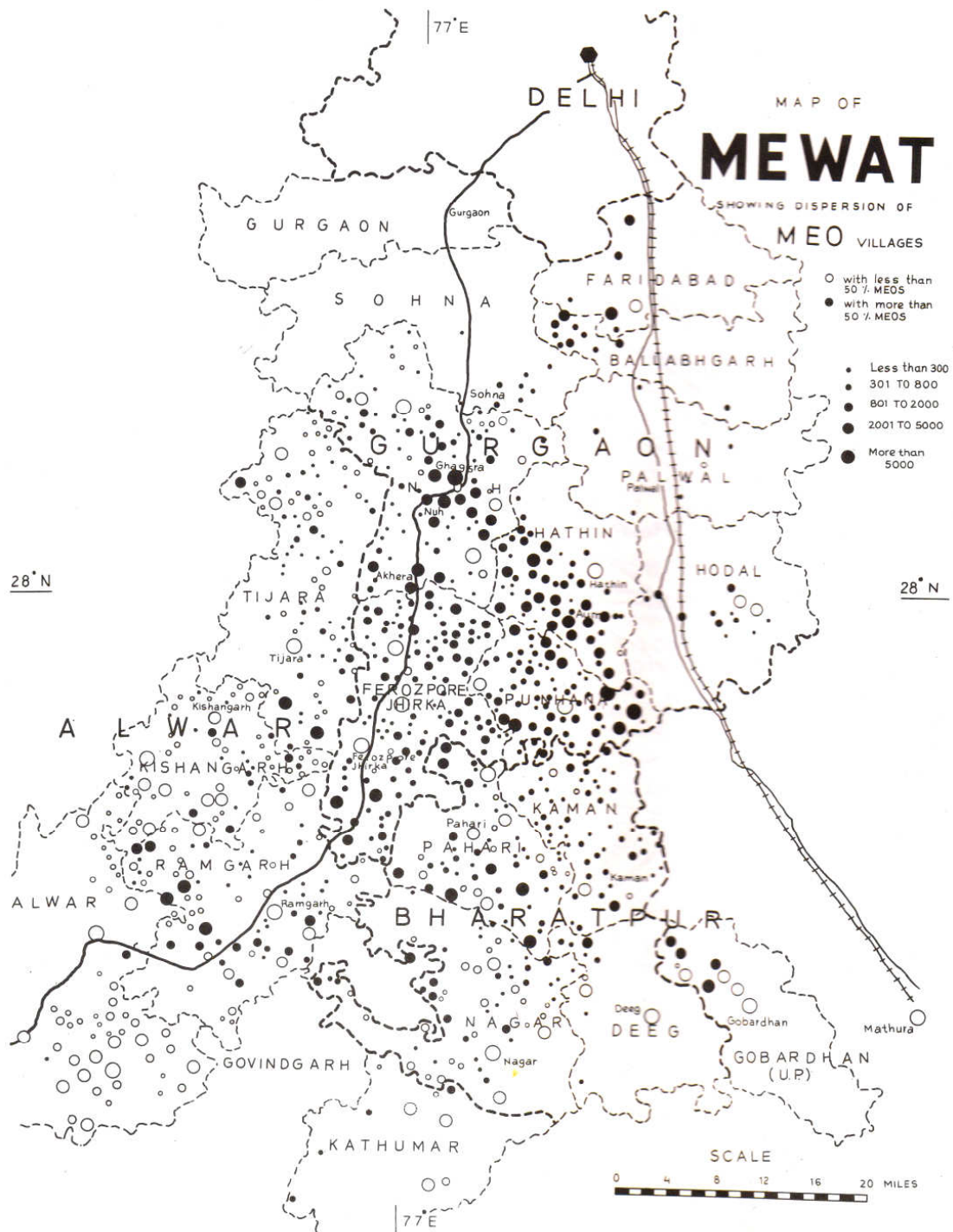
**Table 3.8: Population by religion in descending order in Gurgaon, 2001**

