



The Meos of Mewat : A Historical Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The research paper "The Meos of Mewat: A Historical Perspective" is a brief historical account of the Meos of Mewat region, particularly the districts lie in Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. It includes the origin, customs, and traditions of the Meos, which are to some extent different from the others communities or rather mysterious for the people who reside in Delhi, the suburb of Mewat. However, as for their history, it is as glorious as the renowned kingdoms and reputed ruling dynasties of other parts of India. Since the beginning of their civilization, the Mewati people were a lover of freedom, peace, and independence and never compromised with the neighbouring rulers of Delhi, either they were Muslims or the British. The history of this region witnesses that the renowned Rana Sanga fled from the battle field, while his associate Hasan Khan Mewati gallantly martyred while fighting Babar in the battle of Kanwaha. The inhabitants of this region gave great trouble to the Turk, Pathan, Mughal, and British rulers at Delhi.

Apart from a lot of available historical sources, I based my work on the facts provided by Persian contemporary scholars of medieval times and modern British historians who had analyzed the facts on scientific pattern. The Arab and Persian chroniclers gave much importance to this area. The British historians Elliot & Dowson, Cunningham and a British scholar F. C. Channing worked a lot on the Indian history and throw much light on the history of Mewat region.

Keywords: Mewat, Med, Meo, Hasan Khan, Alwar, Gurgaon, Rana Sanga, etc.

Introduction

The Mewat, the land of an ancient tribe called as Meos, whose geographical position changed various times in response to the advancement of the Meos and aggression of the invaders. The alkaline soil of Mewat and the low production land made its residents rough and hard working. The barren land of Mewat forced even the women folk to work in the fields along with their men to earn the livelihood. However, the Arawali hills are the natural gift for the Meos which provides them wooden fuel free of cost for their hearths and keeps the area neat and clean in addition. Wolsley Haig in his book *Cambridge History of India* describes the area as well as the people of Mewat as follows:¹

"The most turbulent of these petty chiefs were the leaders of the Meos, inhabitants of Mewat, the 'ill-defined tract lying south of Delhi and including part of the British districts of Mathura and Gurgaon, and most of the Alwar and a little of the Bharatpur State'..... The depredations of the Meos extended across the Jumna into the Doab, and northward even into the streets of Delhi. The ruling family accepted Islam, and became known as Khanzadas; and Bahadur Nahar, whose tomb still stands at Alwar, and who ruled Mewat at the time of Timur's invasion at the end of the fourteenth century, was one of the most powerful chiefs in the neighbourhood of Delhi."

The Mewat region is considered one of the most backward regions in India due to the continuous neglect of the region. Poverty and illiteracy are also due to neglect by the rulers for centuries. After seventy years of independence now only one in ten Meos is able to properly read and write.

The Meos (originally called as Meds), the original inhabitants of Mewat region, belongs to the very ancient community of Persia and Greece based on their nomenclature and racial similarity. They were the martial race and entered India along with the Greek invasion and settled there in some portions of sea shores of Sindh, Kuchh and Gujarat region and later migrated to arawali ranged due to the Arab invasion of Sindh. Here they settled permanently, adopted the occupation of agriculture. Major Powlett in his *Ulwur Gazetteer* gives the real picture of the Meos and excerpts of his description need to be quoted as it is. He describes as follows:²

"The Meos are numerically the first race in the State, and the agricultural portion of them is considerably more than double any other class of cultivators except Chumars. They occupy about half the Ulwur territory, and the portion they dwell in lies to the north and east. They are divided into fifty-two clans, of which the twelve largest are called 'Pals, and the smaller 'Gots'. always notorious for their turbulence and predatory habits."

The Meos are found mainly in many parts of the states of Haryana, Rajasthan, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh. Nevertheless, the majority still concentrated in the historic Mewat region. In Haryana, the Meos are found mainly in Faridabad, Gurgaon, Mahendergarh and Ambala districts, as well as the newly created Mewat district.

Origin of the Meos

There are many theories regarding the origin of the Meo community. They themselves claim the Indian origin and a part of the Kshatriya caste of the Aryan community. They proudly claim that Lord Rama and Lord Krishna were their forefathers. The Meos even today affirms their classification of the Chandravanshi and the Suryavanshi. However, the world history witness many tribes, regions and principalities related to the term Meo or Med, which are quite similar to the Meos of Mewat. Their habits, terminology and racial similarity with the other tribes of the world force the researchers to rethink about their origin other than the Indian Aryans.

