Chapter 3
Area and People
3.1 Introduction 45
3.2 History of Meerut district 46
3.3 Agriculture and livestock 47
3.4 Industry 47
3.5 Population 47
3.6 ANSARI 48
  3.6.1 Life cycle Rituals 51
    3.6.1.1 Male circumcision (Khatna) 51
    3.6.1.2 Marriage 51
    3.6.1.3 Death 53
  3.6.2 Festivals 54
    3.6.2.1 Hajj 54
    3.6.2.2 Ramadan 55
    3.6.2.3 Eid-ul-Fitr 56
    3.6.2.4 Eid-ul-Zuha 57
    3.6.2.5 Muharram 58
3.7 BRAHMIN 59
  3.7.1 Samskaras 60
    3.7.1.1 Garbhadhana 60
    3.7.1.2 Jatakarma 60
    3.7.1.3 Namakaran 60
    3.7.1.4 Annaprasana 60
    3.7.1.5 Mundan 61
    3.7.1.6 Upanayana 61
    3.7.1.7 Marriage (Vivah) 61
      3.7.1.7.1 Customs associated with marriage 62
    3.7.1.8 Death (Antyeshti) 63
  3.7.2 Dress and Ornaments 64
  3.7.3 Festivals 64
    3.7.3.1 Holi 64
    3.7.3.2 Diwali 64
    3.7.3.3 Dussehra 65
    3.7.3.4 Mahashivaratri 66
3.7.3.5 Janamashtami 67
3.7.3.6 Karwa Chauth 67
3.7.3.7 Raksha Bandhan 68

3.8 JATAV 68
  3.8.1 Occupation 70
  3.8.2 Marriage 70
  3.8.3 Death 71
Chapter 3
AREA AND PEOPLE

3.1 Introduction
Uttar Pradesh (Northern Province) is the most populous and fifth largest state in the Union of India. The administrative and legislative capital of Uttar Pradesh is Lucknow. The state comprises of 70 districts, which are grouped into 17 divisions. Meerut district is one of the five districts, those come under Meerut division. The other districts of Meerut Division are Bulandshaher, Baghpat, Gautam Budha Nagar and Ghaziabad. Situated in the western region of Uttar Pradesh (U.P) and in the fertile land between Ganga and Yamuna, Meerut district has a total area of 2590 Sq.km. It is located at 28.98° N 77.70° E. It is bounded on the north by district Muzaffarnagar, south by Ghaziabad, east by Bijnor and west by Baghpat. Headquarter of Meerut district is at Meerut city.

According to general and revenue administration Meerut is divided into three tehsils namely– Meerut,
Mawana and Sardhana and twelve development blocks namely- Sarurpur Khurd, Sardhana, Daurala, Mawana Kala, Hastinapur, Parichitgarh, Machara, Rohatta, Janikhurd, Meerut, Rajpura and Kharkhoda.

3.2 History of Meerut district

According to mythological story of Ramayana it was the seat of power of Mai Danav who was known to be the father-in law of Ravana and came to be known as Maidant-ka-Khera. Subsequently during Mahabharat age it was seat of power of Kuru dynasty i.e Hastinapur which is part of Meerut district. According to one account it was originally known as Mahi Rashtra, the name given to it by Mahi, a distinguished architect, who built a palace at Indraprastha or Dehli, in exchange for which he received a land from king Yudhishthira. It is said that Meerut now stands on that land. However, most of these speculations are not based on strong evidence. Never the less Meerut was inhabited in very ancient times and this is evident from the fact that the Ashoka pillar that now stands on the ridge at Delhi was erected by the Great Buddhist Emperor in the 3rd century before Christ. This fact is attested by the inscription on the pillar, which states that the monument was removed from Meerut to Dehli by Firoz Shah Tughluq in 1365 A.D. The existence of this pillar and the discovery of Buddhist remains within the city leave little room for doubt that Meerut was an important centre of Buddhism during the time of Ashoka. Also the archaeological excavations carried out at village Alamgirpur near Meerut have discovered remains from the Harappan culture. This has put Meerut on the international map of ancient cultures.

Due to its strategically sound location, Meerut received considerable significance and the cantonement was established sometime in early 19th century. An important event
of National importance was triggering of 1857 uprising against British Raj from Meerut Cantonment. It was after this that Meerut leapt into international prominence.

### 3.3 Agriculture and livestock

The economy of Meerut district is predominantly agricultural. The agro-climatic conditions of the district are highly suitable for cultivation numerous varieties. Mango is the most important traditional fruit crop of the district. Papaya, Guava, and Peach are other important fruit crops that are being produced. Major food crops include paddy, wheat, barley, sorghum, maize and pulses. The district is known for high sugarcane production. Aomla (Indian gooseberry), mushroom, potato and oilseeds are also being produced in reasonably good quantities. In addition to this almost all vegetables are being grown all through out the region. Besides, floriculture has also developed tremendously with cultivation of tuberose, gladioli, rose and marigold.

Animal husbandry sector also occupies an important position. Cattle, buffaloes, sheep and goats are the main livestock of the district. Dairy farming is very popular among the small and marginal farmers and landless laborers of the district. This helps them to supplement their income. Poultry, piggery and apiculture are also coming up as a useful option particularly from the point of view of supplementing income from main sources.

### 3.4 Industry

Main Industries of the district include textiles, handloom, and coir. Other than this Meerut is famous for production of scissors, musical instruments and sports goods. In addition to this there are a number of sugar mills, paper mills and flour mills. Over a period of time Meerut has developed as an important center for Jewellery (gold, silver, diamond and other precious/ semi precious stones) and Pharmaceutical products.

### 3.5 Population

As per 2001 census, population of Meerut district was 29,73,877 (Rural – 15, 21,894; Urban - 14, 51,983). SC population of the district was 5,46,933. The population of Hindus in the district was 19,64,504 and that of Muslims was 9,75,715. Literacy rate in the district was 65.96 (Males – 76.31; Females – 54.12). However, according to 2011 census (provisional data), the total population of the
district has increased to 34,47,405. The literacy rate has also shown an improvement with a value of 74.80% (Males- 82.91%; Females- 65.69%). The sex ratio for the district is 885 females per thousand males.

Population of district Meerut, like that of other districts in the state, is multi religious. Majority of population is of Hindus, followed by Muslims. Besides, there are followers of Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism. People of the district are enterprising and hard working who belong to various socio-religious communities. Jats, Tyagis, Rajputs, Vaishyas, Gujjars, Jatavas, Pathans, Ansaris, Quraishis etc. are found in abundance in the district.