Religious Groups	Haryana		Religion in Gurgaon (descending order)	
	Population	Percentage	Population	Percentage
Hindus	1,86,55,925	88.25	10,26,542	61.83
Muslim	12,22,916	5.78	6,17,918	37.22
Sikh	27,185	0.13	6,672	0.40
Jain	11,70,662	5.54	4,792	0.29
Christian	7,140	0.03	3,258	0.19
Buddhist	57,167	0.27	838	0.05
Others	-	-	269	0.02
Total	2,11,40,995	100	16,60,289	100

Source: Census, 2001



**Map 3.4: Dispersion of Population in Mewat Region Prior to Becoming of a District**



Source: Baseline survey of Mewat, Srijan (2000)

**Table 3.9: Population by religious groups (2011 census)**

Religious Groups	Population by religion in Mewat			
	Taoru	Nuh	Firozpur jhirka	Punhana
Hindus	87.93	49.10	63.61%	43.70
<b>Muslim</b>	<b>11.56</b>	<b>50.09</b>	<b>33.47</b>	<b>55.40</b>
Sikh	0.26	0.38	0.06	0.03
Jain	0.07	0.36	2.74	0.42
Christian	0.10	0.02	0.07	0.10
Buddhist	0.03	0.01	0.00	0.00
Others	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total	22599	16260	24750	24734

Source: Census, 2011

**Table 3.10: Population distribution in rural Mewat (2001)**

Tehsil	Total Rural population	Rural %	% SC	% ST	% Hindu	% Muslim	% Minority
Taoru	108841	86.3	13.4	0.0	44.1	<b>55.7</b>	55.9
Nuh	201816	94.8	6.3	0.0	26.9	<b>73.0</b>	73.1
Firozpur Jhirka	226113	92.7	5.8	0.0	12.8	<b>86.9</b>	87.2
Punhana	193679	93.6	5.0	0.0	11.3	<b>88.5</b>	88.7
Hathin	192951	94.6	9.3	0.0	43.5	<b>56.5</b>	56.5
<b>Mewat District</b>	<b>923400</b>	<b>92.9</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>25.7</b>	<b>74.2</b>	<b>74.3</b>
Haryana	15029260	71.1	21.4	0.0	87.0	<b>7.0</b>	13.0

Source: Village level directory, (Census, 2001)

After the creation of Mewat as a district, almost 50% of the population of Meos got reduced in numbers, since, Meos of Rajasthan was declassified from the Mewat district. Majority of the Muslims of Mewat district is Meos. The average family size of the Meos in the district is seven, which, to the larger extent, reflects, the social class and the economic background (Moore<sup>45</sup>, 1997) that the Meos belongs. The type of houses, sources of lighting and cooking, availability and quality of drinking water

access to health care, quality of education, and so on, suggest, that, Meos, live a very ordinary life. The survey (NITI Ayaog<sup>46</sup>, GOI, 2015) suggest, that, 36% households of Meos, still uses kerosene oil, as a source of lighting. Most of the population of the Meos depends upon firewood for cooking. Almost 76% of the households, do not own, latrine facilities, which show their backwardness in social and economic fields. The treated water supply of the government is available on to 22% households of the Meo community, and, only 23% household, has water source, within their household premise. All these reflect, the poor socio-economic conditions of the Meos, in the entire region of Mewat.

The educational condition of Meos suggests, that, the entire region continues to be the lowest in the field of education in spite of several initiatives taken by the government and other voluntary organizations. If we look at the female literacy in the district of Mewat, we find, that, among all the tehsils, Taoru has the highest female literacy followed by Nuh, Firozpur Jhirka and Punhana. It is remarkable that Punhana, which is having the least female literacy rate is having the highest sex ratio, whereas, the tehsil having the highest literacy rate is having the poorest sex ratio in the district of Mewat. Overall, Mewat shows better sex ratio as compared to other districts of the state. In case of child sex ratio, Nuh has the highest whereas Firozpur Jhirka is the lowest ratio as according to census-2011. The majority of the rural population of Meos, lack, access to basic health, sanitation and other infrastructural facilities (Masand<sup>47</sup>, 2008).