It has been seen that in the 7th century BCE, a similar Mede tribe inhabited in Greece and Persian border on the south shore of the Caspian Sea. A Mede chieftain Deioces collected the Medes into one nation and ruled over them. He expanded his empire to the Persia. The last Mede ruler Astyages married his daughter Mandane to Cambyses, a Persian. However, in 553 BCE, his grandson Cyrus, king of Persia, rebelled against him and finally won a decisive victory in 550 BCE. Now the Medes were subjected to the Persians but retained a prominent position in the Persian Empire. Many Mede nobles were employed as officials, satraps, and generals.³

Alexander, the ruler of Macedonia, occupied Media in 330 BCE, by defeating the Persian ruler Darius.⁴ At the time of Alexander invasion in India, most of the Medes of his army showed their courage to conquer the Indian territory of Sindh and consequently, entered the Sindh territory following the Alexander's invasion. It is well known that, Alexander left an army under his Governor, Seleucus Nicator, to guard the Indian Territory of Sindh, and he himself returned to Babylonia.⁵

Subsequently, the Meds, who were major part of Macedonian army also settled over the region occupied by the Greeks, and became well known inhabitants, particularly in the coastal and hilly areas of Sindh. It is evident that in Sind region, the Meos were known as Meds and another major community, that lived with them, was the Jat community. They both were agriculturists in profession and also barbarian in nature. Their rulers were Brahman by caste.⁶

Elliot writes by quoting the Arab historian Rashiduddin from his book *Jamiu-t-Tawarikh* that Meds or Mands firmly established in Sindh, along with their ancient Jat rivals, both of whom were said to be the descendants of Ham, the son of Nuh. Elliot further quotes Ibn Haukal who describes that the Mands of his time (977 CE), were occupying the banks of the Indus from Multan to the sea, and to the desert between Makran and Famhal. Another Geographer Masudi, who visited India in 915-16 CE, calls them Mind or Med, and states that they were a race of Sindh, who were at constant war against the people of Mansura.⁷ Elliot further mentions the quotes of another geographer Al-Idrisi, the author of *Nuzhatul Mushtaq*, that there is a place known as Mamhal situated between Sind and India. Upon the confines of the desert there dwells on a hardy race called Mand (Med). They have many horses and camels, and they extend their incursions as far as Alore upon the banks of the Mihran, and sometimes they penetrate even to the frontiers of Makran.⁸ Elliot again quotes the historian Virgil, who notices the earliest evidence of the Meds, calls the river Jhelam as Medus Hydaspes. Hence, there was the evidence that the Medi, or Meds, were in the Punjab as early at least as the time of Virgil, during 40 to 30 BCE.⁹

After many centuries of the settlements of the Medes in the area of Sindh, and other coastal areas, they fought many battles with the Arab conquerors, particularly Mohammad bin Qasim.¹⁰ Throughout time, and hard pressed by Arab conquest of Sindh, the Meds were drove away to hither and thither and finally took their shelter into the hilly areas of Arawali ranges, covering modern states of Haryana and Rajasthan, which were safe for livelihood. Their settlement around the Arawali ranges came to be known as Med-pat, and afterwards Mewat. They embraced Islam and called themselves as Meos.¹¹

Meos Culture and Traditions

For their identity and safety, the Meos organized themselves into 12 *Gotras* and 52 *Pals* on the pattern of the similar martial communities of Rajputs and Kshatriyas. They also categorized themselves into Suryavanshi and Chandravanshi like Kshatriyas and Rajputs and began to claim the descendants of Lord Rama and Lord Krishna in order to prove their ancient link from India. *They inherit the unique type of customs and traditions, generally speaking a synthesis of Hinduism and Islam and rather more Hinduised than Islamic one.*

Major Powlett in his *Gazetteer of Ulwur* has very beautifully described about their religion, customs, and traditions. His description needs to be quoted as follows:¹²

“The Meos are now all Musalmans in name, but their village deities are the same as those of Hindu Zamindars. They keep, too, several Hindu festivals. Thus, the Holi is with Meos a season of rough play, and is considered as important as festival the Muharram, Eid, and Shabeharat, and they likewise observe the Janamashtmi, Dashehra, and Diwali. They often keep Brahmin priests to write the *Pili Chithi*, or note fixing the date of a marriage. They call themselves by Hindu names, with the exception of ‘Ram’ and ‘Singh’ is a frequent affix, though not so common as ‘Khan’. On the Ramdhans or monthly conjunction of the sun and moon, Meos, in

common with Hindu Ahirs, Gujars, cease from labour and when they make a well, the first proceeding is to erect a 'Chabutra' to 'Bairtiji' or 'Hanuman'. However, when plunder was to be obtained, they have often shown little respect for Hindu shrines and temples, and when the sanctity of a threatened place has been urged, the retort has been 'Tum to Deo, Ham Meo!' You may be a Deo (God), but I am a Meo."

