CHAPTER - V

The pattern of Variations: Local, Regional and Trans-regional

Though Customs are universal in nature, they may vary from one society to other, from one region to other and from one period of time to that of other. These variations are not only seen from society to society and region to region, but even within a region, there can be seen a lot of variation in the performance of customs among different groups of people. These variations may be due to the diverse geographical features, mode of production, different religious believes, languages spoken, interaction among the people of different communities living within a region and also with the people of outside the region or adjoining area.

I

Local and regional Variations

As far as Jammu region is concerned, as elsewhere, these variations can also be observed in the performance of the Social Customs. These variations can be seen at three main levels – Local, Regional and Trans-regional.

As already discussed in chapter two, with the arrival of Madras, there was the advent of Vedic culture in Jammu region. Since then, this culture appeared to have penetrated into all the geographical sub-regions of Jammu region, but to some extent, this penetration depended on its acceptability by the sub-regions and the acceptability seems to have been decided largely by physiographical conditions. For instance, in the plains, the Vedic culture has remained strongest in comparison to other sub-regions. This was probably due to its closeness and continuous contact with Northern India, being plain area, there was an easy accessibility of Vedic culture.¹

The western plains and western hills were inhabited by the abhisara tribe of ancient days. This area was essentially tribal in culture; therefore, Vedic culture was never able to take deep roots in the region. Buddhism had also made its way into the
region. But the Vedic culture with its social restrictions could not get along easily with its tribal counterpart. People of this area seem to have been receptive to the Vedic religious practices, which gave them considerable freedom and could be accommodated with their tribal living. Therefore, Buddhism could easily take roots here as they went well with their tribal ways. As a result, there was a little penetration of Vedic culture in this area, so the region was able to maintain much of its tribal culture. Infact, they have moulded tenets of Vedic religion in their own tribal way. Thus, Brahmans, Rajputs and Mahajans of this region do not follow Vedic rules as their counterparts do in Jammu plains. For this very reason they were considered inferior to the people in the plains and were differentiated by the name of Pahari Brahmanas, Pahari Rajputs and Pahari Mahajans.

This indicates that the Jammu region was not completely influenced by the Vedic culture in nature. Except in the main Jammu plains, in the other three sub-regions it was partially accepted. Therefore, there was regional variation in the spread of Vedic culture because there was also the continuous reverence of the aboriginal culture in the region. An important attribute of this aboriginal culture was the prevalence of the cult of local deities.  

Thus, with the spread of Vedic culture, the people of Jammu region also showed great reverence to their local deities. There was no ritual or ceremony which can be initiated without having venerated these local deities. The local deities as well as the Gods of Vedic pantheon were worshipped by the people of Jammu region.

These local deities have been divided into Gram devtas and Gram devis (village deities), Naga devta (snake deities), Shaheed devtas (mrt yr deities), and Silabantis (sati deities) and Aaghat devtas (exotic deities). Many of them have attained the status of folk and regional deity due to their prominence and reverence by the people in the whole of the region. 

Even there were the variations in the form of deities which were both non-iconographic and iconic. In the non-iconographic form the deities largely existed in forms of pindi or mohara. There were some local deities who were both in the icon and pindi. Still there were some deities which were only iconic form. This variation in
representation of the deities depended on the extent of the brahmanical influence that has worked on the form of the deities. There were still some other deities which were worshipped in the form of moharas.4

There was also the variation in the shrines of local deities which were found in two types Dehri and Shikhara type. Dehri was a kind of miniature temple form whose height varies between three meters to one inch. There was hardly any space for a person to sit inside while in some dehris a person or two could sit inside to perform the rituals. Dehri style was usually connected with the deities of martyr class.

Another style of shrines available was that of Shikhara style temple. It was available both in wooden and concreted depending on the kind of raw material available. Therefore, shikhara style temple in wooden in the hilly regions and that made of brick or stones in the plains.5

There was also a variation in the performance of customs of the people of local area. People of different communities lived together, interacted with one another but they performed some customs with their own family peculiarities.

There were also some customs which were related with some particular castes like Tarkhan (Carpenter) who were the main part of the social set up. They played an important role in the performance of marriage rituals by providing daryas, toran, vedee.6 No reetain ritual was performed in this caste. Only mundan ceremony was performed that too in the same way as that of marriage, the set-up of mandal, daryas, shagan leena, tel cinchona, saant, barey parna, navgraha poojan. Mundan ceremony was performed at the age of two and half years. No goat was sacrificed. Only chanani chanda was offered to the kula devta. The mother and boy could not wear pink color clothes according to their custom. They wore it on the day of mundan ceremony given by her parents. Before that, kachi tand ceremony was performed on twenty first days. They had a custom that wearing of new clothes was prohibited to the child until kachi tand ceremony.7

The people of this caste celebrated the festival of diwali in a different way. On the day of diwali they worship the Vishwakarma God and put all their santhals in front of
him and on the next day to diwali, they did not go for work called gaddi bathana. But work only if someone came to their home and gave money to him. People of Janglot (kathua) celebrated the diwali, but in a unique manner. In the night they enlighten divas and put some sweet in a thaali and offer this to their ancestors.

Similar was the case with the cheer caste, they performed the reetain ritual with great joy. First of all they coated the floor with cow dung, called as chownk poorna. Then with the flour a flower was drawn on that place, and a gadwa was placed in the middle of that flower. The peerha was placed on that and pregnant lady sat on the peerha. She wore pink color clothes given by her parents, nayan combed her hair and at this time she covered her face with her dupatta and applied other cosmetic things which were sent by her parents. Women from the community were invited. They sang bihayain songs, shagan in the form of cash money and dry coconut was put in her lap. After that cooked food was served to the seven women of seven different castes like –lohari, tarkhani, cheeri, nayan, kumari, tubi and heer jatti. This was known as Sat-sawaniya.