**Table 3.11: Number of schools in Haryana (2016)**

State/ District	Primary	Middle	High	Sec	Arohi	Kisan	KGBV	Lab sch	Total
<b>Haryana</b>	8883	2394	1382	1829	36	6	23	1	14554
<b>Mewat</b>	492	262	40	40	5	-	5	-	844

Source: Haryana district administration

The survey (GOI, 2008) suggests that most of the educational facilities available in the district are limited to the primary level only. The number of schools available at secondary and senior secondary level is quite few. Almost 92.0 percent villages in the district have primary schools. However, in Taoru (85.4%) and Punhana (88.6%), the

number of primary schools is less than the district average level (92.0). However, the availability of schools shows grim picture with the rise in class above primary level. As against the state average level of middle level schools (51.1%) among its villages, Mewat has only 28.2% villages having middle schools. Firozpur Jhirka and Taoru, further, shows grim picture with 22.9% and 23.2% middle schools. Similarly, the secondary level schools in Mewat further shows acute picture as it is extremely low at 3.20%.

**Table 3.12: School status in Mewat district (as on May, 2016)**

Schools	Middle				High				Secondary				Total
	B	G	Co-ed	Total	B	G	Co-ed	Total	B	G	Co-ed	total	
Taoru	24	5	16	45	0	1	4	5	0	1	6	7	57
Nuh	28	19	18	65	3	1	13	17	1	1	7	9	91
Nagina	30	9	11	50	0	1	6	7	0	0	3	3	60
Firozpur Jhirka	29	14	7	50	0	0	7	7	0	1	4	5	62
Punhana	26	13	13	52	0	1	9	10	0	2	7	9	71
<b>Mewat District</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>341</b>
Haryana	1761	280	375	2416	875	199	377	1451	1055	292	391	1738	5605

Source: Haryana district administration (B-Boys; G-Girls, Co-ed- Co-educational)

The distribution of the schools suggests that the primary schools are readily available in almost entire villages of the district. However, the situation becomes worst, as the availability of school, reduces, while, moving up, at the higher level. At the level of the state, at least one senior secondary school is available in every village, but, the proportion of senior secondary school is almost nil in the Mewat district,. This has a multiple effects, as, the poor level of education among Meos, leaves no space for them, to get employed and enhance their economy. Further, the availability of the teachers in the school suggests that there is dearth of teachers in the school. This also impacts the gender ratio among schools (Tamilenthi<sup>48</sup> et al., 2011).

**Table 3.13: Availability of teaching staffs in schools (in Percent)**

District State	Senior secondary/high school (2011-12)			Middle School (2011-12)			Primary School (2011-12)		
	MT	FT	AT	MT	FT	AT	MT	FT	AT
<b>Mewat</b>	73.1	26.9	9.4	82.6	17.4	2.8	19	81	4.8
<b>Haryana</b>	53.1	46.9	10.4	54.1	45.9	13.0	51.2	48.8	3.1

Source: Directorate of secondary/middle/primary education, Haryana; AT= Average numbers of teachers per school; MT= Male teachers; FT= Female teachers

**Table 3.14: School enrollment**

District State	Senior secondary/high school (2011-12)		Middle School (2011-12)		Primary School (2011-12)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
<b>Mewat</b>	71.8	28.2	64.4	35.6	55.4	44.6
<b>Haryana</b>	52.7	47.3	54.8	45.2	54.4	45.6

Source: Directorate of secondary/middle/primary education, Haryana

The representation of Meo girls across grades reflect that they are negatively skewed with the progression of classes as compared to Meo boys. The figure also suggests that the percentage of enrolment of girls declines with the higher classes. The ten point gap between the boys and girls education at primary level increases up to 29 points at secondary level and 43 points at senior secondary levels. The secondary source (NITI Ayog, 2015: 42) suggests that the cultural of early marriage in Meos plays a significant role for such decline. Further, the imbalance in the ratio of male and female teachers may also be playing role in creating such situation for the Meo girls as such imbalance and the lack of teachers results in increase of pupil's ratio upon teachers that affect the standard of teaching (Diaz<sup>49</sup> et al., 2003). This is because study (NCES<sup>50</sup>, 2001) shows that existence of relationship between student teacher ratio and student achievement.