Sir William Wilsom Hunter's description of the Meos of his own time is also needed worth mentioning. He says:¹³

"They have a mixture of both Musalman and Hindu customs, they make pilgrimages to the tomb of the famous Syyed Salar Masaud in Bahraich in Awadh, and consider the oath taken on his banner the most binding, they also make pilgrimages to shrines in India, but never perform Haj. Among Hindu customs they observe the Holi and Diwali festivals, their marriages never take place in the same *got*, and their daughters never inherit, they call their children indiscriminately by both Musalman and Hindu names. They are almost entirely uneducated, but have bards and musicians, to whom they make large presents. Songs, called *ratudi*, on pastoral and agricultural subjects, are common. The dialect is harsh and unpolished, so that no difference can be made when addressing a male or female, or with respect to social distinctions. They are given to the use of intoxicating drink, are very superstitious, and have great faith in omens. The dress of the men and women resembles that of the Hindus."

In spite of all their daring and warring habits, the Meos are also very innocent and rough, due to the prevalent illiteracy. The Meos generally show the non-seriousness even after committing the misdeeds, mistakes and even the serious injuries to the others by applying different proverbs like, 'Kaha Ho Go' (not seriously happened) and 'Koi Baat Naa' or 'Koi Naa' (nothing serious, leave it). They apply these proverbs in order to minimize the clashes and friction or to avoid the mishappenings.

The position of women in Mewat area was also not well as compared to the other communities of India. The birth to a daughter was considered a sin, and she was always been treated as inferior to all her brothers. The Meo women generally called as Meonis occupy a very pitiable position within the Meo society. However, strangely in the particular family the Meo ladies play a dominating role after their marriage. The elders told that the reasons of respecting their ladies were their hard work. They say that Meo men are notorious for killing time in smoking the Huqqa. The men only engage in plowing with bullocks and digging the soil when required. All the rest of the field work from sowing, weeding, harvesting, thrashing, winnowing to stacking-they leave to their women. Very strangely the work of women into the fields is in addition to what they have to do within the households.

Meos Conversion to Islam

The Meos, whose most of the population is still in the clutches of religious innovation; freely adopt the Hindu name, customs and traditions; having pride to call them as the descendants of Rama and Krishna; have a lot of complex version of theories regarding their acceptance of Islam. The most popular theory about their conversion to Islam is the influence of Sufi saints. As their adoption of Islam was mainly due to the Sufi influence, they didn't forgive their Hindu practice and traditions and more interestingly they frequently used to name their children on Hindu pattern.

It is generally believed that the Muslim invaders in India forced the Indians to embrace Islam, and the people who feared for their lives became Muslims and the brave people are still the Hindus. These type speculations are ridiculous and based on hate and jealousy. After invading Sindh region, Mohammad bin Qasim punished only those people who were at war against him. He was very cordial with his Hindu subject and the Hindus were enjoying the full freedom as under their previous rulers. The Medes, the Jats and even the Brahmans were free to worship their religion, Budhism and Hinduism. Sisakar, the minister of Dahir was the wazir of Mohammad bin Qasim and he told him all his secrets to Sisakar and always asked his advice and consulted him on all civil affairs of the government. In 715-16, he was called back and charged of moral turpitude and put to death. Elliot and Dowson, by quoting *Futuhul Baldan* of Al-Biladury, writes that the people of Hind (Sind) wept for Mohammad bin Qasim.¹⁴

As for the invasion of Mahmud Ghaznavi and his successors, Haig writes their treatment with the Hindus as follows:¹⁵

"Mahmud the Iconoclast maintained a large corps of Hindu horses; his son Masud prohibited the Muslim officers from offending the religious susceptibilities of their Hindu comrades, employed the Hindu Tilak for the suppression of the rebellion of the Muslim, Ahmad Niyaltagin, approved of Tilak's mutilation of Muslims, and made him the equal of his Muslim nobles. Muizuddin Mohammad allied himself with the Hindu raja of Jammu against Muslim Khusro Malik of Lahore and employed Hindu legends on his coinage. And one of the pretexts of Timur's invasion of India at the end of the fourteenth century was the toleration to Hindus."

It is a fact that nobody can leave his cherished religion for fear or desire provided the he is fully aware of the basic tenets of his religion. He can definitely leave the religion if he gets the better option and the love and brotherhood based on Islamic principles propagated by the Sufi saints in India was, undoubtedly, a better option for the marginalized people of India. Some of the higher caste people also might have adopted Islam in their influence. However, the history witness that no forceful conversion was made by any ruler of the post Arab or Turkish rule.

As for the Meos conversion is concerned, it was, undoubtedly, started during Ghaznavi invasion but the conversion of the Meos to Islam was done in the influence of a Sufi saint Syed Salar Masud Ghazi, the nephew of Mahmud Ghaznavi. Syed Salar Masood Ghazi was also a commander of the Ghaznavi forces and attacked many principalities of North India including Delhi and suburbs and off course the region of Mewat. The Meos came into his contact and in his influence most of them embraced Islam. In Mewat area also he is loved and respected even today.¹⁶

Syed Salar Masud Ghazi, the introducer of Islam in Mewat region, was equally cherished by the Hindu population, wherever he went for the military expedition. Hashim Amir Ali quotes the passages of Atul Ananda Chakrabarti's *Cultural Fellowship in India* (Calcutta, 1934), as follows:¹⁷

“The idea of blending religious beliefs was at work from very early times of Muslim invasion. We are informed that Sayed Salar, the nephew of Mahmud of Ghazni, was slain by a Hindu Raja, Sohældeo. But in honour of the slain a shrine was erected there.... Hindus of upper India (still) worship Sayed Salar as one with power to give eyes to the blind.”