The present study involves three population groups viz. Ansari, Brahmin and Jatav. Following account describes each of these three population groups.

3.6 ANSARI

Islam is a word taken from an Arabic term, which means, "peace". However, specialists call the meaning of the word as "submission", which indicates towards the eternal submission in Allah's holy feet. Islam finds its origin in South Arabia and dates back to 7th Century, which is later to any other major religion existing in the world. Despite a more recent origin, the followers of Islam constitute the second largest population in the world after Christians. Allah is the name Muslims use for the supreme and unique God, who created and rules everything.

It was Prophet Muhammad who initiated disseminating the teachings of Islam. He was born and brought up in the holy place Mecca. He started giving sermons, which were so inspiring that many people got attracted to his teachings. While he made so many followers, there were many who were against him. Thus, he moved to Medina, then known as Yathrib. This is considered as the beginning of Islamic calendar and marks the origin of Islam. Till his death, Muhammad converted a majority of Arab population into Islam. The religion expanded as Arabs conquered countries like Syria, Iran, Egypt and later when they shifted to other countries.

Muslims eventually got divided into two groups: Shia and Sunni right after the death of Prophet Muhammad. Shia Muslims wanted somebody from Muhammad
should take mantle of Muhammad, whereas, Sunni Muslims wanted the first Caliph to be their mentor. Ali, Muhammad’s son-in-law was made the leader of Shia group, who was called as 'Imam'. The fundamental beliefs of both the groups are same, yet the difference is huge.

As the last prophet of Muslims said, "Islam is to testify that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah, to perform the prayers (Namaz), to pay the Zakat, to fast in Ramadan, and to make the pilgrimage (Hajj) to the House if you are able to do so." Thus, Islamic religion has five pillars that define the rules of the religion. According to Islam, all men acquire equal privilege from Allah and no one is superior to another.

In addition to the Five Pillars of Islam, a number of further religious practices regulate the lives of Muslims and bring meaning to the most important of life's transitions. The Quran contains prohibitions against the consumption of pork and wine. The prohibition on wine is typically interpreted to mean a general prohibition on alcohol. Smoking is similarly prohibited. Charging exorbitant interest on loans, or usury, is also prohibited in Islam. Gambling is forbidden, as it puts both gamblers and their families at risk.

There are six fundamental beliefs in Islam which are as follows:

- God is one and that is Allah
- Angels of God
- The messenger of God, who bring along them the Almighty's teachings
- The religious scriptures and Quran is supreme among all
- A day is set for all when they would be judged according to their deeds
- God's will is supreme of all

For Muslims, life did not begin at birth, but a long time before that. It began when God created the souls of everyone who would ever exist. God decreed for each soul a time on earth so that He might try them. Then, after the completion of their appointed terms, He would judge them and send them to their eternal destinations: either one of endless bliss, or one of everlasting grief. This life, then, is a journey that presents to its wayfarers many paths. Only one of these paths is clear and
straight. This path is the Sharia. Throughout history, God has sent messengers to people all over the world, to guide them to the straight path that would lead them to happiness in this world and the one to follow. Prophet Muhammad was the final messenger and his Sharia represents the ultimate manifestation of the divine mercy. The Sharia regulates all human actions.

Sharia law comes from a combination of sources including the Qur'an (the Muslim holy book), the Hadith (sayings and conduct of the prophet Muhammad) and fatwas - the rulings of Islamic scholars. The Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet gradually, over 23 years. The Qur'an is the word of God and the essence of its message is to establish the oneness of God and the spiritual and moral need of man for God. This need is fulfilled through worship and submission, and has ultimate consequences hereafter.

By and large muslims are fully dedicated religious group. Although Islam believes in universal brotherhood but social ethos have classified them into various social groups. Sheikh, Syyed, Mughal, Pathan believe that they are immigrants from West and Central Asia and still regard themselves as superior. While Syyed and Sheikh intermarry, the same is true for Mughal and Pathan. However, during the 13th century, the 1st 100 years of Turkish rule in India witnessed mass conversions of Indian Bunkers (weavers) and so called Chandals and Sonkers into Islam. Subsequent centuries witnessed some more conversions from upper and middle class Hindus i.e Rajputs (Rangars); Tyagis (Maheshras); Jats (Moolah jat). There were conversions from Gujjars, Yadavs and some other communities also.

Ansaris, who are referred to as Momin, Julaha, Momin Ansari, Jola are identified as Muslim Julaha or weavers. Julaha is a Persian word for weaver. An organization, the All India Momin Conference looks into the grievances of community members. In Uttar Pradesh, they are distributed in almost all districts; however their maximum concentration is in Meerut, Gorakhpur, Faizabad, Lucknow, Azamgarh, Unnao, Saharanpur, Barabanki, Basti, Bareilly and Allahabad districts. They use Ansari as their surname. Weaving, their traditional occupation is no longer practiced by all because of the development of modern and well equipped cloth mills. Now days many of them are in government and private jobs. Others work as skilled or unskilled
laborers while some are self employed in small-scale and cottage industries. They speak Urdu as well as Hindi and use Arabic and Devanagari script. They profess Islam and their sacred specialist, a Qazi or Mulla performs birth, marriage and death rites. They are making full use of facilities pertaining to formal education, modern medicines, drinking water and electricity.

3.6.1 Life cycle Rituals

Various rites and ceremonies accompany such important transitions as birth, marriage, and death. The mother is given a bath on the sixth day of birth. Any day after this Aqiqah ceremony is observed where by name is given to the child. This is accompanied by shaving of head and sacrifice of an animal.

3.6.1.1 Male circumcision (Khatna)

Male circumcision is an important religious duty in Islam and required by believers to perform on their newborn sons. It is performed when the child is one and a half to two years old. There is no single explanation for the origins of this practice. It may have been adopted from the Jewish practice. Some say it reinforces human submission to God, while others view the practice as an important preventive measure against infection. It is also done to imitate Muhammad, who was circumcised. On this occasion, a feast is arranged and relatives, friends and neighbors are invited.