With regard to Meos, the statistics suggests that the mean years of age for which the Meo girls and the Meo boys get married is below the age in the state. Further, the fertility rate among the Meo girls is higher than the state average. The statistics reflect that the births to girls between the ages of 15-19 years out of the total births are higher among the Meos, as compared to, the girls in Haryana. Further, the infant mortality

below the age of 5 years among Meo girls as well as the Meo boys is higher than the state of Haryana. This is also because of the poor antenatal care checkup and delivery care system prevalent among the Meos, as, the district lack availability of better health facilities. The total statistics produces a very grim picture with regard to Meo girls as it indicates less care and poor attention towards Meo girls during their early years. It is interesting to note, that, in spite of the poor conditions, the sex ratio among the Meos are better than the rest of the districts of Haryana.

**Table 3.15: Reproductive child health**

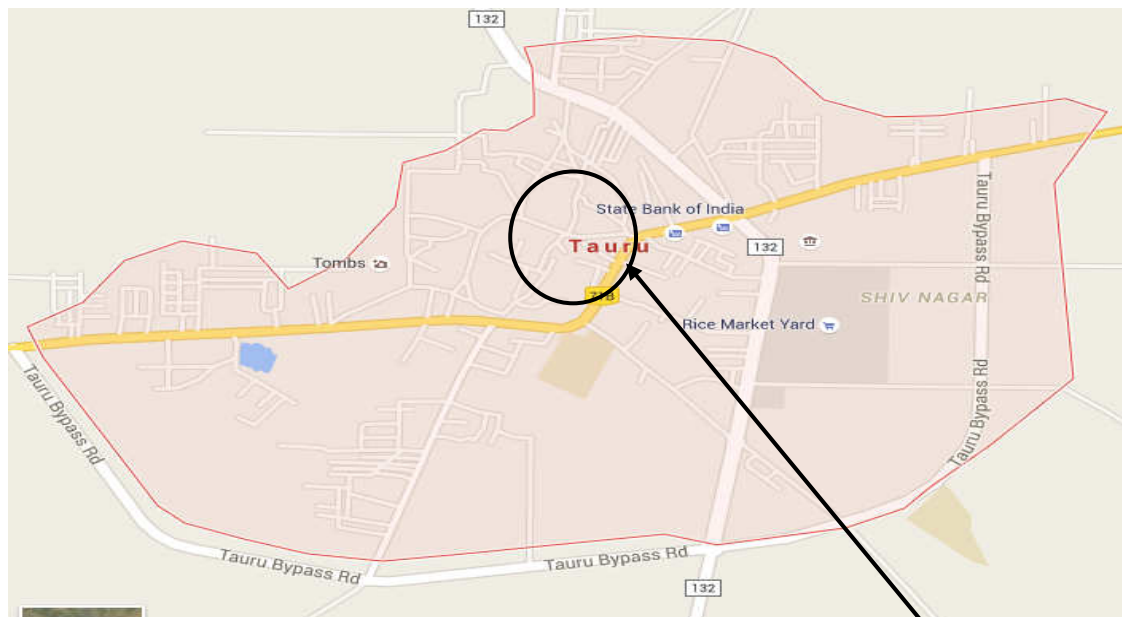
<b>Marriage</b>	<b>Mewat</b>	<b>Haryana</b>
Mean age at marriage for girls	19.7	21
Mean age at marriage for boys	21.7	24
Birth to women aged 15-19 years out of total births	5	2.7
Use of family planning (in %)	23	50.1
Pregnant women received antenatal check-up (in %)	45.5	73.87
Institutional delivery (in %)	51.2	80.3
Child immunization (in %)	27.3	52.7
Infant mortality below 5 years among females (in numbers)	512.0	124.6
Infant mortality below 5 years among males (in numbers)	346.0	182.4

Source: District level household and facility survey IV (NITI Ayog, 2015: 47)

The agricultural situation in Mewat is suggests that the Meos mainly depends upon the rain fest harvest which remain poor across the years. Further, the Meos among the villages across the district utilizes least numbers of diesel and electric sets of irrigation as compared to other areas of the state. The study (NITI Ayog, 2015: 51) suggests that Meos rank the lowest comparatively with the other districts, in terms of average number of persons depending upon one set in one village for irrigation. This is why almost 88% of the Meos depends upon the tube wells in Mewat which further worsens the ground water level.