After Syed Salar Masud Ghazi, the Meos' acceptance of Islam continued until the Mughal period. During these periods the Meos embraced Islam in the influence of many important Sufi saints like Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia, Miran Sayyed Husain Khang Sawar, Miyan Raj Shah, Qutbuddin, Akbar Ali, Khwaja Mehrauli, Shaikh Moosa, Shah Chokha, etc. However, during the later Mughal period and the British period, due to the absence of any religious preacher, the Meos began to adopt different innovations in their religion. Their culture and traditions were mixed with those of Hindus of that region. Major Powlett throws much light on the religion of the Meos as follows:¹⁸

“As regards their own religion, Meos are very ignorant. Few know the *Kalima*, and fewer still the regular prayers, the seasons of which they entirely neglect. This, however, only applies to Ulwur territory; in British, the effect of the schools is to make them more observant of religious duties. Indeed, in Ulwur, at certain places where there are mosques, religious observances are better maintained, and some know the *Kalima*, say their prayers, and would like a school. Meos do not marry in their own *Pal* or clan, but they are lax about forming connections with women of other castes, whose children they receive into the Meo community. They generally dower their daughters handsomely. Along with the Brahmans, the Qazis were also required in the formalities of marriage ceremonies. The rite of circumcision is performed by the village barber and the village Fakir. Their women called as Meonis, do more fieldwork than the men indeed one often finds women at work in the crops when the men are lying down. Like the women of low Hindu castes they tattoo their bodies, a practice disapproved by Musalmans in general.”

During the third decade of the twentieth century, the Arya Samaj was working on its Shudhi and Sangathan movement in Mewat region. The Arya Samajists were continuously roaming in the remote villages to preach them that their fore fathers were Hindus, and it's the better time for them to adopt the Hinduism again. The Muslim clerics were alarmed over the Arya Samajist activities and began to preach the basic tenets of the Islamic principles among the Meos of Mewat. They called this practice as Tabligh. The Tabligh Movement in Mewat was started in 1926 by Maulana Mohammad Ilyas Kandhalvi. Tabligh Movement, which is popularly known as Tabligh Jamaat, is not a registered body nor has it enrolled membership. It comprises some people from skilled and unskilled masses from the gross root level. They request the Muslims to offer prayer, to observe *roza* (fast) and adopt Islamic way of life. They also encourage the people to spend three days or more in their company.

Meos under Retribution

During the rule of the early Delhi Sultanate rulers, the Meos or Mewatis were very turbulent in Mewat or in the suburbs of Delhi, the capital of Sultanate rulers. Some of the Meos at that time had accepted Islam under the Sufi influence but their name, traditions and customs were same as before their acceptance of Islam. The geographical position, alkaline and low yielding soil, traditional bravery and lack of law and order made the Mewati people turbulent in their areas. They frequently waged loot and plunder on the border areas of Delhi. They even dared to attack on the royal caravans and the royal army in order to loot and plunder. Balban (Ulugh Khan), both as a ruler and *Amir*, invaded the Mewat region, covering the many hundred miles. He created havoc by mass level murder and destruction. In the series of persecution and suppression of the Meos, Balban invaded the Mewat region in 1256, 1260 and also in 1266, when he ascended to the throne.

For the first time, Balban (Ulugh Khan) attacked Mewat region in 1256, when a Delhi rebel leader Kutlugh Khwaja sought refuge in Mewat, and its Ajangarh chief Ransi Ran Pal or Ant Pal gave him shelter. Balban (Ulugh Khan) invaded the Mewat region and after a pitched battle the Meos were forced to fly.¹⁹

Until 1260, the Meos again organized themselves under Malkha or Mangal, who became local head of the Mewati territory with its capital at Indore. Balban (Ulugh Khan) marched towards Mewat on 9th March 1260, with 10,000 horsemen in armour and captured Indore, the capital of Mewat. About 12,000 Mewati ladies, gents, and children were put to death. For twenty days, the work of slaughter and pillage continued and the ferocity of the soldiery was stimulated by the reward of one silver *tanka* was offered for every head, and two for every prisoner brought in alive. On 29th March 1260, the army returned to the capital with 250 chieftains of the Meo tribe, who had stolen the camels and other leading men of the tribe, to the number of 250, 142 horses, and 2,100,000 silver *tankas*.²⁰

