CHAPTER - VI

CUSTOMS, RITES AND CEREMONIES

To live in society, every human being follows customs, rites, rituals and ceremonies. These are formal, ceremonial act or procedure prescribed in religious or other solemn use which has the force of law. The term custom has been used to refer to the whole body of those shared behaviour patterns in a particular group or society that are regarded as the traditional and established ways of the people. Customs are more than mere aggregate of individual habits, a custom is a way tacitly supported by social approval. In other words, the actual enduring regularities in social behaviour accepted by and approved by most members of a group or society, may be called customs.\(^1\) Customs influence the way people dress, eat and in general behave, they may take on the force of moral on statute laws.\(^2\) However the term rites are used for a social custom or ceremony generally associated with passage from one important stage to another in someone’s life like birth, initiations, marriage and death.\(^3\) To comprehend the society at a particular point of time it is always essential to know its customs, rites and ceremonies since these plays an important role in the lives of the people. These are the core features of a society. Society even judged the respectability of a person by the account of care and attention he gives to fulfillment of these social and religious norms. These may vary on the basis of caste, community, region and religion.

The most conspicuous events of domestic life are naturally the various stages of growth in the life of a person, namely birth, nuptial and death. A number of customs are associated and elaborated around these occasions. Birth is significant occasion for the family. From the day of marriage cohabitation, the wives are expected to bear children. A childless person is looked upon as having no social status. Everyone loved to have sons and considered it as a misfortune to have daughters.


The birth of a son is essential to perpetuate the family. Because according to Hindu religion only the male issue is competent to perform funeral rites and without which no ordinary soul can hope to go to heaven. The Sanskrit word *putra* also meaning “he who delivers one, from hell”. With the religious incentive for begetting sons, there is a material disadvantage in having daughters because one is expected to provide a dowry for one’s daughters usually more than, what one can afford, so as to get them respectably married into a family of social standing. Like other patrimonial societies, the birth of a daughter was considered as inauspicious and went without any celebration in Punjabi society also. The birth of a male child was seen as a blessing and celebrated with great rejoicings. Number of ceremonies were associated with his birth in the family. According to Sikh *rahat* when a Sikh woman became pregnant, she was expected to recite *japji sahib* and administered *khande da pahul*. A sword, bow and five arrows were placed in a niche in the wall or in some elevated place. Among the Hindus, ceremonies started even before the birth of a child. When the mother is expecting, she was served gifts (*reetain*) amid rejoicing among relations and neighbours. Usually delivery was affected on the ground, the mother being made to lie on a quilt with her head to the north and her feet to the south. Among the Muslims her body direction was made to face Macca and if she died during child-birth she expires in the posture in which Muslims were buried. The birth of the child was announced by *dai* (midwife) to the members of the family. To prevent mischief to the mother or the child, a number of precautions were taken an iron bangle, fire pot, water and grain were placed near the cot of the mother. The senior most members in the family, usually the father-in-law or the father, consult the priest if the time of the birth is auspicious. As soon as when a son was born in *amritdhari* Sikh family, his forehead was touched on the floor in front of sword (*Sri Sahib*), weapons and Guru Granth Shaib. Shortly after the birth, the new born was made to taste his first liquid food (*gurhati*) which was generally

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administered by some elder member of the family. Amritdari Sikhs before giving gurhati, touched it with two-edged sword.\textsuperscript{10} Chuchi dhuai (washing of nipple) ceremony is generally performed by the unmarried sister-in-law of the mother. She washed her nipples with warm water and received some gifts and the kinswomen present on the spot, sung ceremonial songs. The breast feeding started only after this ceremony.\textsuperscript{11} Panjiri made of wheat flour, ghee, sugar and dry fruits were given to the mother on the tenth day and in case the child is a boy, it is distributed among the brotherhood.

After childbirth, a woman was considered impure and remains confined to the house for first ten days or more as the period is called sutak. The period of confinement lasted for forty days and the mother would neither use henna, nor wore new clothes. Its duration was, in theory, ten days among Brahmans, twelve among Khatris, fifteen among Vaisyas and thirty among Sudra, thus varying inversely with the purity of the caste. But in practice it was eleven days among Brahmans and thirteen days among Khatris or only eleven or thirteen days for all castes.\textsuperscript{12} On the thirteenth day the females of the household started the rites of purification by smearing the walls and the floors of house with the mixture of mud and cowdung. After the purification the mother bathed and allowed to come out with baby. Nain or barber’s wife sprinkled the mustard oil on the threshold. Women from the families of the relatives and friends came to offer congratulations and gave money to child in the form of shagan (gift).

Among the Hindus and Sikhs, Brahman or pandit was called to record the hour and other details about the child with a view to cast a horoscope (janampatri). In case, the Brahman forgot to record the precise moment of birth, he carefully, scrutinized the body marks of the child to infer the particular stellar conjunction

\textsuperscript{10} W.H. Mcleod, \textit{Prem Sumarag}, 29.
(lagan) under which the child was born. The Muslims called a mulla who whispered the call subah ki azan in the right ear of the infant and the takbir in its left. As a mark of festivity, Hindus and Sikhs usually hung a cord made of grass (durba) interwoven with mango leaves over the main door of the house.

Upon learning a son’s birth, numerous categories of well wishers, family priests, menials (lagis), bards (dums or bhats), buffoons, dancers and beggars would come to the house with their congratulations. All rich and poor celebrated this occasion accordingly to their status. Maharaja Ranjit Singh for example ordered to distribute large sums of money among the poor and the orphans, on the birth of Kanwar Kharak Singh. Similarly in 1821, on the birth of his grandson, Nau Nihal Singh, the Maharaja ordered to mian Dhian Chand, Jamadar Khushal Singh and Sukh Dyal to distribute gold coins in the town.

The ceremony of chhathi or the sixth day was performed by both Hindus and Sikhs. In Amritsar, Brahmans or Khatris did not perform this ceremony but only Arora caste observed it. The chhathi in spite of its name was not necessarily held on the sixth day of the birth. This ceremony was also known as dhaman. The purohit conducted this ceremony. Various dishes and foods were prepared which were, however, distributed among the kinsmen and poor. In Sialkot, dhaman was also observed by the Muslims and sweetmeat (halwa) and cakes (chapptis) were distributed in the city.
distributed among the brotherhood. In Lahore, among the Muslims mother and child were bathed on the first Thursday or Sunday and this was called chathi ka gusal and food called sutak ka khana was sent to all the women of the family. The religious observance of the aqiqa among the Muslims was closely associated with the chhathi of the Hindus. The aqiqa was an orthodox Mohammedan rite consisting in shaving the child’s head for the first time, on the seventh, fourteenth, twenty-eighth or thirty-fifth day after the birth, and sacrificed two goats or sheep for a boy and one for a girl. Among the Hindus and the Sikhs, it was customary, after bathing the child, to put on a old shirt of another child made of any article.

In Punjab, the first confinement ordinarily took place at paternal home of the mother and in this case the mother, if the child was a boy, brought some gold and silver ornaments and clothes for her in-laws. These gifts were called chhuchhak. The chhuchhak was also observed on the chhathi but sometimes it was postponed for some days.

Among the Hindus, taragi was also worn by a male child round his waist. It was made of thread, stones and beads. If parents were wealthy beads of silver were also strung. Taragi was worn as a preliminary to the wearing of sacred thread (janeo). The naming ceremony of the child was usually performed on the tenth to twelfth day. The Hindus called a learned Brahman or pandit who suggests a few alphabets with reference to the infant’s time of birth and one of these was chosen by the parents. The Sikhs consulted Guru Granth Sahib for this purpose. The granthi or priest opened Guru Granth Sahib randomly and the first letter of the first passage

H.A. Rose, Rites and Ceremonies of Hindus and Muslims, 57.
H.A. Rose, Rites and Ceremonies of Hindus and Muslims, 57.
P.N. Chopra, Life and Letters Under the Mughals, 174; M.A. Ansari, Social Life Under the Mughal Emperors, 177.
H.A. Rose, Rites and Ceremonies of Hindus and Muslims, 30-31; Chopra, Life and Letters Under the Mughals, 174.
H.A. Rose, Rites and Ceremonies of Hindus and Muslims, 52.
Agra Sethi, Var Haqiqat Rai (ed. Ganda Singh), 16; H.A. Rose, Rites and Ceremonies of Hindus and Muslims, 33.
Kahu ji sadhe Pandat, jyotic dekh Haqiqat nau dharya. Pandit was called and on the basis of astrological ground Haqiqat name was selected. Agra Sethi, Var Haqiqat Rai (ed. Ganda Singh), 16; Henry Court, History of the Sikhs, 103; Gazetteer of Amritsar District, 1883-1884, 27.
on the left page is taken as the first letter of the child's name. Among the Muslims naming ceremony was called *fal-quran*, which was usually performed on the day of infant’s birth. They consulted *mulla* or *maulavi* who used Quran for this purpose. A name was given to the child which began with the first letter appearing right hand page when Quran was opened at random.