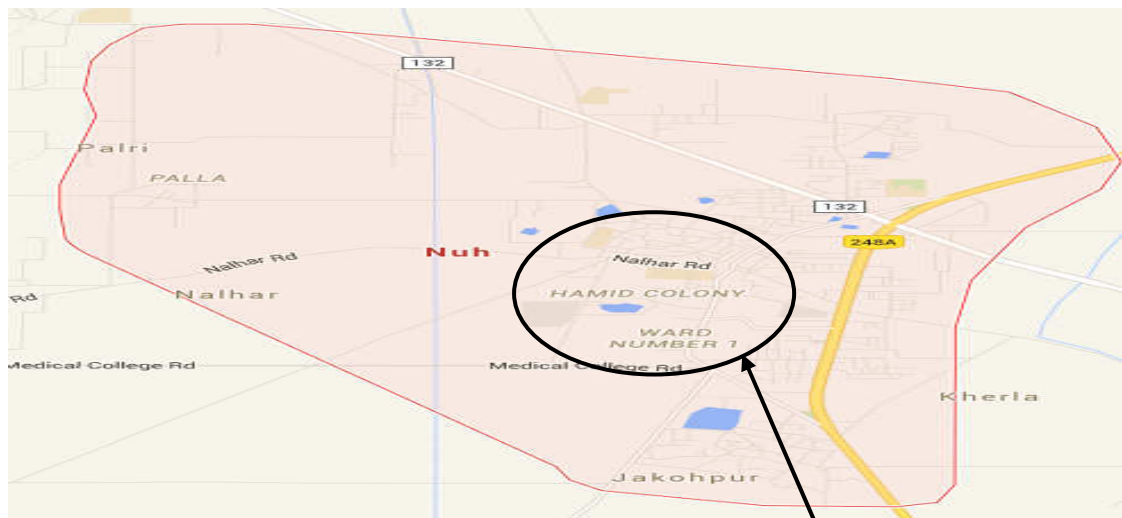
### 3.5: Map Indicating Location of the field area in Mewat