Among the Cheer, the ritual of kachi tand pana was performed in the eleventh or thirteenth day. The mother was made to sit in the khurali with child in her lap. Three threads were tied to lady, child and small animal. This was performed so in case of the male child. In case of girl child, a custom was performed in sixth months after birth. This was called as Sir gundai karna in which some oil was put in the hair of the girl and the comb her hair. Mother and girl were prohibited to use comb before this ceremony.

People of this caste performed mundan ceremony in the two and a half year. It was compulsory for them to pass the first two vratas of Janamashatami and on the third Janamashatami, mundan ceremony was performed. They made earthen small animals called as kattu-bachhu. Churi of ghee and sugar was prepared and with this churi, these kattu-bachu were worshipped called as jand-pujana. After this they ate this churi themselves, if it remained, it was buried in the home. There was also a custom that if someone came to their home they tied that person with the rope. The people of this caste performed drupadi puja. On the day of Drupadi, they prepared rutt. Channe (black
gram) were soaked in the water. They simply worshipped at their home. Some people went to bank of some river or pond and worshipped here.\textsuperscript{12}

The custom of \textit{rakade} was also different in different communities. In Cheer community, they placed cow dung in the courtyard and in that cow dung a piece of \textit{bair} wood was placed and around this they took the \textit{rakade}. All the cosmetic things along with money, clothes and seven \textit{babriya} were kept in a \textit{chhabadi}. This was called as \textit{bayor}. After this ladies from the seven different castes were given food to eat called as \textit{sawahaniya pujan}. Male members performed dance by holding \textit{chhabadi} in the hand and also beg money from the people assembled around him. This was called as \textit{Phumani}.\textsuperscript{13}

Among the Manhas community, \textit{Reetain} ritual was performed. First of all floor was coated called \textit{chouk likhana}. Flower was drawn and on the four corners of that flower wheat or rice was kept, then \textit{peerha} was placed. The expected mother sat on the \textit{peerha} and \textit{nayan} combed her hair, she wore pink or yellow cloth. A \textit{chhabadi} was kept in front of that, and a \textit{diva} was lightened. First \textit{shagun} put in her lap which has sent by her parents. This was known as \textit{pehla shagan} which consisted of \textit{tricholi} made of rice, \textit{til}, money and \textit{nariyal}. \textit{Kachi Tand} ritual was performed on twenty first day after bath. There was also the variation in hanging of mango cord on various occasions like the birth of a male child, sutra, and marriage.\textsuperscript{14}

There was also the variation in the food habits of the people. Jammu region is divided into two parts according to the climatic conditions prevailing here. The region is divided into two parts-Antergiri and Bahargiri.\textsuperscript{15} Antergiri is the hilly area and Bahargiri is the plain area. The food habits of the hilly area comprised of wheat, maize, potato, pulses, green vegetables, milk, curd, butter and honey, etc. Whereas the food habits of the plain area consists of the wheat, rice, bajra, gur, milk, curd, black gram, peas, pulses, green vegetables. People took their breakfast with \textit{Lassi} in the plain areas whereas in the hilly areas it was taken with maize \textit{roti}. In plain area the production of rice was abundant so they were in regular use, but in hilly area rice was used after some time.\textsuperscript{16}

Along with the variations in customs, there were certain religious practices related with their respective \textit{kul-devta} which the people of Jammu region follow, as negligence
on their part can provoke the anger of their deity. The deities not only withhold the benefits but also inflict varied punishments.

Almost all the communities of Jammu region have to follow certain religious sanctions on the birth of the male child. Those who worshipped the *Bawa kalash* as a *kul-devta* followed sanctions like the mother and new born male child had to wear white clothes, the mother should wear only white hair pins, white ribbons, white bangles and the bedding should also be white in color. The mother of the newly born male child did not put vermillion on her forehead. Infact the hair of the child was not combed in this duration. The mother and the new born son have to follow all these sanctions till *mundan* ceremony that is for two and half years. These sanctions were associated with community because of bramcharya nature of deity. Both the mother and child have to follow the bramcharya for two and half year.\(^{17}\)

In other communities such as Mehta Brahman who worship *Baba Jitto* and *Bua Koudi*, the mother of new born son should not wear the pink color but only yellow till the sutra ceremony (purification ceremony) after the sutra ceremony, yellow was forbidden till *mundan* ceremony (tonsure) the other religious sanction comprised of that unmarried girls and women did not wear the glass bangles and *mehndi* on their hands. It was because *Bua Koudi* when sacrificed her life, she wore the glass bangles. Moreover, the people of *biradari* were not allowed to wear black and blue clothes.\(^{18}\)

In some others, the mother and new born son has to forbid certain colors, pink color among khajuria (Brahman), the pregnant women and the mother of new born son should not touch the *mehndi* and *ubtan* till *mundan*.\(^{19}\)

In case of death, family remained under *sootak* (polluted) and they were not allowed to pay homage to their respective deity. Moreover, among all the communities, the unmarried girls were not allowed to bow head in front of the deity. Among Seth Brahmans, the married women were not allowed to enter the place in the shrine where the *Maura* of the deity was installed. They have also to keep veil while offering their homage to the *Kul-devta*.\(^{20}\)
In the Charak community who worshipped Data Ranpat Dev ji as their kul-deva. They have to offer dhoti and gadwa at Data talab on the marriage of the boy and first milk of cow after twenty first days along with dhoti gadwa was also offered here. In case of the birth of the male child, the mother and child did not wear pink and yellow color clothes before mundan ceremony. Both of them also had not to touch the mehndi and ubtan till mundan ceremony. Ladies of this community were forbidden to eat the flesh especially of goat.21