The first tonsure of the male child among the Hindus was an important ceremony. The hair cutting or *mundan* was celebrated not earlier than the age of three. If the mother (or any other family member) had made a vow prior to the birth of her child to observe the rite at a certain shrine or temple, it was duly carried out there otherwise it might be done at home or as it was the custom with the family. An auspicious hour would be fixed by a Brahman or the rite would be performed on the marriage of a near kinsmen.

*Upanayana* (initation) or *janeo* (sacred thread) ceremony was observed by the Hindus when the male child was between the age of seven to ten. This ceremony was conducted by a Brahman. A cord of cotton was made into three strings to be tied round the waist of the boy after reciting certain prayers over it. The sacred thread, consisting of three threads, each composed of three finer threads intertwined into one and cost about four *damris* (a small fraction of *paisa*) was then hung on the left shoulder of the boy, the ends tied round the right arm. The three threads represent the Trinity, the Hindu Gods, Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh and the white colour signifies purity. The sacred thread was the distinguishing mark of the twice born. It was the symbol of regeneration.

Being thus invested with the sacred thread, the Hindu boy began his studies. An auspicious day fixed after consultation with an astrologer, the boy’s parents would invite the school teacher. Usually the father presented rupees and sweets as a
gift to the teacher. Muslims performed *maktab* or *bismillah* (initiation) ceremony when the boy was four years, four months and four days old. The teacher wrote down some letters of alphabet on a leaf perfumed with incense and sprinkled over with cucumber root. It was taken round to be touched and blessed by the parents. Then the boy repeated these letters after the teacher and made obeisance before the Gods and sweetmeats were distributed.

Muslims performed ceremony of circumcision or *sunnat* when the boy was six or seven years old. The barber performed *sunnat* and the child was usually given a little opium or other opiate. This occasion was celebrated with great rejoicings according to the status and means of a family.

Marriage or *vivaha* constituted the most engrossing event of the life. For the several reasons marriage as an institution was held in high esteem by the society. It was considered as a sacrament union. The institution of marriage is a mechanism through which woman’s sexuality can be controlled and her procreative capabilities can be channelised. For a Hindu, marriage was obligatory for begetting a son (heir), for discharging his debt to his ancestors and performing religious and spiritual duties. Wife was not merely a *grihapati* but also *dharmpatni* and *sahadharmin*. According to Sikhism, a superior and natural way of life had been married life (*grishstha*). Guru Amar Das gave importance to marriage as “bride and groom are not they who pose as one whole, bride and groom are they who are two bodies with

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34 *Sattan barsa da hoya dharmi, mulla de parhne payaya, rok rupiya te gur di reori, mullah de liyaya.* At the age of seven, Haqiqat Rai came to *mullah* (priest) for studies. For him, he brought some money and *reori* (sweet of small ball of solidified sugar covered with sesame). Agra Sethi, *Far Haqiqat Rai* (ed. Ganda Singh), 17.
one soul”. In fact, Sikhism upheld the householder’s life as an important adjunct to the spiritual life. Celibacy in Islam was condemned by the Prophet. Married life and family was considered honourable, natural and ideal way of life. Being an important social ceremony it offered an occasion for feasts, gatherings and rejoicings.

The ceremonial aspect of the marriage and rituals associated with it are detailed one. Betrothal or saggai, kurmai was the first step in the preparations for the marriage which generally take place at an early age. It marked the confirmation of the desired alliance. Number of people were participating in marry making. For the preliminary negotiation people depended on the intermediaries called bichola or lagi. The professional intermediaries like priests (Brahmans), barbars (nais) and the bards (dums or bhats) played a significant role in making the marriage proposals. Usually they were the first to broach the subject. Often the first proposal amongst the Hindus was made by the girl’s parents. But it was not necessary because sometimes, boy’s parents too could approach to girl’s parents. Among the Muslims it was generally started from the boy’s side. Before the commencement of the betrothal ceremonies the father of the boy and that of the girl came to an understanding by means of letters or through their lagis, relations or friends. The initiative in the matter of ceremonies was made by the girl’s father who sent their lagi or bichola with some money, clothes, ornaments, coconut, dried dates (chhuaras), rice and sugar called shagan for the bridegroom elect. Contrary to the

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40 P.N. Chopra, Life and Letters Under the Mughals, 175.
Hindu *lagis*, a number of Muslim women with few men visited girl’s house to perform the betrothal rites.\(^{45}\)

On the arrival of the *lagi*, a little oil was dropped at the door. This ceremony was called *tel chona*. With all the kinsmen assembled, the boy was seated in front of the *lagi* who put some sugar, dried dates, sugarcoat (*patasas*) and a coin into his lap. Sweets were distributed among all those present. This occasion was celebrated with rejoicings and called *kurmai* or *mangni.*\(^ {46}\) The parents of the boy could send some gifts to the girl in confirmation of betrothal.\(^ {47}\) The success of the relation depended on how the *lagis* behaved, it was customary among the parents to satisfy them with gifts and sometimes with ornaments.

After the *shagan* among the Hindus and Sikhs, a date for marriage (*lagan*) was fixed with reference to the convenience of the parties and the result of the examination of the horoscopes of the boy and the girl by a Brahman. It was equally important for both the parties to consult a Brahman or astrologer who calculate suitable date (*tithi*), propitious moment (*mahurat*) and day (*var*) for the marriage. This practice was called *saha sudhauna* or *gandh pauna.*\(^ {48}\) Theoretically Sikh marriage ceremony might be held on the fifth day of the light half of a month.\(^ {49}\) Among the Muslims it was called *gandh niqah* (fixation of date or day for wedding).\(^ {50}\) The girl was prevented from going outside the house after the *gandh* ceremony.

An intimation of the date was sent by the girl’s father to the father of the boy by *saha di chithi* or *pili chithi* which was written by the Brahman with saffron and had some saffron sprinkled over it. It was delivered to the father of the boy by the


\(^{47}\) Ibid; *Gazetteer of Sialkot District, 1883-84*, 35.


\(^{50}\) In the observance of this rite a piece of cloth or a string was knotted as many times as there were days remaining till the wedding day. A knot was untied everyday by the parents. A similar knot was circulated among the relatives through the barbers. It was called *gandh pherna*.
Brahman or nai not less than eleven and not more than twenty one days before the actual date of the wedding.\textsuperscript{51}

The most favourable season for marriage was the Spring, but the following months also possessed peculiar attributes: the month of magh (January-February) was said to bring a wealthy wife; phagun (February-March) a good manager; baisakh (April-May) and jeth (May-June) a dutiful helpmate; while marriage in asarh (June-July) were reputed to be very prolific. Marriages were not celebrated in the rainy season or barsatan (chaumasa) because the Gods were supposed to sleep and could not be invoked to bestow blessings on the happy couple and also doubtless because in this season the marriage parties could not travel about the country except at great inconvenience and discomfort. The lunar days in general and full moon days in particular, were considered auspicious for the marriage ceremony.\textsuperscript{52}

As soon as the actual date of the marriage drew near rich foods and varieties of sweetmeats were prepared called bhaji especially for the wedding. The halvais (confectioners) came with their enormous vessels and lit big fire to made mounds of sweets for the wedding feast according to means of the family for distribution.\textsuperscript{53} Different kinds of sweetmeats like shakarpare, jalabi, bundi, laddoo etc. were prepared.\textsuperscript{54} Ram Sukh Rao provided interesting details regarding to the confectioners who prepared sweetmeats in the wedding of Kanwar Nihal Singh. For example, the confectioners from Amritsar and other places had been invited to prepare sweetmeats at Kapurthala a month before the occasion. The bridegroom’s father also made arrangements for preparation of sweetmeats simultaneously at Phagwara where the marriage party was to be received.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{51} A.H. Bingley, History Caste and Culture of Jats and Gujjars, 76; H.A. Rose, Rites and Ceremonies of Hindus and Muslims, 84.
\textsuperscript{52} A.H. Bingley, History Caste and Culture of Jats and Gujjars, 76; Barjinder Kaur, The Jats in the Punjab During Nineteenth Century, Unpublished M.Phil Dissertation, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 1985, 36.
\textsuperscript{53} Parkash Tandon, Punjabi Century, 130.
\textsuperscript{54} “Lage nugdia talan te shakarpame, dhair lavande n evade ghevra de, tale khub jalab gulbhisat bundi, ladhu tikkia bhinre mewara de”. Different kinds of sweetmeats were prepared in large quantity on the marriage occasion. Waris Shah, Heer Waris (ed. J.S. Sital), 73.
\textsuperscript{55} Ram Sukh Rao, Sri Fateh Singh Partap Prabhakar (ed. Joginder Kaur), 58.
Invitations were sent out through the *lagi* with *bhaji* to relatives and friends. Invitations were given according to their status and number of the relatives. On the wedding of Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh, Maharaja Ranjit Singh invited Governor General, the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Henry Fane, Sir Charles Metcalfe, Governor of Agra, rulers of Patiala, Faridkot, Nabha, Jind, Malerkotla, Naraingarh and chiefs of Mandi and Suket.\(^{56}\)