3.6.1.2 Marriage

Marriage (nikah) is generally seen both as a civil contract in Islam as well as a religiously public and joyous ritual. It is a solemn and sacred social contract between bride and groom. This contract is a strong covenant (mithaqun Ghalithun) as expressed in Quran. One matrimonial party expresses 'ijab" willing consent to enter into marriage and the other party expresses 'qubul" acceptance of the responsibility in the assembly of marriage ceremony. The contract is written and signed by the bride and the groom and their two respective witnesses. This written marriage contract ("Aqd-Nikah) is then announced publicly. Both parties mutually agree and enter into this contract. Both bride and groom have the liberty to define various terms and conditions of their liking and make them a part of this contract. The marriage contract in Islam is not a sacrament. It is revocable. Any trust worthy practicing Muslim can
conduct the nikah ceremony, as Islam does not advocate priesthood. The documents of marriage contract/certificate are filed with the mosque (masjid) and local government for record.

The marriage-gift (Mahr) is a divine injunction. The giving of mahr to the bride by the groom is an essential part of the contract. Mahr is a token commitment of the husband's responsibility and may be paid in cash, property or movable objects to the bride herself. The amount of mahr is not legally specified, however, moderation according to the existing social norm is recommended. The mahr may be paid immediately to the bride at the time of marriage, or deferred to a later date, or a combination of both. The deferred mahr however, falls due in case of death or divorce.

The assembly of nikah is addressed with a marriage sermon (khutba-tun-nikah) by the Muslim officiating the marriage. The Khutbah-tun-Nikah begins with the praise of Allah. His help and guidance is sought. The sermon includes the confession of Muslim faith. It is declared that 'There is none worthy of worship except Allah and Muhammad is His servant and messenger". The sermon invites the bride and the groom, as well as the participating guests in the assembly to a life of piety, mutual love, kindness, and social responsibility. The marriage ceremony concludes with prayer (Dua) for bride, groom, their respective families, the local Muslim community, and the Muslim community at large (Ummah).

Marriage (nikah) is considered as an act of worship (ibadat). It is virtuous to conduct it in a Mosque keeping the ceremony simple. The marriage ceremony is a social as well as a religious activity. Islam advocates simplicity in ceremonies and celebrations.

Ansaris prefer to marry within the group (i.e. Ansaris). Parallel and cross cousin marriages are preferred.

**Primary requirements**

1) Mutual agreement (Ijab-O-Qubul) by the bride and the groom
2) Two adult and sane witnesses
3) Mahr (marriage-gift) to be paid by the groom to the bride either immediately (muajjal) or deferred (muakhir), or a combination of both
Secondary Requirements
1) Legal guardian (wakeel) representing the bride
2) Written marriage contract ("Aqd-Nikah) signed by the bride and the groom and witnesses by two adult and sane witnesses
3) Qadi (State appointed Muslim judge) or Ma'zoon (a responsible person officiating the marriage ceremony)
4) Khutba-tun-Nikah to solemnize the marriage

After the consummation of the marriage, the groom holds a banquet called a walima. The relatives, neighbors, and friends are invited in order to make them aware of the marriage. Both rich and poor of the family and community are invited to the marriage feasts. The worst of the feasts are those marriage feasts to which the rich are invited and the poor are left out. It is recommended that Muslims attend marriage ceremonies and marriage feasts upon invitation. He who refuses to accept an invitation to a marriage feast, verily disobeys Allah and His Prophet.

Marriage itself is a Sunnah, which means that it is recommended, not obligatory to us. Therefore, if a Muslim does not marry throughout his life, he commits no sin, although he has chosen a course for his life different from that recommended by the Prophet. Divorce on the other hand is permissible but described as unsavory or distasteful. It is permitted because of the need for it. Both men and women can initiate a divorce, and there is also a mechanism for annulling the marriage. However divorce and annulment do not occur at the same frequency as they do in western societies.

3.6.1.3 Death
Death is the most important event in a person's path to God, and the dying person is surrounded and supported by family and friends. Prayers and other passages from the Quran are read for the dying person, who repents of sins and, when possible, performs rituals of purification. At the time of death, those present at the deathbed whisper the shahadah in the dying person's ear. When possible, the dying person recites it as well. When death appears near, family members recite surah 36 from the Quran, which describes God's raising of the dead on the Day of Judgment.
The body of the deceased person must be buried as promptly as possible, preferably by sunset on the day of the death. The family of the deceased person is responsible for preparing the body for burial and for saying the funeral prayers, which are not typically said in the mosque. The body is buried in a plain white shroud. If the person went on pilgrimage to Mecca, then he or she is buried in the pilgrimage garments. Male relatives climb into the grave to arrange the body on its right side in a hollow niche in the wall of the grave. They turn the deceased's face toward Mecca, supporting the cheek with a stone. The last person in the grave with the body again whispers the shahadah in the deceased's ear. Each member of the assembled party throws soil into the grave, and a member of the party recites a blessing that summarizes the key beliefs of Muslims. Graves are marked with simple stone markers, to emphasize the equality of all people in death. It is believed that the deceased repose in an intermediary state called the barzakh until God resurrects the dead on the Day of Judgment. After the third day of death, teeja is observed. After forty days of death, chaleeswan is observed during which prayers are offered.

3.6.2 Festivals

3.6.2.1 Hajj

Once a year, Muslims of every ethnic group, color, social status, and culture gather together in Mecca. Mecca is a place that is holy to all Muslims. It is so holy that no non-Muslim is allowed to enter. Here they stand before the Kaaba praising Allah together. It is a ritual that is designed to promote the bonds of Islamic brotherhood and sisterhood by showing that everyone is equal in the eyes of Allah. The Hajj makes Muslims feel real importance of life here on earth, and the afterlife, by stripping away all markers of social status, wealth, and pride. In the Hajj all are truly equal. The Hajjis or pilgrims wear simple white clothes called Ihram. During the Hajj, the Pilgrims perform acts of worship and they renew their sense of purpose in the world.

For Muslims, the Hajj is the fifth and final pillar of Islam. It occurs in the month of Dhul Hijjah which is the twelfth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. It is the journey that every sane adult Muslim must undertake at least once in their lives if they can afford it and are physically able.
3.6.2.2 Ramadan

Among the five pillars of Islam, the fourth pillar is dedicated to preach fasting during the holy month of Ramadan. Also, known as Ramazan, the word finds it's origin in Arabic language, which denotes the ninth month in the Islamic Calendar called Hijri. It is a belief that in the month of Ramadan the Holy book of Muslims, Quran was sent down from heaven as a guidance for men and also as a direction and a means to Salvation. Ramadan is the month of fast. It is believed to be the sacred month when Allah bestows his utmost blessings up on Muslims. Muslims abstain themselves from indulging in any kind of evil practice. Islamic religion defines evil in terms of anger, envy, greed, lust, malice, gossiping etc. Sexual intercourse is prohibited during the fasting period. Purity is maintained at physical as well as mental level. The ritual of fasting is named as Sawm, which is again an Arabic term.