They could not keep black dog and black horse in their home because it was said that Data ji was killed on the back of black horse and his black dog was also with them. The daughters known as dhyana of this family after their marriage also came to Data Talab especially on the occasion of their maile to offer their share. In case of the birth of their male child, they also had to offer dhoti and gadwa in Data talab. It was said that Data ji remained happy and fulfilled the desires of dhyana. The male child could not be put bangles.22

In case of the Sambyal community. The mother of the new born had to keep fast for the first five days and only had to take Kara. They performed the six month ceremony of the male child called chattiya. On this day a grand feast was organized and child was given food to eat on that day. The mother and the child had to remain at home till chattiya ceremony. In case of any compulsion, they have to go out; they could go only through back door not from the main door. The child should not be touch while eating and also could not be kept on the earth till chattiya.23

On this day, after the dharti puja the child was kept on the earth. This custom is still followed by the people of village Bara near Vijaypur24 and known as Bhumau Upavesana25. The child and mother could not to wear pink and yellow color clothes till chattiya ritual. The child has not to put in the jhulla because it was said that once upon a time a child was died in the jhulla.26

Among the people of Verma caste, the most important customs were Panjey Lana and Nayaran Pana.27 Rice were soaked in water and grinded, with this paste marks of hands were made on the wall known as Panjey Lana. These marks were twenty one in
number and marked by the male members of the family. On these marks sindur was applied and then the sign of Om was marked on them. A bair stick was taken; it was covered with white cloth. Seven small stones were also taken, considered as seven devtas and a kumbh was placed nearby. Collectively, they were worship and offered big chappatis called as suchiyain in local language. These were also twenty one in number. These were known as nayaran. After the performance of the ritual, these nayaran were distributed, but only among the people of same gotra known as shareek locally.28

Reetain ceremony was performed around four a.m in the morning. The expected mother sat on the peerha which was placed opposite to the panjey on the wall. Women wore cloths of red color sent by her parents. Nayaran were offered to the devtas along with the cloths and pakwans sent by the parents of expected mother.29

On twenty first day taman ritual was performed. On this day also panjey were marked and nayaran were offered. Mother of the new born wore cloths sent by her parents and applied other cosmetic things because she was forbidden to apply them after the birth of the child.

On the mundane ceremony again the panjey were marked and nayaran were offered. The hair of child was cut; the mother sat on the flour and took a puri in her hands. The barber cut the hair and these were put in that puri and ultimately folded in that which were latter on thrown in the Ban Ganga (katra) or Halki Porhi(Tawi).30

As far their marriage customs are concerned, before the saant ceremony the elder brother and bhabhi of the groom dressed themselves like groom and bride. Bhabhi kept a pitcher on her head. They went to a river or a place where water was available accompanied by other family members along with dhol. On reaching the river both of them filled the pitcher with water. Bhabhi again kept it on her head and they came back. With this water saant ritual was performed and both brother and bhabhi were given shagun. This custom was known as sheesh gharoli.

At the time of barat the groom wore the white color dress and only a tilak of turmeric was marked on pagdi by his mama.31
Even there was the variation in the performance of customs at various sub-regions of the Jammu regions. The marriage customs of the people of Jammu areas were started with the *khulle sagan* as already discussed in chapter forth whereas this was not so in the area like Basoli where on that day ladies assembled. They took *mash daal*, wheat and black grams. All these things were cleaned by the ladies. Then *mouli* was tied to wrist of six ladies and one girl. It was also tied to the *chhaj, kadai* and *chakki*. *Mash daal* was put in the flour which was used to prepare *Bade* on the day of *saant*, wheat flour was used in making *babria of saant*, and black gram was put in the gram which was distributed in the day of *saant*.\(^32\)

One day before the marriage, rice was grinded and marks of hands were made of rice flour on the wall which was arranged in number of five, three, two and one. These were known as *chhape lana*. Then all the members of the family worshipped these marks and money, *patashe* and many other things were offered to these marks.\(^33\)

There was also the custom of *Sitala pujan* in which cow dung was taken and an image of *Sitala mata* made of silver was kept in that cow dung. *Mouli* was tied to the *druba* and revolve around the head of the bride for seven times. Then *dalassi* was put in that. *Sat pakwania* was also prepared, clothes, rice, flour and other cosmetic things were offered to the *Sitala Mata*.\(^34\)

At the time of *saant*, *Mama* performed the *bare bharena* ritual. *Mama* stood on the front and *mami* on the back side. After *saant* he made the bride /groom to stand. When she /he were taken inside some pieces of coal and a *diva* were placed on the *chowki* on that *saant* was performed. Bride was said to hit the coal with her foot and *dive* was given to her. *Mama* took her inside. Then mother crosses the *chowk* for three times and place was cleaned with the hands and the mark of both the hands was made on the wall.\(^35\)

A community meal called *dhaam* was organized. First of all a Brahman was worshipped and offered food then it was taken by all other. At the time of *vedee* bride’s brother gave a *dhoti* to groom called as *barani* especially of yellow color. On the next
day, suayania pujan was done in which two ladies and a girl was given food to eat which consisted of mash-daal, rice and kari. It was known as tai suayanian Pujan.