When Ulugh Khan ascended the throne of Delhi in 1265 with the title of Balban, the Mewat region was ruled by Kaku Rana with its capital as Garhdhamna. During these times, the Mewatis were much turbulent and as Ziauddin Barani in his *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* writes, the daring of the Mewatis in the neighborhood of Delhi was carried to such an extent that the western gates of the city were shut at afternoon prayer. Meos plundered the travelers on the roads, entered the city by night, and robbed the inhabitants in their houses, and even by day robbed and stripped

water-carriers and women drawing water from the large reservoirs *Sar-Hauz* just within the city walls, so that it became necessary to shut the gates on the western side of the city immediately after the hour of afternoon prayer. No one dared to go out of the city in that direction after that hour, whether he traveled as a pilgrim or with the display of a sovereign. These daring acts of the Mewatis caused a great ferment in Delhi. Barani further says that the Sultan felt the repression of the Mewatis and for a whole year he was occupied in overthrowing them and in scouring the jungles.²¹

As a result of the Mewati turbulence, Balban attacked Mewat region for the third time in 1266. It was the fiercest attack of Balban and surprisingly, the Meos also fought with full of their strength. One lakh of the royal army was slain by the Mewatis, and the most probability the same numbers of Mewati were also put to the sword. From that time, the city was delivered from the attacks of the Mewatis. After this battle, Adhan Pal had taken refuge in Sarehtha.²²

Kingship in Mewat

After subjugation of Mewati people by Balban, Mewat was politically, almost, dead. However, it again politically emerged during the time of Firoz Shah Tughlaq, when the Rajput chieftain Samar Pal and his brother Sopar Pal of Sarehtha embraced Islam and began to rule over the Mewat region.

It is said that at one time during the hunting expedition Kunwar Samar Pal and Kunwar Sopar Pal, the sons of Jadon Raja Lakhana Pal of Sarehtha, met with Sufi Saint Hazrat Nasir-ud-Din Mahmud, Roshan Chiragh-i-Dehli and accepted Islam. Samar Pal was given new name Bahadur Khan and Sopar Pal as Chhajju Khan. Both the brother later joined the military service under Firoz Shah Tughlaq. It is said that Kunwar Samar Pal, by rescuing Firoz Shah from a lion during the hunting expedition received the title 'Nahar' (the lion) and also the status of *Khana-i-Zad* (son of the household). Hence, Bahadar Nahar Khan (1360-1400), a Jadu Rajput by birth, was the reputed founder of the Khanzada race, which became so renowned in the history of Indian rulers. He held the Mewat region with its capital at Kotila.²³

After the death of Bahadar Nahar Khan his son Bahadur Khan (1400-1405) became the ruler of Mewat. He made Bahadurpur as his new capital. Bahadur Khan had full allegiance of all of his brothers, including the most active jagirdars Shahab Khan of Pahari and Alauddin Khan of Tijara. At his time, there was anarchy prevalent in Delhi Sultanate. Bahadur Khan was actively engaged in Delhi politics but unfortunately treacherously murdered by Mallu Iqbal Khan, a most powerful noble in the Delhi court.²⁴

After Bahadur Khan, his Aqlim Khan (1405-1422), became the ruler of Mewat. He was fully engaged in Delhi politics. He was a close ally of Sultan Mahmud Khan, the ruler of Delhi and opposed the ambitions of Khizr Khan. As a result Khizr Khan attacked Mewat region including the towns of Narnaul, Kotila, Sarehtha, Tijara, etc. After the death of Sultan Mahmud Khan, when Khizr Khan ascended the throne of Delhi in 1414, Aqlim Khan offered his allegiance and cooperation. However, due to some differences Sultan Khizr Khan attacked Mewat region and defeated Aqlim Khan in 1421.²⁵

The people of Mewat enthroned Jalal Khan (1422-1442), with his capital at Indore, as the ruler of Mewat. Jalal Khan or Jallu consolidated the Mewat Kingdom by his new style and entitled himself as Raja *Fateh-ud-Duniya-wa-Deen* Jalal Shah. He was having animosity with the Delhi rulers. The bone of contention between the Delhi rulers and Jalal Khan was the revenue or annual tribute, which being held by Jalal Khan several times. All the time of invasion, he was assisted by his brother Qadar Khan (Qaddu), the jagirdar of Jhimrawat.²⁶

After the death of Raja Jalal Khan, his son Ahmad Khan (1442-1478) became ruler of Mewat. He made his capital at Alwar. He extended his boundaries to the borders of Delhi, from Mehroli to Lado Sarai. In 1452, Bahlol Lodi invaded on Mewati ruler Ahmad Khan and compelled him to cede seven *parganas* to the Emperor and allowed him to rule on the rest of Mewat as a tributary. Later, a permanent peace was established between Mewati and Delhi ruler by a matrimonial alliance. An important courtier of Bahlol Lodi, Malik Azam Humayun Sherwani married his two daughters, one to Sikandar, son of Bahlol Lodi and other to Alawal Khan the grandson of Ahmad Khan.²⁷