The holy month of Ramadan is divided into three parts: Rahmat, Maghfirat and Nijat. While Rahmat means "mercy of God, Maghfirat means "forgiveness of God" and Nijat means "salvation". As their meaning suggest, Muslims (followers of the holy Quran), ask for Allah's blessings to make their life meaningful. There in lies the significance of Ramadan. Ramadan is the period of purgation after which heaven is met. During Ramadan it is made sure that all the Muslims are devoted to worship God rather than any other work. Muslims visit mosque during Ramadan. Apart from the daily five prayers during Ramadan Muslims recite Taraweeh prayer also called the Night prayer. Some of the Muslims are so devoted that they spend the entire night praying.

The entire month Muslims fast with no water and food during the daytime. Muslims have food only before the sunrises and after the sunsets. The day starts with eating of the suhoor. ‘Suhoor’ is the meal eaten by the Muslims who fast before sun rise. Once suhoor is done then Muslims who fast cannot eat or drink the whole day. In the evening when the sun sets then they have another meal called ‘Iftar’. To open the fast they pray and have Iftar meal.

Eid-ul-Fitr marks the end of fasting month of Ramadan. The first day after the Ramadan month is called Shawwal. Eid-ul-fitr is to spread happiness and love all around. Eid is the festival when all the Muslims wear new clothes exchange sweets
and gifts among themselves and have delicious food. This is the time to celebrate after a month’s fasting for all the Muslims.

There is a stark difference between how Sunni Muslims perform Ramadan rituals and how Shia Muslims do. Sunni Muslims attempt to recite the whole Quran at one go via special eid ul fitr prayer ceremony, which they have named as ‘Tarawih’. This goes on during the entire month of Ramadan. Shia Muslims call the same practice as ‘Bidah’ and beware all not to perform it. Rather, they perform 'Qiyam-al-layl' or 'Tahajjud' at every night of the month.

3.6.2.3 Eid-ul-Fitr

Eid ul Fitr, also known as Choti Eid marks the end of the fasting month of Ramadan. While, it is celebrated in varied ways, some rituals are common in the entire Muslim community across the world.

On the morning of Eid, Muslims take bath and have their breakfast, typically comprising of dates and sweets. They wear new clothes on this occasion and visit the mosque (masjid) to worship Allah. Special Eid ul Fitr prayer ceremony is carried out in open areas, under the sky. All the Muslims recite Takbir, a poem in the praise of the greatness of Allah. It starts at the time of the sighting of crescent moon and lasts till the prayers are said. Muslims are supposed to pay Zakat al Fitr i.e. a donation for the month of Ramzan. This donation is given at a nearby mosque, to begin the Eid prayer. Zakat al Fitr can be given in way of money or eatables like dates, wheat, barley, raisins etc. After the prayer, the Imam, or the spiritual head delivers a discourse on social and family duties, also known as Khutba (sermons). Everyone prays for forgiveness for their sins and for protection against misfortune, after which people embrace and greet each other with ‘Eid Mubarak’ or ‘Happy Eid’ and head back home for the feast. It is customary to embrace the person sitting on your either side, after the prayers are over.

On Eid, women pray at home and then get busy organizing a lavish spread of eatables, like sivai - the special sweet for Eid (vermicelli cooked in milk and sugar), dry fruits, sweetmeats, biryani (meat cooked in spicy rice) and other things. They don new clothes and pay special heed to their make-up. The men return home to their beautiful
wives and the family sits down for the grand meal. People embrace each other and exchange greetings of ‘Eid Mubarak’.

Gifts are also exchanged on the festive occasion of Id. Daughters and married sisters are, especially, given gifts. In fact, brothers pay a visit to their married sisters and take sivai and other eatables, along with clothes, bangles and money. Children also receive money from elders, known as eiddi. Celebrations extend to three days of merry-making and enjoyment.

3.6.2.4 Eid-ul-Zuha

The feast of Bakr-Eid or Eid-ul-Zuha or Eid-ul-Adha is an occasion to give and to sacrifice. It is a day to thank the Almighty for one's good fortune and to share it with the less fortunate people. Traditionally, Bakra-Id is marked by the slaughtering of animals as sacrificial offerings, after which the meat is distributed among the needy and deprived. It is celebrated to commemorate the willingness of Hazrat Ibrahim to sacrifice his son Ismail at the behest of Allah. Hence, on this day just like Ibrahim, a true follower of Islam is expected to sacrifice something that is dear to him. This spirit of sacrifice is what truly underlines the spirit of Bakra-Eid. Incidentally, the day also coincides with the day when the holy Quran was declared complete.

Bakra-Eid is celebrated from the tenth to the twelfth day in the Islamic month of Dhul Hijjah. Every year, while pilgrims to the Mount of Mina make animal sacrifices as part of the pilgrimage rituals, Muslims the world over celebrate Bakra-Eid in a similar fashion. A goat, sheep, camel or any other four-legged animal is slaughtered during one of these three days. Festivities mark the first day, when people wear new clothes, offer prayers at the mosque, and greet friends and relatives. The celebrations are carried on through three days to ensure that the entire Muslim community participates in the noble act of giving and sharing. Dates for celebrating the Eid ul-Adha vary since the Islamic calendar is based on the lunar cycle. It can thus fall in either December or January. However, the Arabic calendar always marks the month of Dhul Hijja, or the tenth month of the year, as the month for this celebration.

The second important aspect of the Eid ul-Adha is that it is the end of the Hajj or pilgrimage to Mecca for the year. Those who have made the Hajj that year may
celebrate the Eid ul-Adha with particular joy. The Hajj is jihad, strife to become more obedient to Allah’s will. Thus to have completed a jihad right before the Eid ul-Adha is cause for great happiness.

3.6.2.5 Muharram

Muslims begin their new lunar Hijri calendar with the month of Muharram. It is the first month in the Islamic calendar that starts with the sighting of the new moon. This holy month is one of the four sacred months in which it is considered to be unlawful to fight. After Ramadan, Muharram is the most significant month in the Islamic calendar. On the 10th day of Muharram, that is, Ashura, Prophet Muhammad’s grandson, Imam Husain was brutally massacred along with his family and followers. While the Shia Muslims commemorate this occasion by mourning, Sunni Muslims observe it on a more peaceful note.