A fortnight before the wedding both in the houses of the bride and the bridegroom, women and girls used to gather in the large courtyard to sing wedding songs. The songs were traditional, handed down the generations and were known as *suhag* to wish girl and *ghorian* to wish boy.\(^{57}\) According to the Sikh *rahatmaryada* when only five days remained before the marriage the bride’s diet should be *dal* and rice with *ghee*. She should not eat bread (*roti*). She should be clothed in red garments.\(^{58}\) There were series of ceremonies to be performed during the last two days. *Watna* was anointed to the bodies of the bride and groom respectively. This ceremony was called *maian pauna* and *tel charhauna*. After *maian pauna*, boy was banned from going outside the house.\(^{59}\) In the marriage of Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh, Maharaja Ranjit Singh applied *watna* on his face with his own hands. Sister-in-law of the Maharaja took the pleasure of rubbing the *watna* and the oil on the beard of the Maharaja and received 500 rupees, but in lieu of 500 rupees she desired for a *jagir* and the Maharaja immediately issued a letter for the grant of a *jagir*.\(^{60}\) After the *watna*, the ceremony of *tel charhauna* took place. The Maharaja threw 500 rupees, some sovereigns and gold ducats into the oil, whereupon, all chieftains and Jawand Singh Mokal put 100 rupees each therein. Kanwar Kharak Singh, Raja Kalan, Raja Hira Singh, Jamadar Khushal Singh, Sardar Attar Singh Sandhanwalia, *mian* Udham and other chieftains came forward and performed the ceremony of the oil.\(^{61}\)

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\(^{57}\) Parkash Tandon, *Punjabi Century*, 130.


Customs, Rites and Ceremonies

Among the Muslims, nikasi rite was observed a day or two before the wedding. In this rite the boy, dressed in his new clothes, with the kangana on his wrist and a chaplet of flowers tied round his head, was mounted on a mare and taken to a mosque, where prayers were performed by him and the congregation. On his return he went round the whole town and taken to some other house until the wedding party set out at night.\(^{62}\)

On the actual day of marriage, bathing ceremony (nawai dhuwai) of the bridegroom and bride was performed. The bridegroom was made seated on a stool called khara (pathra) during these ceremonies and a sheet of red cloth (phulkari) was held over him and the women of his biradari sang the songs. He was bathed by the lagis and wrapped in red cloth. While leaving the khara he broke five chapnis (covers of earthen vessels), previously placed near it, by jumping on them from the khara. This ritual was called chappan bhannana signified good omen for married couple.\(^{63}\) The water carrier (jhiwar) who supplied water and the barber who assisted in the bathing were given their lags.\(^{64}\)

In the bride’s house, the girls brought water from the village well to perform the bathing ceremony, called ghari gharoli.\(^{65}\) After this the girls smeared bride’s hands and feet with henna (mehndi). She wore chura (red and white bangles) and nath (nose ring), usually given by her maternal uncle which was a symbol of her married status and nath among Hindus was considered auspicious for her husband’s longevity.\(^{66}\) After adorning these ornaments, multi coloured thread called gana or kangana was tied round her wrist and she was told by her girl friends who were now in constant attendance to tie gana really tight because it would have to be opened by her husband when he took her home. Gana was also tied to the bridegroom.\(^{67}\) During this period the women folk of both families assembled and sang. These marriage

\(^{62}\) H.A. Rose, Rites and Ceremonies of Hindus and Muslims, 106.
\(^{63}\) Agra Sethi, Var Haqiqat Rai (ed.Ganda Singh), 20; H.A. Rose, Rites and Ceremonies of Hindus and Muslims, 85.
\(^{64}\) Denzil Ibbetson, Punjab Castes, 306; H.A. Rose, Rites and Ceremonies of Hindus and Muslims, 85.
\(^{65}\) Bhari ghari gharoli te kuri naati. The pitcher was filled with water and girl bathes. Waris Shah, Heer Waris (ed. J.S. Sital), 76.
\(^{67}\) Parkash Tandon, Punjabi Century, 131; H.A. Rose, Rites and Ceremonies, 85.
songs were repositories of great information and expression of love and affection shared by the family members.

On the day of wedding, the bridegroom attired a gorgeous dress with a sehra or chaplet. Among the Hindus and Sikhs, a muket was crowned over turban. The chaplet was made of mica and tinsel paper and faced with fringe of gold threads as a screen from the evil eye. This ceremony was called sehra bandi. Sikh rahatnama, ‘Prem Sumarag’ has given description of marriage dress of a Sikh, ‘a Sikh should don white clothing, the shirt should open at front and the trousers may be whatever kind. Over them he should put on cotton stockings and underneath he should wear short breeches. Every garment should be white. Finally he should put on a sword-belt. He may wear a jewel bracelet, a jewel turban ornament and a necklace of silver coins. His head-dress should be a golden sehra with strings of genuine pearls thus suspended over his face. Put a garland of flowers around his neck and another on his head. Sprinkle saffron on his clothing.’ On this occasion the assembled relatives pronounced blessings on the bridegroom by bestowing gifts in cash. It was called tambol. Large sums in cash were given as tambol among the rich. Sohan Lal Suri gives a detailed description of tambol ceremony of Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh as follows:

“Granthis of Darbar Sahib rupees 125, bhai Piara Singh rupees 100, _ _ _ _ bhai Ram Singh and Gobind Ram rupees 1,500, bhai Gurmukh Singh rupees 1,500; the British Commander-in-chief rupees 15,000; Raja Jaswant Singh of Nabha rupees 15,000, _ _ _ _ Sarkar (queen) Nakain rupees 15, 000; Glorious Prince rupees 21,000; Sardar Nihal Singh Ahluwalia rupees 11,000, Raja Ajit Singh Sandhanwalia rupees 5,000; Gul Begum rupees 500 each of the four Sarkars (queens) connected with the throne rupees 800, Sarkar Katochan rupees 500; _ _ _ _ Raja Gulab Singh rupees 51,000; Jamadar Khushal Singh rupees 28,000; Sandhawalia rupees 21,000;

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69 W.H. Meleod, Prem Sumarag, 35.
After the tambol or neudra ceremony, the bridegroom was mounted on a mare while his younger brother or a relative (sarbala) sat behind him. The occasion of wedding procession was called janj charhni. The bridegroom usually rode on the mare, the elephant and sometimes on chariot. Just at the same time bhabi (brother’s wife) put surma (antimony) into bridegroom’s eyes and his sisters held the reins of his mare. By doing so they received money from the bridegroom as a token of surma pavai and vag pharai. On completion of these ceremonies, the wedding party (barat) accompanied by a band left for the place appointed for their reception by the bride’s father. It is customary for the party to visit a religious place on the way and there they made their humble prostration before reaching bride’s place.

On the occasion of Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh’s marriage the wedding party visited Harmandir Sahib and offered their prayers as ardas. Number of baratis probably depended on the status of the family. In 1812, on the wedding of Kanwar Kharak Singh, Maharaja Ranjit Singh ordered the march of his royal standards from Lahore to Amritsar and all the triumphant troops and glorious chieftains and special ghorcharas received orders from the Maharaja to present themselves in fine and rich clothes for marriage procession. Sohan Lal Suri, described marriage procession of Kanwar Kharak Singh as follow:

71 Suri, Umdat, Daftar III, 441-442.
72 H.A. Rose, Rites and Ceremonies of Hindus and Muslims, 86, 110.
74 Kahun ji bhain bhanji waag phari, kahun mohran de panj divaye. Sister and niece, seized the strings of the mare of the bridegroom (Haqiqat Rai) and received five mohars. Agra Sethi, Var Haqiqat Rai (ed.Ganda Singh), 21; Parkash Tandon, Punjabi Century, 135.
75 Maharaja Ranjit Singh made an ardas of Rs. 1,100 at Harmandir Sahib in addition to his usual ardas at Akal Bunga, Jhanda Bunga, Shahid Bunga, Gharyali Bunga, Dukh Bhanjani and Baba Atal. Suri, Umdat, Daftar III (I-III), 443.
76 Suri, Umdat, Daftar II, 114.
"The Maharaja rode from the fort of Gobindgarh and reached the fort of Bhangis. Fireworks of all kinds were displayed. A moving throne and “shalabagh” which were adorned and decorated with various kinds of flowers were carried over the shoulders of about 100 men up to neighbourhood of the garden of Tara Singh, where they were placed. After this glorious tents and well equipped canopies and shamianas were sent towards Fatehgarh, and the glorious prince was made to sit upon an elephant and that light of the garden of kindness, that women accustomed to observe veil behind the screen of chastity, the mother of the prince was made to sit in a chariot that was set with jewellery and had a crown over it. Thus they were made to proceed to Fatehgarh, twenty nine elephants went with the procession. On the first elephant rode Fakir Raza and Devi Dass, on the second bhaya Ram Singh, on the third Ilahi Bakhsh darogha of artillery along with topchi. On the fourth Jamadar Khushal Singh, on the fifth Dewan Bhawani Dass, on the sixth and the rest of glorious chieftains and Rajas of the mountainous regions and all the special nearest attendants of the Maharaja rode side by side with him. As soon as they reached near Fatehgarh, a firing of guns with great éclat took place'.