After Ahmad Khan, his grandson Alawal Khan (1478-1517) became the ruler of Mewat. Alawal Khan made his capital at Alwar and built a very beautiful fort known as Bala Quila above the Arawali hills which still can be seen. He was a close ally of the Lodi rulers of Delhi. As a close relative of Sikandar Lodi, Alawal Khan enjoyed full authority in Delhi Court and Mewat rose in prominence among all the principalities of the Sultanate. During Babur's invasion he sent his grandson Nahar Khan to fight at Panipat in 1526, where Nahar Khan was arrested while Sultan Ibrahim Lodi was killed in the battlefield. During his old age his son Hasan Khan was virtually ruling the area of Mewat. Conceivably he has abducted the throne in favour of his son Hasan Khan much before his death. In the Battle of Kanwaha in 1527, Alawal Khan also arrived on the battlefield along with his son Hasan Khan. However, unfortunately before the commencement of the fight he was found dead in his own camp.

Raja Hasan Khan Mewati (1517-1527) was virtually ruling Mewat area with his capital at Alwar during the lifetime of his father Alawal Khan. The date of his accession is not sure, but it is the fact that Hasan Khan was ruling the area of Mewat from the time of Ibrahim Khan Lodi as his father Alawal Khan was too old in age. Being the fast cousin of the ruling monarch Ibrahim Lodi, Hasan Khan had full power and position at the Delhi Court. After the death of Ibrahim Lodi, Hasan Khan made all his effort to get his son Nahar Khan released from the captivity of Babur. Consequently, Babur released his son Nahar Khan and wanted to win Hasan Khan in his favour but Hasan Khan made an alliance with Rana Sanga, the prime opponent of Babur. Babar says about Hasan Khan:²⁸

“After my conquest of Hind, following the example of former Sultans, I also had shown Hasan Khan distinguished marks of favour. Yet this ungrateful man, whose affections lay all on the side of the Pagans, this infidel, regardless of my favours and without any sense of the kindness and distinction with which he had been treated, was the grand promoter and leader of all the commotions and rebellions that ensued, as has been related.”

Hasan Khan Mewati and his twelve thousand horses fought against Babur in the battle of Kanwaha in 1527. He was died in the battlefield while his ally Rana Sanga retreated over the hills of Mewat.²⁹

Native States in Mewat

When the Mughal Empire was in the declining phase, Mewat once again became independent and divided into many principalities. In those periods, Mewat has seen the rule three different ruling dynasties. The rulers of Naruka dynasty were ruling over Alwar and its adjoining areas. The other portion of Mewat was ruled by the Jats of Sinsiniwar clan from Deeg and Bharatpur. The third important ruling power was the Nawabs of Ferozpur Jhirka. In the course of time another ruling dynasty of Badgujars ruled the some portions of Mewat region from Ghasera for the very short time. Raja Bakhtawar Singh of Alwar, Raja Surajmal of Bharatpur, and Deeg and Nawab Ahmad Baksh Khan of Ferozpur Jhirka and Bahadur Singh of Ghasera were the greatest rulers of all the four ruling dynasties.

Mewati Rebellion of 1857

The year of 1857 was the awarded gift for the Meos of Mewat in which they had thrown themselves into the war with their ancient valour and bravery. In the revolt of 1857, the whole of Mewat supported the revolutionaries and actively participated in the revolt as well. On 20th May 1857, the Meo leaders and Choudhries of Punhana, Pinangwan, Hathin, Nagina, Nuh, Ferozpur Jhirka, Rupraka, Kaman, Deeg, Bharatpur, Dhausa and Alwar held a Meo *Mahapanchayat* and declared Bahadurshah Zafar as their leader in that very War of Independence. By the last week of May almost all the rural Mewat came under the rule of the Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar. The *Chaudharies* began to conduct the management of their villages and localities in accordance with the instructions of Emperor.³⁰

The Meo revolutionaries under their leader Sadruddin Meo and Ali Hasan Khan attacked British establishments on Nuh, Tauru, Sohna, Ferozpur Jhirka, Punhana, and Pinangwan and overpowered these towns and their administrations. About Sohna, *Punjab District Gazetteer* says that the Meos, after attacking Sohna started loot and plunder as they did at other places. Sohna became the center of freedom fighters that comprised of Meos and Gujars.³¹ In the mid of June 1857, the revolutionaries faced a setback as Major W.F. Eden, Political Agent of Jaipur attacked Mewat with a big force comprising of 6000 men and seven guns. Between Tauru and Sohna, the hard nuts Meos fought valiantly and Eden's force suffered heavy losses.³²