For Shia Muslims, the day of Ashura is very important as they consider Imam Husain, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad, the rightful successor of Muhammad. They believe the battle of Karbala took place between the good and the evil, with Imam Husain representing good and Yazid representing evil. Shia Muslims do not take the day as a day of joy and festivity. Instead, they commemorate it as a day of mourning. They refrain from music and avoid planning out any weddings or parties on this date. By doing so, they try to commit one to mourning of Imam Husain completely. By crying and listening to poems and sermons about the tragedy on the assassination of Husain and his family, Shia Muslims try to connect themselves with Husain’s suffering and martyrdom. To experience the suffering of Husain and his family, people slash their bodies with knives and other sharp tools attached to chains, allowing blood to run freely. Some people also indulge in matam, i.e., beating of the chests to show solidarity with Imam Husain and his family.

For Sunni Muslims as per records in Sahih al-Bukhari, Ashura is a commemorative day wherein many Meccans used to observe the customary fast. Even during Hijrah when Prophet Muhammad was leading his followers to Medina, he observed Jews fasting on this day. He inquired one of them about the significance of fasting on Ashura. The reason given was that on this day, God saved the Israelites from their
enemy, Egyptians. Hence, to mark this freedom, Moses observed the fast. Prophet Muhammad too started fasting and recommended his followers and other Muslims to fast on two of three consecutive days, including the 10th of Muharram. The fast during Ashura is only recommended and not made obligatory, since Sunni Muslims consider the Ramadan fast to be more significant. These fasts are considered to be the most rewardable ones among the Nafl or voluntary fasts. The fasts can be observed for the first ten days of Muharram or on the 9th and 10th day of Muharram or on the 10th and 11th day of Muharram. The choice of fasting totally depends on an individual.

3.7 BRAHMIN

Brahman is a varna category traced to Vedic period and also a jati. They continue to be the rallying factor of various Hindu groups, particularly in rural parts because they define and redefine customs. There are a large number (over 125) of Brahman jatis all over India. Adh Brahman or Gaur is one such group that shows a significant presence in western Uttar Pradesh. They are one of the few groups (like Chaurasia, Acharaj, Panchali, Bairagi) of Brahmins who are ranked low. According to one viewpoint, they originated from Haryana. According to another theory they derive their name from the old Gaur of the Lakhnauti kingdom of Bengal. Formerly they used to perform sacredotal services but have of late taken up agriculture.

The Vedas are the primary source of knowledge for all Brahmin traditions. A traditional Brahmin accepts Vedas as apaurusheyam (not man-made), but revealed truths of eternal validity or relevance. In fact, the Vedas are believed to be divine. Brahmins also give tremendous importance to purity of body and mind and hence attach great importance to ritual baths and cleanliness.

Daily practices of Brahmins include sandhyavandana (prayers to Gayatri and Sun God), prayer to ishtadaiva (personal God), yoga, non-violence, vegetarianism etc. Everything in the daily life of a Brahmin is a ritual. Orthodox Hindu code of conduct places emphasis primarily on two qualities in a human being. They are education (Vidya) and proper social and religious conduct (Samskarah). Samskaras are the rites of passage a person is expected to perform at various stages of his life. They begin
prior to birth and end with the cremation of the body following death. There is however, no unanimous opinion on the number of rites.

3.7.1 Samskaras

The number prescribed in various scriptures varies from eleven to forty. Some of the most significant Samskars are:

3.7.1.1 Garbhadhana

The rite through which a man places his seed in a woman has been called Garbhadhana. In Vedic culture spiritual aspirants can get married. For them marriage is a partnership to aid them in their mutual progress in spiritual life and not simply a license for sexual gratification. One of the duties of such a married couple is to produce spiritually enlightened children. Bringing such spiritually aware children into the world is beneficial both for the parents as well as for society in general. Thus in Hindu dharma, the birth of a child is considered a religious activity.

3.7.1.2 Jatakarma

The jatakarma ceremony welcomes the baby into the world. The father places a small amount of ghee and honey on the baby's tongue and whispers the name of God in his ear. The baby's ear is pierced. This ear piercing is supposed to enhance the memory of the child. Brahmins chant mantras for a healthy, long life of the child. This Samskar is restricted to the family level.

3.7.1.3 Namakarana

In Namakarana ceremony the child is given a name. Every parent has the duty to give a nice meaningful name to the child, which reminds the child of some goal or objective in the life. Whenever the child hears the name he will remember the meaning and purpose hidden in it and will be inspired by its meaning. Sweets are distributed to everybody and a feast is usually arranged.

3.7.1.4 Annaprasana

This sanskar is related to the time when the child is to be given solid food apart from the mother's milk. This emphasizes the importance of proper health care and nutrition for the child. The object of this ceremony is to pray to the Gods to bless the
A child with good digestive powers, good thoughts and talents. It is usually performed when the child is six months old which is the weaning time. It is indicated that this ceremony should be performed on the day on which the child was born. Offerings are made to the Goddess of speech and vigour. Prayers are offered for a proper development of child’s senses and he/she can live a happy and contented life. The father feeds a little amount of food (mixture of rice, ghee, curd and honey) to the child with the chanting of mantra. Thus the first feeding of cereal commences with this ceremony.

3.7.1.5 Mundan

Mundan Vidhi is performed to carry out the first hair cut of the baby. It is believed that if it is carried out as per the Vedic method it removes any deficiencies developed in the child before birth. It is also believed that the shaving of the hair stimulates proper growth of the brain and nerves. During this vidhi all the hair of the baby are removed and the baby's head is cleanly shaven. Hair collected during the hair cut are kept inbetween two puris (fried indian bread) and then offered to holy waters like Ganges, Yamuna or any other holy water bed.

3.7.1.6 Upanayana

Upanayana, is a religious ceremony undertaken by Hindu boys of the three highest castes. The ceremony usually takes place between the ages 7 and 11, indicating the entry into adulthood and the ability to deepen the individual's awareness of the duties they now embrace. During the ceremony, a sacred thread is tied. The thread is made up of three separate threads, each with a symbolic meaning – one meaning to worship God, one meaning to show love and respect to parents, and one meaning to learn from the religious teacher. Mantras from the Rig Veda are used during the ceremony.

3.7.1.7 Marriage (Vivah)

From religious point of view, marriage marks the beginning of life as a householder (grihastha ashrama). Marriage is also referred to as Kanyadan in which the girl is passed on by her father to the groom. Jati endogamy and village/gotra exogamy is the rule of marriage.
3.7.1.7.1 Customs associated with marriage

- **Rokka**: This is the tradition where the boy and the girl get committed to each other. In this it is decided that the boy and the girl will marry each other and no one else.