After some days bride was given utensils of worship to clean which was known as chhang-manjana with this she was allowed to work in the kitchen of in-laws.36

We also observed many variations in the customs of Rajouri area. As far as the customs of the area are concerned, after the birth of a child, the mother of the new born went to the kitchen on the eleventh day and prepared some sweet dish which was distributed among the family members. With this rite sootak terminated from the family members but parents of new born considered it for forty days.37

The mundan ceremony of a child was performed on the two and a half month, two and a half year or five years. There were variation even within that area, some people performed the mundane ceremony of both the boy and the girl, but others performed only of the boys. Some people performed the ceremony at home, others performed it under the Amala tree because there was a believe among the people that if they did not perform it under this tree some sort of deformity might came in the child. This is still performed by the people of Rajouri area. No reetain ceremony was performed in this area.38

As far as the marriage customs are concerned they were started with the mitti ritual. On this day, all the women were invited from the community called sadda dena. All of them went to a sacred place and brought mitti from there along with dhols. On the way they hold the mitti one by one, started from mother to all the paternal and maternal aunts. A meal was also served on this day. When they came, they assembled at a place in the house and coated mitti on the flour. With this started the marriage rituals. From that very day, women came to their home for help in doing marriage works and also to sing songs in the night.

Two or three days before marriage gana ritual was performed. This period was considered as the period of weak stars so pandit tied red thread called gana on the wrist of the groom. After this ritual, he always holds a sword with him.
There was also a custom that if two persons were married at the same date; they could not meet with each other after *gana* ritual because it was considered as an omen.

One day before marriage, *mehndi* ceremony was performed. It was applied by the *bhabhi* of groom only. After that bridegroom with his friends hide somewhere in the house with blanket and his *bhabhi* went to look for his *debar* and taken his along with his friend in the room after giving *shagun*. On the day of marriage, before the departure of *barat* there was also a custom that the bridegroom and his friends hug each other and ate sweets.

When the *barat* reached the bride’s home his *saalis* (sister-in-law) put *surma* in his eyes and in return he gave money to them and then after he was taken in the house. This ritual was known as *maraj torana*.39

Only one *vedee* was made in that area. On the next day when they came in groom’s home. Bride took a bucket of water and wash the foot of her husband with her hands. The groom also wash her foot but with his feet. He put some rice in his mouth and spit it on the bride. Groom’s mother put milk and water in a pot and made *kachi lassi*. A ring was thrown in it for three times, both of them have to look for the ring.

As far as the death customs are concerned no food was cooked till the *phull chunana* ritual. Till that day, the community members came to their house and cooked food, and served to the family concerned. The death *sootak* was observed for the ten days. On the tenth day, they went to some river or a place where was available, bath there and wash their cloths. In this way, they became from *sootak*

On the eighteenth day, a grand meal was served to all the relatives and the community members.

They also performed the *drupadi* in a different way. Women kept fast and made *Rutt* same in the number with their children. They went to a well and performed the *drupadi puja* around this well. A *rutt* was thrown in the well as an offering to the God.40
In mangal dai (Noushera), marriage customs was started with Gur- Mansana ritual which was performed before seven days of marriage. On that day, Brahman was called, he fixed a mahurat. On this mahurat ladies were invited and Gur was offered to the kul-devtas. After this it was given to the Brahman and then to all the ladies assembled there. With the commencement of this ritual, the marriage ceremony began.\(^{41}\)

Five days before the actual ritual, the chulle pathana ritual was performed in which ladies from the community assembled. They made one big and three small earthen hearths called chulle in local language along with a Nithi. Mouli was tied to the five ladies and also to the chhaj, kadai, chhaki. Before three days, kadayi chadana ritual was performed. On this day, the ladies were assemble, mash daal was grinded in the chhaki and babriya were prepared and they were bonded in the khamani and hanged on the main door on the day of saant by mama.

On the day of saant the ceremony of sheesh gharoli was performed. The bridegroom’s bhabhi and brother dressed in their best and accompanied by some other female relatives, go singing to a nearly pool or well. His brother cut the water with the sword and Bhabhi filled a gharoli (small earthen pitcher) with water. This water was ceremoniously brought mixed with more water. With this water saant ceremony was performed. At the time of barat bridegroom wore the dress and sehra given by his mama.\(^{42}\)

Before proceeding to the bride’s house, the ceremony of cutting the Jand tree was performed. To ward off evil, the bridegroom cuts off with his sword, which hangs on his side, a branch from the Jand tree, which was called as Jand katana. After that he was taken to a temple to pay his homage there, and then the whole party proceeds to the bride’s house.

On the next day when groom came back with bride, seven thalis were put in the room and bride has to pick them one by one without making a noise. It was a believe that if she made noise while holding thalis it means that there would be no good relation between bride and her mother-in-law.\(^{43}\)
Similar was the case with the customs of Bhadrawah area. The Bhadarwahi culture was highly influenced with worship and meditation on Nag Lords: -Shesh Nag, Vasuki Nag, and Takasht Nag. In all the Pargnas of Bhadarwah have one or other Nag Lords as their Isha Dev and they were worshiped and pleased at many occasions in a particular form during the year. From ancient times a custom was prevalent in Bhadarwah for pleasing Nag deities by celebrating a specified type of festival (Kod Mela or jataraein) which was celebrated in devotion to Nag Lords in each main village or town right from Paddar in north to Bilawar in south and Bheja in east to Sudh Mahadev in west.44

These Melas or fairs started from Aashad Purnima (June/July) to Kartik Amavasya that was about more than three months. On these occasions the devotees or worshipers offered particular obligations and sacrifices to their Nag Lords in a particular way. During the whole night the devotees dance around a heap of burning fire. In the morning hours Chellas representatives or disciples of Nag Lord walked through the burning coals and performed a plenty of miracles which were worth seeing. They also forecasted the coming events of the year and all secrets which one would ask from them at a particular occasion. At this occasion, the Devwani tune was played on drums and flutes. Devwani means dialect of Devtas or Nag lords and on this tune the particular Nag Lords possessed the Chella and replied the questionnaires. During this whole period the Chella remained trembling which indicated the Nag Lord has entered the body of the person. The dance performed on this occasion was named Dehku dance and tune played while making the disciple to predict was Devwani.45