After the fall of Delhi on 20th September, a strong force of 1500 men, 18 pounder guns and two mortars under Brigadier General Showers was sent to settle the Mewat issue on 2nd October. He was assisted by Mr. Clifford, Assistant Collector (ADC) of Gurgaon. Showers and Clifford attacked a rebellious village Raiseena but Meos gave tough resistance and killed 60 army men, including Clifford. At last British forces (Gurkha Regiment), under Showers, with the assistance of Ford defeated the Meos and killed them ruthlessly and burnt the villages.³³ After overpowering rebels around Sohna, Hathin, Palwal and Tauru, Showers returned to Delhi, giving the charge of Mewat to Captain Drummond. On his instructions, the Kumaon Regiment under Lt. H. Grant attacked Ghasera and in that fierce battle, 160 Meos were killed. In the mid of November 1857, Captain Drummond, along with Tohana Horses, Hodson Horses, 102 men of Kumaon battalion and 1st Punjab Infantry under Coke proceeded towards Rupraka. On 19th November 1857 around 3500 Meos fought heroically but lost the battle and around 400 Meos lost their lives.³⁴

On 27th November 1857, a contingent of Gurkha Regiment under Captain Ramsay with assistance of Joint Magistrate of Gurgaon Macpherson Meo attacked a small village, Mahun. The revolutionaries under Sadruddin were defeated with the loss of 28 Meos, including a son of Sadruddin. British forces killed another 42 men in the neighboring villages. At Nuh, a small force under Macpherson, Joint Magistrate of Gurgaon was attacked by Meo rebels under Chaudhary Nahar Khan in which Macpherson was killed. In retaliation, Europeans attacked Nuh town and hanged 52 Meos from Nuh and nearby villages. Besides this, 42 Meos were hanged at Ferozpur Jhirka and 18 at Gahlab.³⁵ If we believe oral statement and interviews of Mewati bards and village headmen, we find that until 29th of Nov. 1857, about 3600 Meos were killed and a large number of Meos were captured and sent Delhi where they were tried and hanged. Around 102 Meos were hanged in Delhi.

Meos and Partition of India

In 1947, when India became independent and unfortunately partitioned, the Meos and some other communities of Mewat faced a lot the curse of partition. Maharaja Tej Singh of Alwar, along with his Deewan Dr. Khare, an activist of a Hindu organization, was already against Meos. During July and August 1947, he killed thousands of Meos who had taken shelter in the hills of Arawali. Murder, loot, and plunder, forcible conversion of the Muslims became a general affair. Seventeen thousand Muslims became Hindu in Alwar, and three thousand Muslims became Hindu in Bharatpur. However, they came into Muslim fold the effort of Maulana Ibrahim, Vinova Bhawe, Satyam Bhai, and Maulana Hifzur Rahman, etc.³⁶ Soon the same situation developed in the Jaipur State. Mewatis had to suffer due to the discriminatory policy of the state. According to an estimate about 3,00,000 Meos including ladies and children were killed in riots that took place in the State of Bharatpur, Alwar and Jaipur. Only in Alwar and Bharatpur districts around four thousand mosques were demolished. The whole area became a graveyard for the Muslims.³⁷

On 15th of August 1947, India was divided and Pakistan came into existence. A large number of Hindus and Muslims were killed in the communal riots that followed the partition of India. The Mewatis had also to suffer greatly due to the communal frenzy. A large number of them began to migrate to Pakistan. In Sohna, a transit camp was organised by the Mewatis with a view to migrate to Pakistan. About eight lakh Mewatis decided to leave for Pakistan. A Meo leader Chaudhary Mohammad Yasin Khan tried his level best to dissuade the Mewatis from

migration to Pakistan.³⁸ On the request of Chaudhary Mohammad Yasin Khan, Mahatma Gandhi, Vinova Bhave, Pandit Sunder Lal, and other Gandhian leaders personally visited the Meo camps around Sohna and Delhi borders. They also arrived at Ghasera in Mewat on 19th December 1947, to prevent the forcible emigration and to assure the rehabilitation of the Mewatis. Gopichand Bhargava, the East Punjab Premier was also with Gandhiji.³⁹

The joint effort of the Gandhian leaders and Chaudhary Mohammad Yasin Khan succeeded in checking the mass migration of the thousands of the Meos. Even a large number of them who had already crossed the border of India returned to Mewat in the Following months. However, they suffered the rehabilitation problem as their home and hearths were occupied by the refugees migrated from Pakistan.