Kanhiya Lal estimated, five lakhs guests gathered in the marriage of Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh. Probably he wished to state that it was a big wedding procession.

The arrival of the wedding party in bride’s village or town was termed as *janj dhukni*. Money was thrown over the bridegroom’s head to be picked up by beggars and needy. The wedding party was welcomed by the bride’s father, being conducted to a suitable place for its stay. Sham Singh Attariwala, father-in-law of Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh, greeted the marriage procession with a discharge of *topkhana*. He came on foot to receive the Maharaja and led him to his own *haveli*.

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77 Ibid, Daftar II, 117.
and offered 11 horses and 101 gold ducats to the Maharaja, 251 ducats each to Kanwar Kharak Singh, Nau Nihal Singh, Sher Singh, Raja Kalan and Jamadar Khushal Singh and gave something to the other chieftains, according to their rank and position.\(^{80}\)

While the *barat* was still away from the residence of the bride, some rites were performed. Among the Hindus, bridegroom’s father sent sweetmeats and some gifts including a *dhoti* (cloth to be wrapped round the waist) for the bride’s use. This rite was known as *kuar-dhoti-da-shagan*.\(^{81}\) At the twilight, the wedding party moved to the bride’s house. The occasion was celebrated with music, dance and fireworks. The bride’s father, brothers and kinsmen stood and waited outside the house. Then the meeting ceremony was held called *milni*. The bridegroom’s father embraced the bride’s father and latter made some presents or money according to his means. The maternal uncle of the boy and that of the girl then embraced each other in the same way. *Lagis* assisted them in exchange of gifts. Their respective bards, *bhats* and *dums* recited their genealogies. They received their usual dues at time.\(^{82}\) The procession then proceeded to the place set apart for them and the bridegroom was sent to the women’s apartments where some rituals were performed and practical jokes played with the groom. The sisters and friends of the bride passed a lot of filthy and embarrassing remarks against the bridegroom. As indicated by Waris Shah, at such time quite embarrassing and suggestive remarks were made for the bridegroom somewhat familiar and little free with each other. The groom was supposed to utter some rough verse called *chhand bandi* or *bhasha*.\(^{83}\) At this time some rituals were also performed. The earthen lamp (*diva*) was placed in a sieve (*chhanani*) which was hung in the middle of the doorway. In order to test his marksmanship, the groom was required to remove the *diva* out of *chhanani* with his

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\(^{81}\) Ghio maid te chawal bakre bheje bahut masale, kuar dhoti da shagan kit one, lai gaye haloofe wale. Father of bride sent rice, flour, ghi, he goats and spices to bridegroom. They performed rite of *kuar dhoti da shagan* and money was taken by the *lagis*. Agra Sethi, *Var Haqiqat Rai* (ed.Ganda Singh), 21; Daljinder Singh Johal, *Society and Culture as Reflected in Punjabi Literature*, Ph.D Thesis, 283-84.


Customs, Rites and Ceremonies

sword. This was called *chhanani jorna*. The bride escorted by her friends was made to pass under the mare of the groom. A finger ring was obtained from the groom by the girls and was put into the bride’s finger.

The actual wedding that is *niqah* among the Muslims and *lavan phere* according to Vedic rituals among the Hindus and Sikhs was conducted on the first night after the arrival of the bridegroom’s party. The *phera* ceremony took place before sunrise in the courtyard of the girl’s house under an awning consisting of four posts driven into the ground with a red cloth spread over them was called *mandapa* or *vedi*. The banana plants were put as pillars and a top covering was made of twigs and mango foliage. Inside the pavilion were placed two new square reed baskets upside to serve as stools. The marriage ceremony commenced with the worship of Lord Ganesh and was performed in accordance with the Vedic rites. The boy appeared first and was made to sit on the northern stool with a piece of wood of the *ber* tree under his feet. Then the father of the bride welcomes the bridegroom in the prescribed form by offering water to wash his feet and by the well known oblation called the *arghya*. The bride then appeared in red *lahanga* or gown, rich and beautiful, for red was a bride’s colour in the Punjab. She was bedecked with gold jewellery from head to feet, one special piece for each part of the body. The bride was also seated over southern stool (*chaunki*). The priest prepared a square place on the ground over which flour was spread. Many divisions were marked in the square with the name of planets inserted in them to obtain favourable omens. It was called *chaunk purna*.

The priest performed the ritual by reading sacred verses from the *vedas*, called *lavan-parna*. The bridegroom preceded the bride as they walk around the pit,
keeping it on their right side. The girl’s father performed a ceremony signifying the formal gift of his daughter to the bridegroom known kanyadan. It was also called hathlewa. The couple had the hems of their garments knotted together by the women to signify their perpetual and inseparable union, this being the ceremony of gandh chitrna. At the end of these came the final ceremony of the seven steps (lavan) in circumambulation among Hindus and four steps among Sikhs round the sacred fire. Fire was to be lighted as a witness to the wedlock. The prohit chanted mantras and the womenfolk sang wedding songs while the couple and bride’s nearest relations were helping them in completing their rounds. The bridegroom preceded the bride as they walk around the vedi, keeping it on their right. Their walking around the holy fire was called phera-laina. Kanwar Nau Nihal’s wedding was also performed in accordance with vedic rites. According to rahatmariyada, granthi or priest performed Sikh marriage ceremony. After the four rounds, khande da pahul was administered to the couple. Five pauris of anand was sung and then karha prashad was distributed. The phera ceremony was essential for the completion of the marriage because when they walked around the sacred fire seven times they took their seven wedding vows. The final and eventful step made them husband and wife before God.

At the time when the nuptial rites were being performed, the mother of the bridegroom in her own house, in company of her female relatives, put her feet in water mixed with milk and asked the old women to give her son and daughter-in-law their blessing that as the milk mingled with the water so they might ever live in loving kindness with each other. This rite was called lassi pair.

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91 Gazetteer of Lahore District, 1883-1884, 51; Ramesh C. and Urmila Dogra, Hindustan Sikh Wedding Ceremonies with Salient Features of Hindu and Sikh Rituals, 19, 144.
93 Gazetteer of Lahore District, 1883-1884, 51; Parkash Tondon, Punjabi Century, 139.
94 Pare likhe purohita, aag machaun wale, singh de name purbak Hindua di pustak to kahani parke aag de duale parkarma karwai. Kanhiya Lal, Tariikh-i-Punjab (ed. Jit Singh Sital), 231.
95 W.H. Mcleod, Sikhs of the Khalsa, 105.
96 Gazetteer of Lahore District, 1883-1884, 51; Henry Court, History of the Sikhs, 102; Parkash Tandon, Punjabi Century, 141.
97 H.A. Rose, Rites and Ceremonies of Hindus and Muslims, 88.
Among the Muslims, the qazi or the learned mullah was called upon at the time of niqah and made to sit on a carpet spread over the ground amidst the assembly of other males. Two responsible persons were chosen as witnesses (gawah) and one as agent (vakil). The qazi invoked the blessings of the God and recited the kalma five times along with the sifat-i-imam. After defining the rules of the shariat he sought the formal consent of the boy and the girl through vakil and the gawahs. In theory, mutual consent of the marriage partners to marriage was the most important but the will of the parents reigned supreme in reality. The qazi made the girl to recite the kalma and asked her whether she consented to become the wife of so and so. She replied in the affirmative or else an affirmative reply was presumed from her silence, and then they came out and announced it, and the boy consented himself three times by saying qabul hai, and in this way the ceremony was completed.

After the marriage ceremony, the marriage party was entertained with various sweetmeats. For entertainment of baratis dancers, acrobats and bards were invited. The wedding festivities lasted for any number of days according to the means of the bride’s people and according to their mutual arrangements. The minimum stay for the bridegroom’s party was fixed for a day and maximum for ten days.