Apart from these festivals, one general festival was celebrated in devotion to Shesh Nag at Sabar Dhar, one day prior to Baishakhi. In this festival almost whole of the tehsil Bhadarwah and some parts of district Doda participated. This was the day when the doors of the temples were opened for the year which was closed in the month of Pusha (December- April), whereas, the doors of Vasuki Nag were opened on first and second Basakh in Bhadarwah town and Gatha. These customs and rites were the part of religious performances for Hindus inhabiting Bhadarwah.46
The devotion towards Nag Lord still continue to exist; it signified that this valley was once inhabited by the Nag Lord before the mankind inhabitation started and rule in ancient times. Today, even the people settled in Bhadarwah from outside celebrated these occasions in devotion without any fail, to mark the respect to their ancestors. The popular conception of the Nagas, now, current represented them under the form of snakes, living in the water of springs or lakes protected by them. In Bhadarwah at present day the springs and holy ponds are named as Nag.47

The another famous custom of Bhadrawah was Kanchawath. The Kanchawath was a lady day being celebrated for the well fare of their husband or would be husband and their long and prosperous matrimonial life. It was generally falls in the month of Magha (Jan-feb).48 Like Karwa Chouth that was celebrated in plains (Jammu Udhampur), Kanchoth was celebrated in hilly Bhadarwah. Both were celebrated by women to pray for long life of their husbands. Style was almost same. The only difference was timing.

On Karwa Chouth women broke their fast when the moon appeared while as in case of Kanchoth the fast was broken after Gouri Pooja during the day. Ladies clad in their best suits and ornaments gathered at nearby water body, performed Puja and then sang Ghurai songs and dance one by one. On this particular day, the ladies and maiden kept fast till half day and made merry and dance in a folk assembly. They went in the neighborhood to offer Thel (respect) to one and all irrespective of creed and caste, age and sex and get in return their blessing Suhagan Bho (Live long your husband), get the blessing for their happy married life.49

The other festival celebrated in Bhadrawah was Dharam Divas. This was celebrated on first chaitra of every Vikrami year when the spring season was in its prime. On this day actually the ploughing for this coming year started which stood seized from Dec (The Posh month). After a long spell of winter when earth became clear of snow, people irrespective of their creed and cast took their own oxen to nearby field, performed their puja by putting a tilak on their foreheads and Gur in their mouth and plough the land. The ritual was done by every male of the family including small children. Women folk dig the land with Kudali. The day was called Dharamdees (pious day). In the
preceding night a large thali filled with rice and Gur was placed at the feet of the family deity.

Next day, before dawn someone from the family went to the nearby Boali to fetch fresh water. It was supposed that one who fetches the water first of all is blessed by God almighty. The pot of fresh water is then placed near the ‘thali’ called Kamrath and some gur eaten from it. This was done by everyone from the family one by one. On Dharamdees people avoid going to each other’s house believing that their going would caste good or bad effect on the family for the whole year.50

One more festival which has important in the region was makar sangrate following the day of Lohri. This day was celebrated almost in whole of North India. The celebration of this festival in manner in which it was celebrated in the rest of country.51 The influence of Naga Puja has greater impact on Bhadarwahis because in the course of any disaster or trouble the public generally went to Shesh Nag temple at Sibar Dhar to perform the ritual prevalent in this area.52

As far as the marriage customs of this area was concerned their main function was mehndi day. On this day mehndi was send from the side of bride’s in-laws.53 They came in a procession accompanied by dhol. When they reached the bride’s door step, her mother took Aarti of them and then they entered the house. After mehndi ritual they performed Kud dance, in which they made a circle and started dance.

When the barat reached the house of bride, her mother welcomed the groom. She gave her some sweet to eat and saw the face of groom because there was the custom that bride’s mother have to see the face of groom first of all which is still in practice. Sweet was distributed. The barat remained there for two days which is still prevalent in that area.54

They have also a custom that bride and groom did not see the face of each other till the Vedee ritual. At the time of Vedee, bride was given the ornaments and cloths sent by her in-law’s side. On an auspicious mahurat, she wore that ornaments and cloths and saw the face of her husband. Sweet was distributed at that very moment.55
On the next day when bride reached the groom’s house, they performed a unique custom. Bride herself did not enter the house; instead her mother–in–law saw the face of bride first and took bride to her back and entered the house.\textsuperscript{56}

On the next day, bride and groom accompanied by their family members went to a place where water was available. The bride holds the gadwa on her head when they went to the river or pond and in return she has to come by holding again it on the head.

Then they came back and the ceremony of Talwar Nachana was performed in which the mama (maternal uncle) of the groom made him to dance. After that everybody started dancing.\textsuperscript{57}

The main custom performed by Bhadrawahi at the time of the birth of a child was that of Barol which was celebrated on the twelfth day of the birth of a child. On this day the mother fully dress-up like a bride took the child out for the first time to show Sun. A rutt was prepared with coins engraved on it and maternal uncle of the child threw it on the roof. The children rush towards the roof to collect the coins from the rutt. After that a community meal was served.\textsuperscript{58}

\section*{II}

\textbf{Trans-Regional Variations}

Having discussed the customs and the variations obtainable at local and trans-local level, one would now move on to discuss the similar customs in the regions which are geographically proximate to our area of study, which would largely correspond to the present day Kashmir, Ladakh, Panjab and Himachal Pradesh.