#### (A): Block Map of Taoru



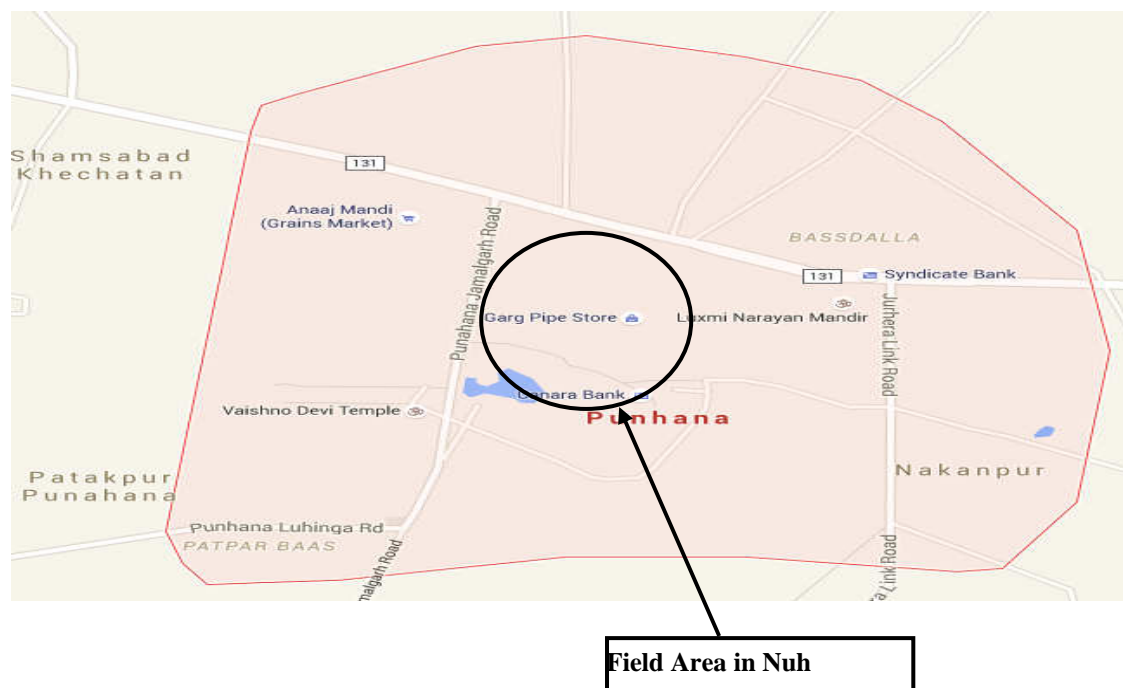
Field Area in Taoru

#### (B): Block Map of Nuh



Field Area in Nuh

### (C): Block Map of Punhana



### 3.22: Concluding discussion

The overall situation of minority concentrated areas, seems to be far worse than other parts of the state, where the Meos concentration is less. The public infrastructure and basic amenities, presence of factories, poor electric supply, irregular bus service and non-access to rail networks and so on are poorly available in Mewat despite the fact that it has strategic location near the most developed Gurgaon district. The proportion of availability of factories in the rest of the state is far better than Mewat. This is why the district ranks the lowest on the basis of overall development in the state. The facts highlighted above provide a very grim picture of the entire region and have not caught the attention of the policy makers and other governmental agencies responsible for the development of the Meos.

The understanding of the areas suggests that Meos of Mewat lags far behind in terms of any indicators of development and progress. Strategically located Mewat within the vicinity of the capital of India, and, the most developed state, Meos concentrated areas brings forth the political characteristics of the state. Meo girls, from this area, construct their experiences, and, relations to the external world, with differing sets of conditions. The struggle for existence, and, positive hopes, for development, has not shattered among Meo girls. The emerging political consciousness, dynamic socio-



economic prospects and expansion of educational and other life options has sharpened the sense of their identity. It has also classified the Meos along the lines of 'us' and 'them'. Within these contexts, the present research was conducted among three different Meos concentrated areas, so as to comprehend the issues taken in the research more comprehensively and effectively.

## END NOTES:

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- <sup>1</sup> The name of Gurgaon has been changed to Gurugram by the office order of the government
- <sup>2</sup> Cunningham, J. (1918). *A history of the Sikhs from the origin of the nation to the battle of Satluj*. Bombay: Oxford University Press
- <sup>3</sup> Crooke, W. (1896). *The tribes and castes of the North-Western India*. Calcutta: Government Printing Press, reprint Delhi: Cosmos Press
- <sup>4</sup> Fyzee, A. A. (1974). *Outlines of Mohammadan laws*. Bombay: Oxford University Press
- <sup>5</sup> Hunter, W. W. (1908). *Imperial gazette of India*. Vol XVII. Bombay: Oxford University Press
- <sup>6</sup> Rajasthan district gazetteer. (1971). *Bharatpur*, Government of Rajasthan
- <sup>7</sup> Channing, F. C. (1882). *The land revenue settlement of the Gurgaon District, Lahore*.
- <sup>8</sup> Harris, A.P.D. (1907). *Report on the Mohammedans in the Cis- Satluj Punjab, North west provinces, Oudh, North- west Bengal, central India and Rajputana*, Calcutt: office of the Superintendent of government printing
- <sup>9</sup> Aggrawal, Pratap C. (1969). Islamic revival in Modern India: The case of the Meos, *Economic and political weekly* 4(42)
- <sup>10</sup> Gotra is equivalent to clan. It refers to people who are descendents in an unbroken male lienage from a common male ancestor.
- <sup>11</sup> Sociologically bans is understood as coming generation
- <sup>12</sup> Pal is understood to be lienage.
- <sup>13</sup> Jamous, R. (2002). The Marriage Alliance among the Meo. *Indian Social Science Review*, Sage, New Delhi. 4, (2) July-December
- <sup>14</sup> Iddat is the period usually of 4 months 10 days either, from the day of divorce, or after the day of the death of the husband. The reason for iddat is for the detection of pregnancy as marriage is prohibited during pregnancy. After the follow of the period of iddat a female can remarry.
- <sup>15</sup> Sagotra means in the same gotra
- <sup>16</sup> Singar is beautification of the girl
- <sup>17</sup> Ghar dikhai is a custom which is followed, when, the father of the marriageable girl, starts looking for the groom and visit the groom's house for settling the marriage.
- <sup>18</sup> Sagai is the custom which is fixation of marriage of the boy and the girl
- <sup>19</sup> Nai is the barbar who was assigned the work of invitation
- <sup>20</sup> Neg is a kind of gift given in the form of cash and kind
- <sup>21</sup> Chaita is the derivatives of 'chaitra', which is the first month of the Hindi calendar
- <sup>22</sup> Swastik is a sacred symbol, often considered for goodluck by the Hindu community
- <sup>23</sup> Chak nautana is the custom when a girl is invited to the potter's wheel to make a symbol of swastika.
- <sup>24</sup> Swasi is the female companion of bride such as married sisters, father's sisters etc to whom several responsibilities are given
- <sup>25</sup> It is applied on the hand and feet of the wood be bride