On the eve of departure of the bridegroom’s party, vari was displayed by the boy’s father. Vari or vara sui consisted of clothes, ornaments and dry fruits was sent to the bride. The girl’s parents kept some of these articles for immediate use and the

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98 Qazi sadya paran niqah nu’. The qazi was called for performing niqah. Waris Shah, Heer Waris (ed. Jit Singh Sital), 77-78; Barjinder Kaur, Jats in the Punjab, 36.
100 Bhant-bhant de bani mathayi khawan mitr piarey, bedana bundi te jalebi, bari, shakpare, laddu, kutabkhanian, ghariyan aur chuharey, Agra gheo kacchorian, madey de bhalle. Agra Sethi, Var Haqiqat Rai (ed. Ganda Singh), 22; Henry Court, History of the Sikhs, 102.
102 Trai raatin janj rahi uthnii khiijmat bahut kito ne, Haqiqat Rai’s barat was stayed for’ three days and well entertained by bride’s parents. Agra Sethi, Var Haqiqat Rai (ed. Ganda Singh), 22; A.H. Bingley, History Caste and Culture of Jats and Gujjars, 78; K.M. Ashraf, Life and Condition of the People of Hindustan, 182.
rest were sent back. At the end, the bride’s father presented the dowry (khat). It was displayed in the courtyard on the beds (charpoys). The bride’s friends and relatives came to look at the daj. The elder women examined it with critical eyes. In fact dowry was a symbol of family’s social and financial status. A poor might spend his life’s earning on his daughter’s dowry. The dowry included clothes, kitchen utensils, jewels, household material, animals and sometimes cash. The description of dowry of Grand daughter-in-law of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was given by Sohan Lal Suri in detailed. Her dowry consisting of suits of clothes which made ‘tewar’ and ‘bewar’, four suits of clothes made of gold, 101 camels, horses, cows, buffaloes and sheep, six elephants, many pieces of ornaments and utensils made of gold and silver and rupees 11,000 in cash.

The departure of the bride, called vidai, marked a symbolic separation between the daughter and parents. On the departure of the bridegroom and bride there was a ceremony in which the bridegroom and his friends had to fight their way to bribe and in another ceremony the bridegroom had to bribe the maidens to restore a stolen article or to let him pass the gates with his bride. The bride was seated in the doli (palanquin), covered with a red cloth with white trimmings placed near the front door. On her departure from her parents’ house, some of the touching songs were sung by the womenfolk and there was much shedding of tears.

When the bridal party returned home, on their arrival in the town or the village, the procession moved slowly through the bazaar with great splendour. The boy mounted on a mare proceeds first and the girl was borne after him in doli. When the couple reached at the home, sisters and relatives of the boy receive them with due honour. They sing certain songs signified their arrival. The mother of the boy waved a gharwa or utensil full of water seven times over their head and drank it.

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This was called *pani-varna*,\(^{110}\) which mean that she, with pleasure and for her son’s love, took on herself every misfortune that may in future time befall on either of them. Some mustard oil was poured on the threshold and the couple entered the house. *Khichari* (mixture of rice and pluse) or *churi* (bread mixed with butter and sugar) were put into the bride’s mouth seven times. Then the younger brother of the bridegroom (*dewar*) was seated in the bride’s lap as a sign that she should have sons.\(^{111}\) She then presented *nazars* to the elder relatives of her husband, and in return got presents and clothes from them.\(^{112}\)

Another ritual *til-khela* was also performed by the senior relatives of the boy. The ritual signified that they wish the bride to bear male children as numerous as the sesamum seeds which fall on the ground. They gave a handful of seeds to the bride which she returns at once.\(^{113}\) The bridegroom was asked to hand over his purse containing money to his wife. She was at liberty to take any amount out of it to be spent at her pleasure. This signified that the husband entrusted to the care of his wife all his worldly goods. She then promised that she would spend nothing without his knowledge. To convert the bride into her husband’s *got* all the women of the family, including the girl, ate rice and sweetmeats together from same dish. It was called *got kulana* or *got kumala*.\(^{114}\)

After a day, the ceremony of untying the wrist thread or *gana* was conducted when bride and the bridegroom joined hands in untying the *ganas* of each other.\(^{115}\) A similar ceremony was called the game of *lassi mundari*. Some *lassi* (butter-milk) was put into *parat* (metal tray). Then a ring, one cowrie and one rupee were thrown into it. The couple was required to find the ring and pick it out. The occasion was enjoyed by the womenfolk. It was customary to make thanks offerings to their


\(^{112}\) H.A. Rose, *Rites and Ceremonies of Hindus and Muslims*, 90.

\(^{113}\) *Jitney dharti til girsi, utne vohti putt jenesi.* May the bride bear as many sons a sesamum seeds have fallen to the ground. H.A. Rose *Rites and Ceremonies of Hindus and Muslims*, 90.

\(^{114}\) Ibid.

family’s sacred places. The ceremony of muklawa or gaona was usually observed when the girl was too young for the consummation of marriage. The husband with some relatives after a period varied from 1 to 3 year from the date of marriage carried back his wife. His father-in-law on this occasion gave him some clothes and jewels.

Like the birth and marriage, death too had its own set of rites which were very scrupulously performed but unlike them, the occasion of death was characterized by demonstration of grief. When a person was about to die, some pre-death rituals were observed. Among the Hindus and the Sikhs when no signs of improvements were shown a space of ground near his charpoy (cot) or some other, was smeared with cow-dung and grass scattered over it. To die on a bed, was considered as a religious demerit or inauspicious. On the grass a sheet was spread and the dying person was laid on it, or on the ground with his feet to the east. This cot was laid in the courtyard where the dying person gave away the cows and other things in charity called gow-daan as was customary in the last moments. The dying person would pour a few drops of water into the Brahman’s hands symbolizing abstinence in life before death, called chuli-chhadna. An earthen lamp (diva) with a long wick (vatti), which was lit, placed near the dying person’s hand, supposedly to light his way to heaven. Ganga jal and leaves of tulsi were poured into his mouth and the priest began chanting mantars. It is believed that listening and recitation of verses

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118 At the last moments of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, he was made to lie straight upon a bed, which had been set right with all the requisites of the last day, like doshalas, tulsi leaves, gold ducats, linseed and so on, and lighting up a gold lamp, gave it away by way of samkalap along with other things. Suri, *Umdat*, Daftar III, 452 ; F.S. Waheeduddin, *The Real Ranjit Singh*, 202; Ram Sukh Rao, *Sri Fateh Singh Partap Prabhakar* (ed. Joginder Kaur), 53; W.H. Mcleod, *Prem Sumarag*, 72.
draw his attention to one direction and that if he died he would not suffer any
difficulty at the time of death.\footnote{Bhai Gobind Ram uttered the Words, “Ram Ram” in to the ear of Maharaja Ranjit Singh three times at the moment he was expiring and the Maharaja repeated them twice. Suri, *Umdat*, Daftar III (Pbi), 452; F.S. Waheeduddin, *The Real Ranjit Singh*, 203; Parkash Tondon, *Punjabi Century*, 148-149.}

Among the Muslims *imam zaman ka rupiya* and amulets were used to escape
death. Some goats were also sacrificed. Holy water or *sharbat* from the *zamzam* well
at Mecca was poured to facilitate exit of vital spark. The face of dying person was
usually turned towards *qibla* (direction of Mecca). *Sura-i-yasin* or other verses
relating to pardon for sins were read near him and he also recite them.\footnote{P.N. Chopra, *Life and Letters Under the Mughals*, 189; H.A. Rose, *Rites and Ceremonies of Hindus and Muslims*, 180.}

As soon as the shadow of the angel of death falls on a dying person, the first
duty of his (or her) kinsfolk was to give him a ceremonial bath. It was performed by
the male or female relatives in accordance with the sex of the deceased. For the bath
hot water with *ber* leaves bathed in it, soap and sweetened things such as rose water,
camphor, sandal etc. were required. The body was laid on a wooden board with its
sheet, only the washer man or woman and the nearest of kin remaining inside. The
clothes of the dead were given to the washer man or to a poor. The washer man gave
him a bath and used towel to dry it and the body was covered with a clean generally
unstitched cloth. In some cases scents were also sprinkled on the body to serve as
disinfectants.\footnote{Ibid., 141.} If the deceased was a man of high caste (Brahman or Khatri), the
*tilak* was applied to his forehead and *janeo* placed round his neck.\footnote{Ibid., 141.} Among Sikhs a
new pair of *kachh* (underwear) was worn on the body of the deceased and a sword
was placed on its right side.\footnote{W.H. Mcleod, *Prem Sumarag*, 73.} In 1839, on the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, his
body was put up on a wooden stool in a sitting posture, given bath with water
brought specially from Hardwar for the purpose. A turban was put up on his head
with a suit of clothes perfumed with saffron. The body of deceased Maharaja was

decorated with ornaments, such as a bejewelled plume, a bejewelled turban gem, a bejewelled hand chain, a pearl necklace, an armlet and a diamond ring.\textsuperscript{126}