One would start by discussing the essentials of the rituals practiced in these regions and try to see how they compare with those rituals which are practiced in the region under study.
Kashmir Region

The birth of the child was ushered into the world on a bed of soft straw of the drab (or Koin) grass, which has been rendered holy by perfumes and by the utterance of Sanskrit Mantras. The birth bed was known as hurru, and an earthen vessel was placed near the bed known as hurlij. Close to the vessel the flour was carefully swept, and a mystic figure was traced on it in chalk and on this figure was placed a stone pestle which was worshipped by some girl of the house. The mother was known as Losa and if this is her first child she is called Sadh Piavi. Often before the confinement a ram is brought into the room which the patient strokes three times. She then puts a handful of rice into a basket, her mother puts in a handful of flour, and her sister puts in some money. The female relations come in all bringing presents of figs, dates, almonds, rice and money. All these gifts are eventually given to the priest. Later the women scatter rice, flour and money around the bed and when the child is born, if it is a boy, this was celebrated with joy. All food taken by the mother after her confinement has to be cooked on a fire worshipped by the girl and is placed in the huriliji and the girl after the fire worship anoints her forehead and the foreheads of the mother and child with ghee. For three days after child birth the mother must eat but little, but on the fourth day a feast called Panjiri, made of sesameum, walnuts, almonds and sugar fried in oil, is prepared and sent round to relatives and friends.

On the ninth day after the birth the mother and the child receives its name. On that day, too, the child is given clothes (Za Pheran) and the midwife throws out the old straw bed and makes a fresh bed. After bathing, seven vessels, either of clay or of bronze, are filled with food. These vessels represent seven deities, and as some are flesh eating deities and some vegetarian, the food chosen has to be selected carefully. After the food has been made pure, the midwife lights a torch of birch-bark and waves it round the heads of the mother and the child finally flings it into an earthen bowl filled with water. The holy food is also distributed among the relatives and neighbors.

The birth of the male child was an occasion for rejoicing. The father performed several rites at the birth of the son. In the list of the Nagas of Kashmir there was mention
of a Naga deity was worshipped by people to get many sons. The sense of regard for the father was shown by the son by touching his feet and he too, laid open his facial affection by smelling the head of the son. The children received proper attention of festive occasions. The happy ideal for a house holder was to have sons and grandsons endowed with long life. The birth of a boy was a time of great ceremonial activity. 62

During the first eleven days the visitors are not allowed to eat or drink in the house, with the exception of the very near relatives, as the house is considered infections and unclean. 63

On the eleventh day a purification ceremony, the Kahnethar, took place on the day, the mother of a child leaves her room. A havan was performed and the child given a name. 64 The priest bring his horoscope and receives a good tip if it is a male child. The horoscope is a scroll of paper showing the planets that are favorable or unfavorable to the baby.

The oldest woman of the household procures a few pieces of birch bark. She rolls them up and then assembles the family together. The pieces are then burnt, and the burning pieces are revived several times round the head of each member in turn, while the old lady keeps on reciting the verse: This is a good omen, may it recure. 65

In the third year the ceremony of shaving the child’s head (zar kasai) take place, this being a very joyous occasion. The day before the ceremony the boy’s hands and feet are colored red with the dye of mystle or of a lichen, and great feast is prepared by the paternal aunt. This custom is known as Manzi rath, and is also observed on the occasions of wearing the sacred thread and of marriage. The food on this occasion is known as Wari. In case of girl there is no shaving of the head. The boy’s hair is carefully buried under a walnut. 66

When the boy has attained the age of seven years and before he reaches his thirteenth year, he must wear the sacred thread and become a true Brahmin. An auspicious day is fixed by the astrologer, and five days before the date relatives are invited to the boy’s house. There is constant feastings and women sing and make merry. 67
The house is cleaned and white-washed. It is called *Gher-Navii*. The maternal uncle presents gifts and the day before the sacred thread is put on, the rites of *devgon* is a ceremony when the protection of sixty four deities, called *Yognis* is invoked. Friends and relatives give the boy’s father money (awarah bal), and sometimes considerable sums are received. On the day the boy is confirmed as a Brahman, small earthen *dais* is made in the courtyard on which a fire is lighted and the boy throws almonds and pistachio nuts in it. He is then shown a virgin heifer seven times and the sacred thread of three strings (*janeo*) is placed on the boy. Late he stands on the mystic figure traced on the ground (*weug*) while the women sing around him. Coins and shells are thrown over his head and then and then he is carried in state down to the river where performs his first *sandhia* or prayer ceremonies.

As regards marriage, boys and girls did not enjoy the freedom of selecting their match. The selection was the exclusive privilege of parents or the guardian or middleman as it was believed that the children, however grown up, they would not, because of their inexperience, be able to make the correct choice. The unmarried people did not even participated in the discussions about the offers received from various household as this was regard as an act of misbehavior.

Therefore, a professional match-maker (*manzim yor*) are requisitioned and when he markes down a likely bride, the astrologers are called in and horoscope of the boy and girl are compared. If the horoscope are favorable and there is no hitch, the girl’s parents send a little salt and sugar to the boy’s parents, sometimes also money. The astrologer fixes an auspicious day for the marriage and information is sent to the bridegroom’s parents of the number of guests who are to join the marriage party. On such occasions, the house was white-washed, as in the case of the thread ceremony. This also was divided into three chief days - henna ceremony and *devagun* and the wedding ceremony. The chief day was called *Lugan* (marriage).