- **Mangni**: It is the formal acceptance of the both the families, that the boy and the girl are now a part of both the families. Marriage rings are exchanged in this ceremony.

- **Chunri Chadan**: A few days before the marriage, the to-be-in-laws come with the Thaal of Shagun to the Brides home. Here the red colored Chunri/silken robe is put on the head of the bride and the Red Bangles (Indian Jewellery) to be worn by the bride.

- **Sangeet**: A day before the marriage, the marriage songs are sung, dances are done and sweets are distributed among the relatives and well wishers.

- **Mehandi**: Mehandi is one important function of the Indian Marriage. A day before Marriage, the Mehandi is applied on the hands and feet of the Bride. It is said, more the color of the mehandi, more will the bride be loved by her In - Laws.

- **Sehrabandi & Ghodi Chadna**: Evening is the time when the Barat from the Grooms side sets off to the bride’s home. For this the groom rides on the ghodi (she - horse). Songs are sung and the groom’s family dances as they cover the distance till they reach the brides home.

- **After the Barat reaches the bride’s home, the groom and his relatives are received by the girl’s relatives. Rose petals and perfume is sprayed on them as they are welcomed inside the Wedding Hall. The Groom is taken to the stage. There the garlands are exchanged between the Bride and the Groom. This is called as Varmala Ceremony. After the Varmala Ceremony, the bride and the groom are led to the mandap. Here they sit in front of the holy fire and the marriage ceremony proceeds. The bride and the groom take four pheras (rounds taken around the holy pyre while chanting is done). This is followed by Saptapadi (seven steps taken by the boy and the girl). With each of these seven steps a vow is taken. The marriage becomes officially conformed either through**
Saptapadi or by tying of mangalsutra (sacred thread) by the groom around the neck of the bride or by both. Mangal sutra signifies that the groom and his bride are bonded for life. Putting vermilion in the parting of the hair of the bride by the groom is also an important component of the marriage ceremony. After the ceremony the couple seeks the blessing and greetings of the congregation.

- **Vidaai**: The most emotional time of a wedding ceremony is Vidaai, when the bride leaves her parents house and goes with her husband to start a new life.

### 3.7.1.8 Death (Antyeshti)

It involves cremation rites, making offerings to God and to the ancestor seeking comfortable journey of soul into the other worlds, scattering of ashes at select places, serving food to relatives and the poor.

After the death of a family member, the relatives become involved in ceremonies for preparing and carrying the body to the burning or burial ground. For most Hindus, cremation is the ideal method for dealing with the dead, although there are a few exceptions. Saints/ spiritual gurus and infants are buried rather than cremated. At the funeral site, in the presence of the male mourners, the closest relative of the deceased (usually the eldest son) takes charge of the final rite and lights the funeral pyre. After cremation (usually on third day) ashes and fragments of bone are collected and eventually immersed in a holy river (preferably Ganges).

After funeral, everyone undergoes a purifying bath. The immediate family remains in a state of intense pollution for a set number of days (sometimes ten, eleven, or thirteen). At the end of that period, close family members meet for a ceremonial meal. Often gifts are distributed to the poor or for charity.

A particular feature of the Hindu ritual is the preparation of rice balls (pinda) offered to the spirit of the dead person during memorial services. In part these ceremonies are seen as contributing to the merit of the deceased, but they also pacify the soul so that it will not linger in this world as a ghost but will pass through the realm of Yama, the god of death.
3.7.2 Dress and Ornaments

Girls prefer salwaar kameez while women usually dress up in saris adorned by the gold jewellery. Bangles are an important accessory for women. Mangal Sutr (a chain with a pendulum gifted by groom to his bride) and vermilion in the hair parting are considered essential for married women. Toe rings are also common among the married women. Men of older age groups wear dhoti kurta or kurta pyjama while those of younger generation prefer shirt and trousers.

3.7.3 Festivals

Some of the important festivals of Brahmins include:

3.7.3.1 Holi

Holi marks the onset of spring. It is celebrated with colors and Great Spirit. Holi, the festival of colors is celebrated on the full moon Phagun. It corresponds to the month of March according the English calendar.

As the legend goes, Hiranya Kashyap, the demon ruler of the 'Sapta Deep' used to think that he was more powerful than God. He attempted to murder his youngest son Prahlad, who had deep faith on Lord Vishnu. This was because the child refused to acknowledge him to be mightier than the God. Holika, the sister of the demon, who had a divine garment which would save her from fire, entered the burning pyre along with Prahlad on her lap. But she got burnt. Prahlad however came out unhurt. Holi thereby marks the triumph of good over evil and is celebrated with grand extravaganza throughout Uttar Pradesh. The Indian mythological tale tells us that Lord Krishna, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, in human form celebrated holi with the Gopi’s (cowherd maids).

On the day of holi, the air is full of gulal and abeer of different colors. People apply it on each other as well as to the feet of the elders of the family. Pichkaris having different shapes and sizes are a great attraction for young children. Gujiya, mathri, laddoos add sweetness to the occasion of holi. Bhang or Cannabis is also consumed by the people.

3.7.3.2 Diwali

Celebrated in the month of Ashwin, Diwali is the sacred festival of Hindus. The festival of paramount religious significance and marks the victory of good over evil. It symbolizes
the light and wisdom; it is considered that one should always strive to overcome darkness and try to enlighten the souls with knowledge of truth and goodness.

According to the holy book of Hindus, Ramayana, Lord Rama, after spending 14 rigorous years in jungles, returned to Ayodhya. While in exile, he along with his brother Lakshman and wife Sita spent a long time in jungles. During their stay, Sita was abducted by the demon king of Sri Lanka, namely Ravana. Rama after killing Ravan, returned back to his kingdom. The people of Ayodhya welcomed them by burning oil-lamps. Since then Diwali festival is celebrated to commemorate the victory of good over evil. It is also believed that departed souls visit the houses of their kith and kin. In order to guide these souls to go back, houses are lit with lamps.

The most prominent feature of diwali festival is the firing of crackers at nights. The noisy pitch of the crackers fills the entire atmosphere. People use artificial lights to decorate their houses; the entire scene looks spectacular. Hindu devotees perform massive puja celebration to pay their reverences to Goddess Lakshmi whose blessings are supposed to bring wealth and prosperity to the worshippers. The courtyards are adorned with beautiful patterns of Rangolis.