Among the Muslims, while performing \textit{ghussal}, a shroud cut in two, was spread over the bed and the body was laid on one half and covered with the other down to the knees. Verses from the Quran were written on the shroud with burnt charcoal or clay. Camphor dissolved in rose water was painted on every joint. The lower sheet was then wrapped round the corpse and knotted at three places, on the head, on the waist and over the feet. A copy of Quran was placed at the head of the body and the nearest of kin, friends and others were shown the face of the deceased for the last time, accompanied with weeping. Sometimes the toes of the hands and feet were tied together with a piece of cloth which was called \textit{zanakh}. Similarly a piece of cloth was tied round the head across the chin to shut the mouth. This was called \textit{taht-ul-hanak}.\textsuperscript{127}

The body was invariably clothed, among Hindus, a man’s body being dressed in white and the woman whose husband was still living was decked in her finery, a new set of bangles being put on her wrist. Sandalwood paste, white clay, jasmine oil mixed with saffron, essence of roses etc. were used for her last toilet, in accordance with the deceased’s means.\textsuperscript{128}

The funeral procession called \textit{arthi, janaza} or \textit{mazal} started from home to cremation ground, usually situated near a river bank, was headed by the chief mourners. Hindus and Sikhs tied dead body to a stretcher of bamboos called \textit{takhta} or \textit{baban}. In the case of rich persons it would be made of costly sandalwood.\textsuperscript{129} The bier of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was constructed in the shape of a ship. It was wrought with gold, the sails and flags were made of the richest silk, embroidered with gold.

\textsuperscript{126} Suri, \textit{Umdat}, Daftar III (IV-V), 486; Kanhiya Lal, \textit{Tarikh-i-Punjab} (Jit Singh Sital), 350; F.S. Waheeduddin, \textit{The Real Ranjit Singh}, 203.
\textsuperscript{127} H.A. Rose, \textit{Rites and Ceremonies of Hindus and Muslims}, 184-185.
The vessels were placed on a board on which the body of Maharaja lay. By contrast, the Muslims placed the corpse on a bedstead (palangh or manjah).

The chief mourner who was the eldest son or some very near relative of the dead person led the procession. He carried a firepot in his hand. When the body was tied to the bier the first pind or ball made of rice, ghee was placed on the deceased’s breast. The bier was then lifted on to the shoulders of four near kinsmen of the deceased, called kandha dena. As soon, as the body was taken out of the door of the house, second pind was offered. The third pind being offered when it had passed the gate of the village or town.

Among the Muslims, when the procession was started special prayers were performed by the priest or imam who was especially called. The assembled stood in rows, called saffan-bannhana. The priest would go to the dead body and usher taqbir (i.e. allah-hu-akbar) four times in a loud voice so that Munkir and Nakir, the two angles, recording all the sins of his life, go away thinking him to be a true Muslim. All other standing in the rows would then recite certain verses like kalam-i-darud and qul-fil-hal from the Quran for the peace and benefit of the departed soul. This was called namaz-i-janaza.

Funeral procession among the Hindus and the Sikhs was accompanied by the musicians (rababis) reciting the words “Ram Ram” or “Ram naam such hai” (the name of Ram is truth itself) and Satnaam Waheguru, Satnaam Waheguru respectively. According to Sikh tradition all mourners should be Sikhs. In the case of rich or old man, flowers and coins were showered over the bier. Thousands

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of rupees were thrown over the funeral procession of Maharaja Ranjit Singh as alm, and charity among the poor and needy.\textsuperscript{136}

When the bier had gone half way between the house or village and the burning ground, the ceremony of adhmarg (half way) was performed.\textsuperscript{137} The bier was put down on the ground and the head of the corpse was laid towards south and the feet towards the north. The ceremony of adhmarg was performed according to the advice of maha Brahmans or acharaj (charji).\textsuperscript{138} A mixture of rice, barley etc. was prepared and distributed it in the name of deceased and also pitcher containing of water, with which the deceased had been given a bath, was given away. The pitcher had to be dropped in such a way that its neck also broke, to prevent death visiting the family again too soon.\textsuperscript{139} Fourth pind was also offered at the adhmarg. Before the fourth pind was offered, water was sprinkled on the ground and the bier was set down, the first pind being replaced by the fourth.\textsuperscript{140} This rite was called ‘basa dena’, or the ‘rest giving’ and the place of the halt was termed bisram, or the rest. Here too, the bier was turned round so that the head of the corpse was now in front, though the same four kinsmen continued to carry it.\textsuperscript{141} Muslim had a little different practice, they stopped at short distance from the burial ground laid down the bier and uttered some funeral prayers. They did not bow the head at this rite and only invoke blessings for the departed soul.\textsuperscript{142}

Among the Hindus and the Sikhs the final putting of a pyre was termed as chhikha. The purest wood for the funeral pyre was sandal wood, which was however, rarely used owing to its cost.\textsuperscript{143} Sandalwood was used by the rich and common people used the wood of peepal, dak and beri tree.\textsuperscript{144} Sometimes the wood was carried by the mourners themselves. A pyre should be so constructed in a

\textsuperscript{136} Kanhiya Lal, Tarikh-i-Punjab (Jit Singh Sital), 350; S.M. Latif, History of the Sikhs, 494.
\textsuperscript{137} H.A. Rose, Rites and Ceremonies of Hindus and Muslims, 143.
\textsuperscript{138} Acharaj Braman who perform funeral ceremonies among the Hindus. Denzil Ibbetson, Punjab Castes, 221; Henry Court, History of the Sikhs 103.
\textsuperscript{139} Suri, Umdat Daftar IV, 119; Parkash Tondon, Punjabi Century, 151.
\textsuperscript{140} The adhmarg ceremony of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was performed when the bier was passed out of the Roshanai gate. Suri, Umdat, Daftar III (IV-V), 488.
\textsuperscript{141} H.A. Rose, Rites and Ceremonies of Hindus and Muslims, 143.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 188.
\textsuperscript{143} Chikha banaie chand di, chandan de kill lage. The funeral pyre of Haqiqat Rai was made of sandal wood and nails were also of sandal, Agra Sethi, Var Haqiqat Rai (ed. Ganda Singh), 48.
\textsuperscript{144} P.N. Chopra, Life and Letters Under Mughals, 187.
rectangular pit some two feet deep. The big and heavy logs were placed at the bottom, the smaller one, the still smaller logs formed rest for head and feet. There the corpse should be placed between wooden boards and panchratans (five metals) of gold, pearl, copper, silver and coral put in the mouth. In the case of woman this was done at the house.\textsuperscript{145} When the pyre had been completed the fifth and last pind was offered and the valuable shawl or other cloth removed from the corpse was given to a sweeper or a maha Brahman. The body was then unfastened the cords which bind it to the bier being broken with one hand one foot and lay on the pyre. The body was laid supine upon the pyre, its hands being placed behind and so underneath it to prevent its being cruel in the future life. The shroud was tore near the mouth and ghee was put into the eyes, ears, nostrils etc. and covered with a few pieces of wood and then smaller logs with some big ones on top again. The eldest son, the younger brother in case of male or female and a husband in case of a wife took the burning grass in his hand and walk once right round the pyre, keeping it on his right hand, and then turn back until he reached the feet. Here they halted and throw the burning grass on to the pyre.\textsuperscript{146} Incense and ghee were then poured all over the pyre. Sohan Lal Suri gives description of Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s funeral pyre as follow:-

\begin{quote}
“The Sarkar was made to sit in branches of sandalwood after a bath in his own garden near the gate just at the foot of the Padshahi masjid. The ladies performed the parkarma and made prostrations; while Kattochan (queen) joined the burning, placing the head of the Sarkar on her thigh. All the Sardars rested their heads upon the ground in prostration and later on sprinkled, clarified butter and with some rubbish straw and Kharak Singh set fire to the corpse”.\textsuperscript{147}
\end{quote}

The Muslims on reaching the graveyard dug the grave from north to south. It has two chambers, the lower, called lahad, in which the body was placed being as

\textsuperscript{147} Suri, \textit{Umdat}, Daftar III (IV-V), 488-489.
long as a man’s height. The face of the body was kept towards the qibla, because according to Mohammadan belief the dead shall rise up on the day of Judgement (qayamat) with their face towards the Mecca.\textsuperscript{148} In lahad, the body was finally placed with the shroud removed. Then the mullah asked to write the kalima sharif with a stick on a mud brick which was put in the grave, and the mullah called all to recite surat-ikhlas over seven clods of earth and put them together near the head of the deceased. Most of the Shias and some Sunnis placed a written paper called ahdnama (agreement) in the deceased’s mouth in the grave. This ‘agreement’ contained a declaration by him of the principles and doctrines of Islam and it was placed on him with the idea that he might not be terrified at the questions put to him by Munkir and Nakir when they appeared before him with their dreadful looks but answer them with the aid of the agreement. Then the lahad was filled up with stones and bricks. The upper part of the grave was then filled in with earth by all the mourners except the deceased’s heirs. The members of the funeral party now recited the fatiha or verses from the Quran for the benefit of the departed soul.\textsuperscript{149} Food was distributed to the poor. This food was called toshe ki roti or bread for the journey.\textsuperscript{150}