On this day the bridegroom, richly attired bedecked with jewels and brave with heron’s plumes, set out to the bride’s house in a boat or on horseback or on a vehicle. As they approach the bride’s house conchs are blown and a near relative or honored guest of
the bride’s family comes down to meet the barat.\textsuperscript{73} Again an alter is erected, and incense is kept burning. The priests chant Vedas. The husband and the wife are made to swear to hold each other as one body and one soul. Through mantras their bodies and souls are united. The woman is *Urdangi* (half body- left side of the man). After the marriage is over the wedding party is given a feast, vegetable food only being served, and then they leave the house with the bride. When they reach the bridegroom’s house the doors are closed against them by the bride’s father the bridegroom are summoned by the bride’s father. The bridegroom is given some rupee, and then the married couple is sent back on the same night. The bride spends a few days, not exceeding a week, in her husband’s house, and then returns to her father and spends some time there also. Every time the father wishes to see his daughter he has to pay some cash. If both the bride and the bridegroom are of adult age they live as husband and wife, if not, the bride wears gold-embroidered cap and sleeps in a separate room till they attain maturity. On that occasion another ceremony is performed, without the priest. This is called ‘Zuge’, or marriage proper. On this occasion also the bride’s father has to invite son-in-law to his house and spend a good deal of money on feast.\textsuperscript{74}

The ceremonies at the time of death of a Hindu were performed with religious zeal. The body was washed with warm water and wrapped in a piece of new cloth. A little ceremony was performed outside the house. The son or the brother or the nearest relatives has to attend this ceremony. The greatest shock for a father seems to have been the death of a son.\textsuperscript{75} When it is over the body is placed on a plank and carried to the cremating ground. The men that accompany it continue chanting: *Sheo, sheo shamo’,* etc (o god of peace, forgive our sins’) After the body is removed the priest covers a small piece of ground inside the house with flour and places a basket over it with a lamp kept burning inside. He pretends to discover what body the soul has been changed into by reading the impression made on the flour the body is then burnt in a peculiar way. The men come back, wash themselves in the river, burn a little fire on the river bank, turn round it seven times and then go to their houses. On the third day the son of the deceased visited the ashes of his father and brings a few bones, which are kept in the house till they are thrown into the Ganges, or a lake at Ganga bal which is supposed to possess the same merit as the Ganga.\textsuperscript{76} When the body of a deceased Hindu is carried to the cremating
ground it is laid down in a corner, while certain elaborate ceremonies are performed, which may be very briefly stated here. From three separate sites are selected, on which lamps called kulushas are placed. At this place eight barous are invoked and propitiated through different mantras. Barous are the attendants of the god Rudra, the master of death. Chit shakti, the all-permeating vital force of the universe, forms the ninth Barous. Apart from this, two fires are burnt; the one is called Vedic and the other Shavic Agni Sadhan.

As far as ornaments of the people of Kashmir are concerned, Jiggni and Tikka, worn on the forehead, are generally triangular, semi-circular and circular in shape. These are made of gold and silver and are fringed with hanging pearls and gold leaves. Bala, Dor-hor, Alcahar, Kana-door, Jhumaka, Deji-hor, Kana-Vaji are the ornaments of ear. Bala is studded with turquoise with a fringe of hanging gold leaves and balls. Kana-vaji is an ornament studded with a fring of small pearls and jumaka is a bell-shaped earring. Deji-hor and Tolraj are indispensable ornaments for Kashmiri Hindu married women. They wear them day and night as it is for them a symbol of suhag. Alka-hor lies over the ear on either side of the head and is connected by a chain running over the head. Halqa-band, kanthi, sagalar, necklace, tulsi, raz are ornaments of neck. Bangar, gunus and dula are the wrists ornaments.

**Ladakh Region**

In Ladakh some differentiation is made among the various sections of the people on the basis of their occupation. Traditionally there were three classes: Rigzang (upper class), Mangriks (middle class), and Rignun (Lower class). Rigzang included the Gyalpo (Raja), ans Kushak (chief Lama), Klori and lonoo (officials). Mangrika include Lama (priest), Unpo (astrologer), Larje (physican) and Thakshos (common gentry). The last class, Rignun includes Beda (piper), Mon (Drummer), Garra (blacksmith), Shinkan (carpenter), Lamkin (cobbler) and Malakhwan (dancing girls and prostitutes). Generally there are no restrictions as to inter-dinning among these grades of society or on inter-marriage among them.
Lamas and Chamos dominate the social order among the Buddhists of Ladakh. There was a custom in the Buddhist families of Ladakh that each of the family will dedicate at least one of the son or daughter to their respective monasteries for conversion into a monk (Lama) or the Nun (Chomos). The men so dedicated became Lamas and women become Chomos. There are separate Gumpas for the Chomos. They used to learn ‘Dharma’ by staying in the monasteries, and are sent to some other monasteries for the advance religious knowledge. This practice is still prevalent in Ladakh. 

(Ladakh and Himalayas (tourist and spiritual profile) According to local custom, the family estate is inherited by the eldest brother, whose duty is to look after the mother and unmarried sisters. He has also to support the next two brothers. In the absence of a male heir the family wealth is inherited by a daughter who can marry a person of her own choice and also divorced him at will. This husband is known as her Magpa. He has no right on her property and can be summarily divorced.

Lamas play an important role in the social structure of the Buddhists. From birth till death a Lama is always present to perform the ceremonies according to the local customs. The Lamas are not born but they are made. The Head Lama is known as ‘Shashok’ He is born, not made. One of the beliefs is that a Shashok again takes birth only as a shashok. The custom, therefore, is that when a Shashok is on his death bed his disciples patiently listen if he gives any indication of his place of reincarnation. If he did not give such an indication the children born within a specified period after the shashok death are gather. They are shown the possessions of the deceased and the one who evinces interest and expresses recognition of these articles, is allowed to be brought up by his mother till he attains the age of five or six years and then placed under the charge of a selected tutor. After attaining the necessary knowledge of the Buddhist scriptures, he is anointed as shashok.