3.7.3.3 Dussehra

Dussehra is one of the important festivals for Hindus. Also termed as Vijayadashmi, it is preceded by Navratri, which has religious significance associated with it. As per the legends, Dusshera is the day when Lord Rama killed Ravana and rescued his wife - Sita. Therefore, as a symbol of victory of good over evil, Dusshera holds a special place among the myriad festivals that are celebrated by the Hindus.

Ramlila

A number of customs are common for Dussehra, in different parts of India, one of them being Ramlila. The tradition of burning the effigies of Ravana, his brother Kumbhkarna and son Meghnath on Ramlila is followed since ages, in the northern parts of the country. During the festival, Ramlila is conducted at a huge ground or ‘maidan’. It is a fair, witnessed by hundreds of people, every year. Oversized effigies (of Ravana, Meghnath and Kumbhkarna) are constructed a month prior to the festival. They are filled with crackers and erected on the eve of Dussehra, at the Ramlila maidan.
Artists disguised as Lord Rama, Sita, Lakshman and Ravana head towards the maidan, with the procession of people, amidst the bursting of crackers. After arriving at the maidan, a small drama is enacted by the artists, depicting the climax of the war between Lord Rama and Ravana. As the climax approaches, the artist, acting as Rama, shoots an arrow towards the effigy of Ravana, in order to set it on fire. Subsequently, the effigy catches fire and then bursts. This is witnessed by hundreds of people, who rejoice on the 'defeat' of Ravana by Rama.

3.7.3.4 Mahashivaratri

Mahashivaratri is an important Hindu festival. It is celebrated on 13th or the 14th night of the new moon during Krishna Paksha in the Hindu month of Phalgun, which corresponds to February-March in Gregorian calendar. The festival is celebrated on moonless night. Dedicated to Lord Shiva, Mahashivratri honors the goodness and power of the Almighty. Since Lord Shiva is one among the Hindu Trinity (the other two being Lord Brahma and Lord Vishnu), he is worshiped by almost everyone, who has faith in Hinduism (Vaishnavas being the exception). Lord Shiva is known for his short-temper, which is often brought down by the pacifying effect of his significant half - Goddess Parvati.

On the glorious occasion of Mahashivratri, the temples worshiping Lord Shiva are flocked by the devotees of the deity. All through the day, they would indulge in the worshiping of the lord, by conducting special pujas in temples or their home and chant the divine mantra of 'Om Namah Shivaya'. Many devotees would observe a stringent fast for the entire day, when they would not consume anything other than the specific diet formulated for the day. Mostly, the diet for the fast consists of fruits and beverages including tea, coffee and milk. Non-vegetarian food is strictly not included in the diet. People abstain from any foodstuff made of common salt. In fact, sendha namak (rock salt) is used to make recipes for the day.

Pujas are conducted in Lord Shiva temples to commemorate the festival. Celebrations of Maha Shivaratri mainly take place during the night, when the devotees would sing bhajans and chant mantras of the name of the Almighty. The devotees stay awake for the entire night of Mahashivratri, to show their devotion to the deity.
3.7.3.5 Janamashtami

Janmashtami, the birthday of Lord Krishna is celebrated with great fun and fervor. This day not only signifies the birth of the reincarnation of Lord Vishnu but also the birth of a divine teacher who invoked the entire mankind with the divine knowledge and power.

The most common and essential ritual followed on the day of Janmashtami is the fasting by devotees. Most of Lord Krshna’s devotees fast for on this day and open the fast at midnight when it is assumed that Lord Krishna has been born. At the time of midnight also, the people who have observed fast whole day prefer to have only milk and milk products as they are considered auspicious as well pure. Some of the ardent devotees of Krishna observe the fast for the entire day even without consuming water—it is called ‘Nirjal Vrat’.

It is said that chanting Lord Krishna’s name with entire devotion brings immense joy and pleasure in the life of the devotee. So, on the birthday of Lord Krishna, devotees indulge in continuous chanting of Krishna’s name for the entire day. They chant sholkas, mantras, richas from the Veda. They also read Bhagwat Geeta and sing bhajans in the name of Krishna. Very much like the Ramleela, devotees of Lord Krishna organize plays on the life of Lord Krishna called Krishnaleela.

It is known to everybody that Lord Krishna was extremely fond of sweets and dairy products. So on the day of Krishnashtami, devotees of Lord Krishna prepare umpteen varieties of sweets and dairy products and offer them to the idols of Krishna. This ritual is called ‘bhog’. Later, these sweets are distributed amongst the devotees as ‘Prasada’.

3.7.3.6 Karwa Chauth

Karwa Chauth is celebrated with great enthusiasm. Typically, a festival of north and north western India, Karwa Chauth falls on nine days prior to Diwali, to be precise, on Kartik ki Chauth. Married women observe fast all through the day after eating the traditional meal ‘sargi’ early in the morning, before sunrise. The morning is spent by activities such as applying henna in hands and dressing up for the festival. In the evening, a group of brightly dressed married women gathers in a house or the nearby temple to conduct Karwa Chauth puja. Tthe women apply tilak on the idol of Gauri
Ma to seek her blessings and pray for a long, blissful and prospered married life. Thereafter, an elderly woman of the group narrates the Karva Chauth katha (story), a legend associated with the celebration of the festival.

The married women would wait for the moon to rise in the evening. They would go to the place, with their individual puja thalis, where moon is clearly visible. Once the moon rises, they would see the moon through the sieve, offer prasad (dry fruits such as almonds and cashew nuts) or snacks such as mathi to the moon, and then see their husband through the same sieve. Thereafter, they would break their fast by drinking the water that they have kept in their thali.

3.7.3.7 Raksha Bandhan

Raksha Bandhan is celebrated on 'Shravan Purnima' (full moon day of the Hindu month of Shravan), which generally falls in the month of August, every year. The auspicious day commemorates the unique bond between a brother and a sister.

On the auspicious occasion of Raksha Bandhan, sisters would decorate a puja thali (a plate). All the necessary pooja items including roli (for tilak), akshat (rice grains for tilak), diya or deep (for performing the aarti of their brother), sweets and the Rakhi are beautifully arranged in the thali. First, the sisters would put tilak on the forehead of their brother and then stick some of the akshat to the same tilak. Thereafter, they would perform an Aarti of their brothers. After that, they tie the Rakhi on the right wrist of their brothers.