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- 26 The cleansing ceremony of the bride is known as tel ban nautana
- 27 It is a custom in which candy is given or distributed to members of the both boys' and girls' family.
- 28 It is the bathing ceremony in which the bride and the groom is bathed and wear new clothes
- 29 Mando is a ceremony which is observed a day before wedding. In this ceremony all the members of the patti are fed.
- 30 This is a ceremony which is celebrated on the conception of the child in mother's womb.
- 31 Seventh month of pregnancy celebrated with sweets and fruits on the lap of the Meo girl
- 32 It is a ceremony in which after sixth day of the birth of the child, mother and child are given a bath.
- 33 The meaning 'tableegh' is 'to preach'. The term tablighi Jamaat is an organization, committed to preaching of basic principles of Islam among masses. The members of the Tablighi Jamaat visited the villages of Mewat to instruct on Islamic traditions, and, to encourage the communities to adhere to the Muslim traditions and leave their earlier traditions.
- 34 Sikand Y. (2002). *The origins and development of the Tablighi-Jama'at (1920-2000): A cross country comparative study*. New Delhi: Orient Longman
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- 36 Sharma, M. Vanjani, U. (1990). Remembrance of Things Past: Partition Experiences of Punjabi Villagers in Rajasthan. *Economic and Political Weekly* August
- 37 Grierson, G. A. (ed) (1916). *Linguistic survey of India*, Reprint edition (1967). Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas
- 38 Bhatt, Zarina. (1998). *Girls Education in Mewat: Issues and Strategies*, Paper Presented in National Conference on Education of Muslim Girls: Issues and Strategies, Department of women's Studies, NCERT, New Delhi
- 39 Singh, K. S. (1994). *People of India: Haryana*, Vol. XXII, p. 360-64, New Delhi: Manohar Publications
- 40 Mewat as a region included Rajsathan also, which was later carved out of Mewat when it was made a district.
- 41 These sub-divisions were Nuh, Firozpur Jhirka and Hathin
- 42 These 5 blocks were Nuh, Taoru, Firozpur Jhirka, Punhana and Hathin
- 43 Government of India. (2008). *A baseline survey of minority concentrated districts of India: Mewat, Haryana*. New Delhi: Indian Council of Social Science Research
- 44 Government of India. (2008). *A baseline survey of minority concentrated districts of India: Mewat, Haryana*. New Delhi: Indian Council of Social Science Research
- 45 Moore, S. (1997). *Sociology alive*. Musselburgh: Scotprint limited
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- 47 Government of India, (2015). *Identifying backwardness of Mewat region in Haryana: A block level analysis*. Research Division: NITI Ayog, p.27: Originally quoted from Masand, A. (2008). The rural urban divide in India. Retrieved originally from

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/7849672/The-Rural-Urban-Divide-in-India> on September, 3,2014

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- <sup>48</sup> Tamilenth, S. Mohansundaram, K. & Padmini, V. (2011). Staff, infrastructure, amenities and academic achievements of the high schools in Chipata district, eastern province of Zambia. *Archives of Applied Science Research*, 3 (6): 131-140
- <sup>49</sup> Diaz, K., Fett, C., Gracia, G.T. and Crisosto, N. M. (2003) *The effect of student-teacher ratio and interactions on student/teacher performance in high school scenario*. Technical report BU-1645-M. Retrieved from <http://mtbi.asu.edu/downloads/education.pdf> on May 16, 2016
- <sup>50</sup> Government of India, (2015). *Identifying backwardness of Mewat region in Haryana: A block level analysis*. Research Division: NITI Ayog, p.43: Originally taken from National Center for Education Statistics (2001). Overview of public elementary and secondary schools and districts: School year 1999-2000 Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2001/overview/table06.asp>