Among the Hindus and the Sikhs, when the body was nearly consumed, another rite was performed, called kapal kirya (breaking of the skull). According to the Hindus, kapal kirya took place at a time when the soul separates from the body and going into the brain took the form of enclosed wind whereupon a stick was struck against the head to break it and the wind was allowed to go out.\textsuperscript{151} After kapal kirya, the mourners returned to some well or tank where all of them bathed and wash their clothes. After bath the ceremony of tinka torna or breaking of straw was performed. All the young and old hold straw in their hands while the acharaj Brahman recited certain quotations or shaloks before every one of them. The meaning of shalok was that the dead had gone, therefore, nobody should grieve for it. After listening shaloks, everybody would pluck a blade of grass and break it in

\textsuperscript{150} H.A. Rose, \textit{Rites and Ceremonies of Hindus and Muslims}, 187.
\textsuperscript{151} Suri, \textit{Umdat}, Daftar IV, 121; Daftar III (IV-V), 489; W.H. Mcleod, \textit{Prem Sumarag}, 74; A.H. Bingley, \textit{History, Caste and Culture of Jats and Gujjars}, 80.
two to flung it over his head. This practice was called *tinka torna*.\(^{152}\) After performing the above mentioned practice, the funeral party returned home. On the way a branch of a *nim* (margosa tree) was plucked and everybody was given a leaf before entering the village, they were supposed to chew it and then spit out as a token that all contamination had been removed.\(^{153}\)

The period of mourning or *matam* varied from one to thirteen days.\(^{154}\) All the relatives, male and female wore white clothes. The widow of the deceased removed her ornaments and loosened her hair. The loud lamentations of the women were called *vain*. We do find such references in Punjabi literature as well.

> “*khule vaal zananey sarre rovan kheh odaye*”.\(^{155}\)

The beating of breast and thighs was termed as *pittna*. In Punjab, *siapa* or *pittna* was performed by the experienced and aged ladies. According to Sikh tradition no lamentation was raised, nor give expression of grief and did not enter mourning.\(^{156}\) During mourning period, the deceased’s family was not allowed to shave and to wear shoes. No fire was lit in the house but the neighbours and the *biradari* had thoughtfully prepared a simple meal. All the earthen vessels in the house were broken and thrown away. Gaudy dresses were avoided and the women covered their heads with white *dupattas* or shawls as a sign of mourning. Various charitable acts were performed.\(^{157}\)

Among the Muslims, on the third day, the rite of *qul khwani* was performed. Verses of the Quran being recited for the benefit of the deceased soul which was called *khatam-quran*. His clothes were also given to the poor as charity. On this day, food was cooked at home. The sweet dishes and other food items were distributed

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\(^{152}\) *Tinka tor sutio ne pichhe, ghar jayeke yaar piyare*. After breaking the straw it was throw behind and all relatives of Haqiqat Rai returned to the home. Agra Sethi, *Var Haqiqat Rai* (ed. Ganda Singh), 48; Suri, *Umdat*, Daftar IV, 121.


\(^{155}\) All women loosened their hair and dust was arising as they weep. Damodar, *Punjab Wich Qissa Heer Ranja* (K.S.Kang) Lok Sahit Parkashan, Amritsar, 1983, 264.

\(^{156}\) W.H. Mcleod, *Prem Sumarag*, 75.

among the poor. On this day the lawful heir was made to put on a turban by his pir or a Sayyid. Clothes and money was also given to him. After the qul khwani, the deceased’s heirs placed some palm leaves, sweet scented flowers and green leaves of a fruit tree on his grave. This was called phul-patri. It was believed that these reduce or alleviate his sufferings. On this day parents-in-law of deceased husband gave his widow some cash, clothes and ornaments which were called jora randsala or grab of widowhood.

Bone collecting ceremony or phul chugna was an important ceremony among the Hindu and the Sikhs. The ceremony was done on the fourth day (chautha) after the cremation. Remaining bones were collected and washed with milk water (lassi) and deposited into a new earthen pitcher (kuja) or a bag of deer skin and thrown into a river preferably in the Ganga.

The ceremony of phul chugna of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was performed by Kanwar Kharak Singh who on 30th June, 1839, along with the Sardars went to the cremation ground. At first he himself picked up the ashes with his own hand and put the same into the vessels of gold. The Sardars also engaged themselves in this business and taking the ashes of the noble Sarkar, the ladies of his seraglio and his maid servants preserved them separately. They put those ashes first in a box made of brocade and put the box before the Granth Sahib. After that Kharak Singh took the box of ashes into his own hand and went to place them under a big canopy.

The ceremony of kirya karam was considered as the last ceremony among the Hindus and the Sikhs held on 13th day. On this day all the relatives friends and kinsmen were invited. On this day Brahman received special gifts of clothes and other articles. The period of mourning finished with this ceremony. On the day of

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kirya karam of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, lakhs of rupees, in cash or in kinds were distributed among the Brahmans.\textsuperscript{163}

Besides the above mentioned rituals and ceremonies, there were some other ceremonies, which were celebrated at the Lahore Darbar with great enthusiasm and splendour, for instance coronation ceremony and celebration of victory. Coronation ceremony was the most important administrative ceremony. It was celebrated with magnificence. The whole of the capital was profusely decorated. We do not get much information about the coronation of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, except a brief reference in Diwan Dina Nath’s \textit{Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh}. There he states that Ranjit Singh held a Darbar in 1801, attended by all his feudatories, officers and Sardars. At this formal gathering he proclaimed the assumption of the title of \textit{Sarkar-i-wala}. He had not associated himself with any title of the Maharaja, he issued the coins in the names of Gurus.\textsuperscript{164} In another source, \textit{The Real Ranjit Singh}, we get the information that Sahib Singh Bedi daubed him (Ranjit Singh) with saffron paste and proclaimed him the Maharaja of the Punjab.\textsuperscript{165}

In 1816, Maharaja Ranjit Singh decided to install Prince Kharak Singh as heir-apparent to the throne of Punjab. A grand Darbar was held at Lahore in which Kharak Singh was proclaimed to be the crown prince. All the Rajas, princes, Sardars and feudatories offered \textit{nazars} in token of allegiance to Kharak Singh.\textsuperscript{166} The conventional coronation of Kharak Singh was held in 1839 after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Sohan Lal Suri gives a detailed account of the ceremony as follows:

\textit{“On the 18\textsuperscript{th} bhadon, 1896 Sambat (1\textsuperscript{st} September, 1839 A.D) Raja Sahib (Dhian Singh) and the other chieftains, all the three bhai Sahibs (Gobind}

\textsuperscript{163} Kanhiya Lal, \textit{Tariikh-i-Punjab} (ed. Jit Singh Sital), 351.
Ram, Ram Singh and Gurmukh Singh) presented themselves. The glorious tent and a costly canopy were pitched under the place for throne, which was supported by 40 pillars. Before the rising of the illuminating sun Kharak Singh took his seat in a gold chair and took a sacred bath with water of Ganges and put on white garments beset with diamonds, a big armlet, the Koh-i-noor and the other articles of jewellery. After that he offered a worship of Ganeshji and the nine stars (navgrah puja) and the mark of installation was first put by the prohits. After that the other Sardars and bhai Barhami and Raja Sahib (Dhian Singh) applied the mark upon the blessed forehead, when bhai Rupa and the three bhai Sahibs, bhai Ram Singh, bhai Gobind Ram and bhai Gurmukh Singh had finished applying the installation mark. After that large sum of money, various things and several gold pitchers were given away to the Brahmans and the bhaís on a performance of a samkalap. After that all presented nazars. Rewards were given to the dancing girls, the staff in-charge of floorings, servants and attendants. At the happy moment of enthronement a discharge of topkhana took place’’.

We do find the information about the coronation ceremony of Sher Singh and Dalip Singh respectively. Sohan Lal Suri gives a picturesque account of Sher Singh’s coronation as follows:

“After mutual consultation of all the pandits, astronomers and the astrologers, all of them fixed up the day of basant panchmi as the blessed hour for the purpose, according to the books and the readings of astrology. _ _ _ _ On the day of the basant panchmi (20th January, 1841) Sher Singh took a sacred bath early in the morning according to instructions of Brahmans and after finishing with his worship and distributing of alms and charities, took his blessed seat upon the throne. At first Raja Dhian Singh, Raja Gulab Singh, Raja Suchet Singh, Sandhawalias, Sardar Attar Singh Kalianwala, Jamadar Khushal Singh, Sardar Tej Singh Sardar Lehna Singh Majithia, Attariwala chieftains, 

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Fakir Aziz-ud-din, Khalifa Nuruddin, the rest of the staff, the pillars of the great kingdom and the counsellors of the great court presented one by one in their names swift-footed horses with gold necklace and harnesses, gold ducats and several other wonderful and good things to the Shahzada. After that daftaries, munshis, vakils and commandants of the platoons and other office bearers secured over lasting facility by presenting nazars. As soon as Sher Singh finished with taking nazars he attended to the listening of music and dance of the dancing girls. All the servants and the staff of the state were granted rewards befitting the position and rank of everyone”.