After tying the Rakhi, the sisters sweeten the mouth of their brothers with sweets. Then, it is brother's turn to give some gifts to their sisters in return of the beautiful Rakhi. Thus, on the festive occasion of Rakhi brothers and sisters wish a happy long life, success, prosperity and health to each other.

3.8 JATAV

The term Chamar is a blanket term that signifies a conglomeration of numerous endogamous groups of low status in Hindu social hierarchy. Jatav represents one such group. They have been included in ‘Scheduled Caste’ category by constitution of this country. Jatavs primarily inhabit the western region of Uttar Pradesh, eastern parts of Rajasthan, north- western parts of Madhya Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana, Punjab and parts of
Jammu and Kashmir. They speak languages of Indo-Aryan family including Hindi, Rajasthani and Brij bhasha and they use Devnagri script.

Jatavs constitute a significantly high proportion of SC population in Meerut district. However, separate population figures for Jatavs are not available as they are grouped with the Chamar. In comparison to other scheduled castes, people from this group have a forward outlook and are more laborious. They are divided into different exogamous sub groups referred to as got or gotra. Some of these gotras are: Pipal, Khardom, Khen, Khem, Neem, Pepriye and so on. These names are believed to have been the names of some saints who are considered to be progenitors of particular gotra.

There are a number of theories about the origin of Jatavs. According to one conception, they are products of marriage between men from the dominant caste of Jats and Chamar women. However, Jatavs themselves deny such origin. At some time in the past, they believed that they were Yaduvanshis. In the present time, even this belief is not very acceptable to them. Since the beginning of twentieth century, particularly in twenties and thirties, Jatavs have asserted their distinct identity and have even refused to be synonymously referred to as Chamar. Pre-independence they were strongly influenced by the ideals of Arya Samaj and Achutananda’s Adi Hindu movement. Post-independence they were significantly influenced by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. Beginning with the first conversion to Buddhism in 1956 under the leadership of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in Nagpur, there have been recurrent conversions to Buddhism. These conversions came as a rejection of the Hindu caste system and as an assertion of the equality of all individuals. Never the less majority of Jatavs are Hindus by faith. Most of them believe in the major deities of Hindus, especially in their localized forms. Most of the Hindu festivals (particularly Holi) are celebrated. Kartik Purnima, Magh Purnima and birth & death ceremonies of Dr. Ambedkar are observed as important festivals. A large number of Jatav families are devotees of saint Ravi Das.

Brahman priests traditionally have not served Jatavs. Instead local headmen have officiated at rituals. Jatavs perform all the major life cycle ceremonies of Hindus. Following child birth, a post delivery ritual is observed after the fifth day. It is referred to as Chathi Pujan. On the tenth day of birth, Kunwa Pujan (Well worship) is performed.
Mundan (hair shaving) ceremony is performed after one year of age. Ear/ nose piercings (Karna and Nakh chedan) for girls is also performed after one year. Some families also perform the Siksha Grahana Sanskar when their children begin education.

3.8.1 Occupation

Earlier Jatavs had a low status in the society, and they were mainly involved in leather works such as tanning or preparing shoes or were landless laborers. Now they are engaging themselves as farm workers and are involved in buffalo and other cattle works. They are also engaged in such panchayat works as Indira Awas Yojnas and Nehru Vikas Yojnas. Some of them are engaged in agriculture in small holdings which they were allotted by the state (left as surplus by farmers with large land holdings under ceiling act). They are also making use of panchayati open fields like grazing grounds and ponds that have been allotted to these dalit groups. Parents are now educating their children, leading to a better life. A number of members of the educated younger generation have found jobs in government sector where a certain percentage of jobs are reserved for Scheduled Castes.

3.8.2 Marriage

The weddings among Jatavs are very traditional and are celebrated with full spirit. Caste (biradari) endogamy and Gotra (khandan) & village exogamy are marriage rules. Inter caste marriages are strictly prohibited. Parents arrange most marriages; although the members of the younger generation are now enjoying greater say in the final decision. Dowry is generally not demanded, but as an unsaid rule it is offered.

The marriage rituals actually commence a few days before the actual date of marriage. Most of these rituals are related to purification. In their respective houses, the bride and the groom are given ritualistic bath that is based on astrological parameters. The ritual specifically associated with this bath is referred to as Cheyi in the local language. It is accompanied by an elaborate feast. Application of Haldi (turmeric) to the bride and groom constitutes yet another important ritual and some times goes on for more than a day.

On the day of marriage the groom reaches the marriage venue in a procession that includes his family members and friends. After the welcome of the groom and all the
guests accompanying him, the groom is taken on a platform (or a stage) where he is soon joined by the bride. The exchange of garlands takes place here. This is referred to as ‘Jai Mala’. All the visitors convey their wishes and usually during this time photographs are taken. This is followed by dinner. The main ceremony of marriage takes place according to the prescribed time (again based on astrological calculations) which is in most cases, late at night. During this ceremony the bride and the groom take rounds around the sacred fire, the groom ties mangal sutra (necklace) around the bride’s neck and he puts vermilion in the parting of her hair. Kanya Dan is the most important ceremony of marriage. Then in the early morning the Bidai (farewell ceremony) of the girl takes place. On the third day of marriage, the girl’s brother goes to bring her back to her parental house. This ritual is referred to as Pag Phera. In a day or two she returns to her husband’s house.

The traditional marriage dress for the groom is dhoti-kurta or sherwani. For the bride, bright colored lehenga or sari is preferred. Vermilion, glass bangles, bindi and toe rings are the symbols worn by a married woman. After marriage the ideal format of residence is patrilocal (with husband’s family). However, nuclear families are becoming very common.

3.8.3 Death

The dead are usually cremated. It is essential for a son to perform the funeral rites of his parents. In case of cremation, the mortal remains are disposed off in Ganga, Yamuna or Sangam waters at Allahabad. In case of death of children, burials are common. Death rituals require participation of agnates and male neighbors to cremate the corpse immediately. The mortuary rites are performed on the twelfth day for females and on the thirteenth day for males. It is believed that the dead soul lingers after death and passes on after a number of days. Barsi ritual is performed at the completion of one year of death.

Belief in transmigration of souls is widespread, and some believe in an afterlife in Heaven (Svarg) or Hell (Narak). Ghosts of those who died before their time (bhut) and other spirits are believed to have the power to possess or harm living people. Besides, fear of the evil eye is also widespread. Shamans (bhagat), who are sometimes Jatavs, are usually consulted in cases of spirit possession and other such issues.