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3. Herodotus, *Historica*, (*Herodotus*, Eng. Trans. Beloe, William, Vol. I, London, 1830), pp. 84-110. (By quoting the *Histories* of Herodotus, the Medes were formerly called as Arians, but when the Colchian woman Medea came from Athens to the Arians, they changed their name as Medes. From that very name of Medes, there emerged a vast tract of principality or region known as Media. The region of Media extended from just east of Harhar to Alwand, and probably beyond (ancient country of northwestern Iran, generally corresponding to the modern regions of Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, and parts of Kermanshah). At the beginning, Medes were usually mentioned together with another steppe tribe, the Scythians, who seem to have been the dominant group. Herodotus, *Historica*, (*Herodotus*, Eng. Trans. Beloe, William, Vol. IV, London, 1830), p. 5.)
4. Plutarch (1883). *Alexander*, New York, p. 6.
5. Russell, Ada (1914). *Alexander the Great*, New York, pp.182-185.
6. Elliot & Dowson (1867). *History of India, as told by its own Historians, The Mohammadan Period*, Vol. I, London, p. 124, see also Khan, Habibur Rahman (1985). *Tazkira Sufia-i-Mewat*, Delhi 1985, p. 53.
7. *Ibid*, pp. 519&523.
8. *Ibid*, p. 79.
9. *Ibid*, p. 529
10. In 704 AD, the King of Shri Lanka sent to Hajjaj, viceroy of the eastern provinces of the caliphate, the orphan ladies of Muslim merchants who had died in his dominions. Med pirates of Sind (also in Makran and Kathiawar) coast near Debal, Dahir's principal seaport, looted the Arab ships coming from Shri Lanka, and carried away the booty and orphan Muslim Women. Hajjaj sent a letter through Mohammad bin Haroon, the governor of Makran, to Raja Dahir to set the women free. Dahir replied that he had no control over pirates. Earlier to this episode, Sind had seen seven Arab attacks in 637 & 663-683 AD. After Dahir's unsatisfactory reply Hajjaj sent two expedition one after another to Debal under Ubaidullah Bin Nibhan and Budail bin Tuhfa but they were defeated and killed. Hajjaj, deeply affected by these two failures, fitted out a third expedition in 705 AD, under his cousin and son-in-law Imad-ud-din Mohammad bin Qasim, a youth about seventeen years of age who had been already famed himself in the expeditions against Iraq and Kurdistan. Mohammad bin Qasim with the lavish arms, soldiers, food provisions and 6,000 Syrian soldiers fully equipped with Roman War Machines of the latest types, stone-throwers (Manjanique), machines for scaling fort walls, flame throwers, etc. Mohammad bin Qasim, having assembled the siege machines which had arrived by sea, stormed Debal, and occupied by slaying a lot of Jats and Meds in 711 AD. In 712 AD, he moved towards Rawar and Bahmanabad with 50,000 and in this fierce battle Dahir was killed after a gallant fight. Afterwards, Mohammad bin Qasim marched towards the capital Alore, which was defended by Dahir's widow Mayain or Rani Bai. However, she was defeated and committed Sati. Alore was made capital of caliphate viceroyalty. (Panhwar, M. H. (1983). *The Chronological Dictionary of Sind*, Karachi, p. 133-139 see also Haig, Wolseley (1928). *The Cambridge History of India*, Vol. III, London, pp. 1-7.)
11. Elliot & Dowson, Vol. I, *op. cit.* p. 124, see also Habibur Rahman, *op. cit.* pp. 35&53.
12. Powlett, *op. cit.* p. 38.
13. Hunter, William Wilson (1886). *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol. IX, London, p. 419. (Kaye & Malleon, moreover, describes the Meos by quoting Sir John Malcolm, "although usually reckoned Mohammadan, it is difficult to say whether they are Muhammadans or Hindus; they partake of both religions, and are the most desperate rogues in India. They are turbulent, vindictive, cunning, cruel, robbers, murderers, and assassins- yet they are faithful, undaunted guards and servants to those whose *Nimuk* (salt) they eat." William Kaye & George Bruce Malleon (1910). *History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-58*, Vol. II, London, pp. 184-85.)
14. Elliot & Dowson, Vol. I, *op. cit.* pp. 175-76 &124.
15. Haig, Vol. III, *op. cit.* p. 89.
16. Till 1960-70 in many villages of Mewat the custom of saluting the flag of Syed Salar Masood Ghazi was prevalent. In that custom the *Mujawars* (servants of Ghazi) used to bring the flag and hoisted it in the village *Chopal*. The children and women devotees offered *Nazar-o-Neyaz* and youths performed military drill. On the third day of the ceremony the *Mujawars* departed along with the flag. Another practice was the worship of flag of Syed Salar Masood Ghazi. But due to the influence of the *Maulvis* and Tabligh movement these practices slowly and gradually game to an end. (Habibur Rahman, *op. cit.* pp. 67-68 and 180.)
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26. *Ibid*, pp. 60-61, *Muraqqa-i-Mewat*, *op. cit.* pp. 260&262. & Cunningham, *op. cit.* p. 18.
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32. *Gurgaon District Gazetteer*, pp. 61-62.
33. *Gurgaon District Gazetteer*, p. 62; see also Abdus Shakoor, *op. cit.* pp. 459-60.
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37. *Mewat Ka Safar*, *op. cit.* p. 15.
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