Similarly the day of coronation of Dalip Singh was fixed by the pandits of Lahore on the 22nd magh (2 February, 1844 A.D). After worshiping, Sodhi Sahib, Bedi Sahib after that bhai Ram Singh and bhai Gobind Ram fixed the installation mark of the Rajaship upon his forehead. After that chieftains and others presented nazars.

Conquest of a territory and victory in battle was the one of the most joyous events at the Lahore Darbar. Whenever, Maharaja Ranjit Singh was victorious in any campaign large scale celebrations were held. At the news of every victory, a round of festivities would start. In 1799, when Maharaja Ranjit Singh made his triumphant entry into Lahore, guns fired the royal salute. Trumpets of happiness were blown and voices of felicitation were raised from all sides. The leading citizens of Lahore presented nazars and received rich khillats from their new ruler. War booty was distributed among the poor and the needy.

The victory of Amritsar in 1805, added more laurels to the fame of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. This event was celebrated with great pomp and show. Sohan Lal Suri’s description of the celebrations of the conquest is as follow:

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169 Suri, Umdat, Daftar IV, 304.
170 Suri, Umdat, Daftar II, 37; Khushwant Singh, Ranjit Singh, 40.
“The exalted Sarkar entered the fort and took five cannons and some swivels. He held a public assembly at the house of the Bhangis at the back of the fort. Then he went to visit the Harmandir Sahib and thereby derived eternal esteem. He bestowed upon the people of the city variety of favours according to rank and station”.172

The victories of Qasur in 1806 and Kangra in 1809 were celebrated with great grandeur. Illuminations were held at Amritsar and Lahore.173 The prominent persons who rendered good services in the victory of Qasur were granted deserving jagirs in the vicinity of Qasur. They were also honoured with the grants of glittering khillats. Large sums of money in cash or kinds were sent to Harmandir Sahib.174

The news of fall of the Multan in 1818 was brought to Lahore by a fast messenger (chobdar) of Sardar Fateh Singh Ahluwalia. The harbinger was awarded with a pair of gold bangles, one scarf and rupees 500 in cash and on the news being confirmed through official sources, rupees 600 were conferred up on Sahib Singh, head of the harkaras.175 Sohan Lal Suri gives a detailed account of celebration as follow:

“The Maharaja rode on a huge elephant went to the fort of Lahore, enroute Golden mosque, Taksali gate, Thathiar bazaar, Paper mandi and Lahore mandi, showering gold all along and filling the aprons of the expectant, needy and the poor. Most of the ahlakars secured everlasting felicity by offering nazaranana on the occasion of the conquest of the fort of Multan. Dancing girls and other needy persons came to congratulate the Maharaja and the apron of their desire was filled with cash. And illumination of the city took place with great glory.”176

Sardars who had participated in this campaign were bestowed with gifts, titles and jagirs. Misr Dewan Chand, the conqueror of Multan was awarded the title

172 Suri, Umdat, Daftar II, 48; Kanhiya Lal, Tarikh-i-Punjab (ed. Jit Singh Sital), 154-155; S.M. Kohli, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, 60.
174 Suri, Umdat, Daftar II, 55; Kanhiya Lal, Tarikh-i-Punjab (ed. Jit Singh Sital), 171.
176 Suri, Umdat, Daftar II, 253; G.L. Chopra, Punjab as a Sovereign State, 13.
of Zafar-Jang-Bahadur (the victorious of battle) and was also granted a jagir with a valuable robe of honour.\textsuperscript{177} A few pairs of gold bangles and some scarfs and shawls were sent to Misr Dewan Chand for their distribution among those who showed boldness and excelled others in the field of battle.\textsuperscript{178} The cities of Lahore and Amritsar were illuminated for a week. Royal orders were issued to the citizens of these cities to illuminate their houses. Grateful offerings were made to holy shrines of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs.\textsuperscript{179}

The victory of Multan gave the Maharaja tremendous boost to conquer Kashmir.\textsuperscript{180} The news of capturing the Kashmir, in 1819 gave him “thousand fold pleasure”, and joy. Sohan Lal Suri describes the pleasure in following manner:

\begin{quote}
On this blessed news Maharaja Ranjit Singh ordered the firing of guns with great éclat. Riding on a huge elephant he went about scattering gold and silver coins and other pieces of silver all over the victorious troops. After that he got the pleasure of paying obeisance to the Granth Sahib and went back to his residence. He set up a great assembly for merry-making and enjoyment in the form of happy festival or celebration. The moon-faced beauties with bewitching voices sang and received very excessive and abundant rewards, and the aprons of all the honest and nearest attendants filled with their objects of ambitions”.
\end{quote}

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The Maharaja was so pleased with the conquest of Kashmir that he awarded Misr Diwan Chand the title of Fateh-o-Nursat Nasib and also granted a jagir of 50,000 rupees and a valuable robe of honour.\textsuperscript{182} The Maharaja also appointed Diwan

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\textsuperscript{177} Suri, \textit{Umdat}, Daftar II, 253; Khushwant Singh, \textit{Ranjit Singh}, 126; Radha Sharma, \textit{The Lahore Darbar}, 72; Gulcharan Singh, \textit{Maharaja Ranjit Singh Conquest of Multan}, 78.

\textsuperscript{178} Suri, \textit{Umdat}, Daftar II, 253.


\textsuperscript{181} Suri, \textit{Umdat}, Daftar II, 303.

\textsuperscript{182} Suri, \textit{Umdat}, Daftar II, 317, 318; Radha Sharma, \textit{The Lahore Darbar}, 72.
\end{flushright}
Moti Ram as a nazim.\textsuperscript{183} He visited Harmandir Sahib for thanks giving and made large offerings in cash and gold. He offered Rs. 1000 at Harmandir Sahib and Akal bunga each. As usual, cities of Amritsar and Lahore were illuminated for many days.\textsuperscript{184}

The return of Maharaja Ranjit Singh to Lahore, after victory of Peshawar, was an occasion of great rejoicing. He visited Harmandir Sahib and paid Rs. 25,000 as ardas. He showered gold and silver coins on the large concourse of people who had gathered in the streets to celebrate the victory of Peshawar. He sent large sums of money to the religious places of Hindus and Muslims.\textsuperscript{185}

Thus we can say that human life was woven around the various customs, rites and ceremonies. These were relevant features of the society. Each event of life had some peculiar rites and rituals which were observed with happiness and sorrow. Numbers of people were gathered to observe them. Most of the ceremonies were common among the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims. Birth of a child was considered as a most auspicious event in the family which was elaborated with numbers of ceremonies and customs. Among the Hindus, ceremonies started even before the birth of a child called reetan. Hindus considered woman impure after delivery and remains confined to the house for first ten days or more as the period is called sutak. The duration of sutak varied among different castes. Religious books were consulted for the naming ceremony of the male child. Janeo among Hindus and sunnat among Muslims symbolized their separate identities.

In weddings Bichola or lagi like Brahmans, barbars (nais) and the bards (dums or bhats) played a significant role. Months like magh, phagun, baisakh, jeth and asarh were considered lucky for marriages. But Spring was considered the most favourable season for marriage. Numbers of rituals were observed during wedding. Rituals like til-khela and dewar godi mein baithana were signified the importance

\textsuperscript{183} Diwan Amar Nath, Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh (ed. Kirpal Singh), 114; Radha Sharma, The Lahore Darbar, 72; Debi Parsad, Gulshan-i-Punjab (tr.Harminder Singh and ed. Fauja Singh), 30.


\textsuperscript{185} Kanihya Lal, Tarikh-i-Punjab (ed. Jit Singh Sital), 291; S.R. Kholi, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, 152.
male child in society. From the evidences on funeral rites like *gow-daan, chuli-chhadna, diva-vatti, pind daan karna, adhmarg, tinka torna and kapal kirya* one can see the importance of the next world.

Besides the customs, rites and ceremonies related to life cycle, there were other occasions which were celebrated by the ruling class. Victory of new area was occasion of celebration at a large scale. Religious places were visited, illuminations were ordered and charities distributed among the poor and needy. Heroes of the victory were given handsome rewards. Similarly coronation of a new ruler was most important administrative ceremony. A grand Darbar was held at Lahore, in which all the Rajas, princes, Sardars and feudatories offered *nazars* in token of allegiance to the new Maharaja. We get a reflection of the celebrations, rites, rituals and ceremonies the literature of the period as well.