At the time of marriage ritual, before contacting the girl’s parents a religious specialist called ‘onpo’ (astrologer) is consulted for the future prospects of the match. Onpo determines whether the Loh (kundali in Hindi) of the boy and the girl matches or not. Boy’s maternal uncle, his father or the father’s brother contacts the members of the girl’s family with the help of middlemen. Chhang and a khataks (white or golden scarf
which is an auspicious Tibetan tradition for welcoming and also for the start of a good relationship) are carried along. This step is term as ‘Tee-chang’. Tee means asking. The acceptance of chang and khataks approves the proposal from the girl’s side. Bride’s wish is also asked whether she agrees to the proposal or not. She can turn down the proposal against her parents. This shows that girl among Ladakhi Buddhist exercise some choice while agreeing to the mate selected. 83 The Bodhils prefer Pus, the last month of their calendar for marriage. They reduce the terms of their marriage to writing. The consent of the bridegroom is given in writing to the bride. When betrothed, the bridegroom proceeds to the bride’s house with a bowl of Chang and the relatives discuss wedding day and the spirits together. After the bridal day has been fixed, the bridegroom is obliged to send a portion of food and Chang daily to his elect. After the end of fifteen to twenty days all the relatives of both the parties assemble together to ask the bridegroom what present he will make to the mother of the bride. The bridegroom makes an offer, generally of a few rupees, according to his means and the ardor of his love. About ten or fifteen days after the asking the relatives of both parties assemble at the brides’ house, and conduct the lady in state to the bridegroom’s house, where prayers are read by a party of Lamas and the couple are declared man and wife. The whole party sits down to dinner and Chang of which the supply on these occasions is always ample. The marriage feast is called Bag-ton.84

As soon as the baby is born an arrow, known as Dhan-dar (lucky arrow) is fixed in the heap of grain which is kept in a pot, and this pot is placed near the head of the child on Choktse (small table) for 30 days. The visitors, who want to see and bless the child, come with ‘khataks and also bring new clothes for the baby. The seventh day of the birth is called ‘dun’. During this period, the nearest relatives and friends visit the house to bless the baby. The first 30 days are treated as pollution period and nobody takes food in the house of the newborn except the family and phaspun members. On the 20th day a ceremony called ‘Ni-shu’ is performed, when the distant relatives, friends and village community visit newborn.

When the child completes 30 days, a Dha-gangs (means completing of one month) ceremony is performed which is a time of festive occasion celebrated very elaborately
like a marriage under a big taut in which sitting arrangements are made by carpeting the floor. The rows of choktse (table) occupy the large sitting areas as they are used for placing food and drinks. Ladakhi dance and music make the occasion lively and colorful. On all these days that are 7th, 20th, and 30th, after child birth the relatives and others, share the feast popularly known as ‘Marzan’. Marzan is brought mostly by female. Whatever they bring whether gift for baby, cooked food, butter, rice, etc are recorded in a note book because it is reciprocal custom.

On these important days monks are requested for performing Laf-sang. Laf-sang in a ritual to purify the atmosphere. In addition to what has been explained above the Onpo’s (astrologer) recognition is undisputed. The onpo, in general, is contacted after every birth. He is also invited to the house of the new-born to read the future of the child. He prepares horoscope for the infant. This document known as ‘Skaskar’ is believed to contain all about the infant’s future. In case of hurdles reported for future life the onpo suggests remedies. As a remedy the performance of some ritual readings had to be done in future by the monks.85 A curious custom prevailing in Ladakh is that the man does not leave the house during his wife’s confinement, which extends to thirty days. He will not also cross a stream, channel or other flowing water for some specified length of time after child birth. A purificatory Pujah is performed by the Lama on the fifteenth day. Both the ears of the child are pierced. The first drink given to a child is milk. Om is recited over a spoonful of three children is taken as very auspicious for the parents.86 They are then entertained to a sumptuous dinner and the usual drink - Chang.

A Buddhist child remains unnamed for quite a long time ranging from one to three years. During this period the child with terms like Digpa (male) and Digma (Female). For the naming ceremony of the child, he is taken to a Lama to whom an offering is made of money and grains. The Lama pronounces a name. After this the party returns home and the naming feast, locally called Ming-Ton is held. The guests are entertained with dinner and Chang.87

Ladakh was a land of intense barrenness. If the population were permitted to increase, the people would not have been able to keep the wolf from the door, for not
only were they unable to grow sufficient to support more months than were already there, but with communications so bad, little could be imported. Besides, the country’s resources were inelastic and its isolation from the rest of the world - isolation of manners, languages, and religion, as well as geographical isolation - hobbled emigration. It was found impossible for their living. They naturally became mere helpers in the household – farm servants to the elder brother. From that there came about the curious custom that when the elder brother married a wife she became a wife to all the brothers. Thus, system of polyandry had been in force in Ladakh from time immemorial.

The eldest son inherited the family estate as soon as he married; it was his duty then to provide for his parents, grandparents and unmarried sisters, in addition to which he had to support those brothers who shared his wife. This system of inheritance kept the property intact, for there was never more than one heir and patrimony was never divided. The children of a family had one ‘big father’ and several ‘little fathers’. When the husband who actually married the woman died, she needed not remain with the brothers. If she wished to leave them, she just tied a thread to the finger of her dead husband, broke it, and was at once free of them all.

There was, in Ladakh, a rather curious custom of the father and mother of a grown-up family retiring from active life and its responsibilities at a time when they might not be much beyond middle-age. When the son was married and had a child then the time came for the grand-father and grandmother to leave their son. They would go into a very small house near, taking only one or two head of cattle, and retaining just enough land for their food. After this was done they had no more claim on the son, who became legal owner of the family property. There was often a house attached to a holding which was put to this very use. The amount of land to be given over was regulated by custom. This, on the death of the old people, came back to the estate. If there be fathers alive they were both got rid of and provided for in this way.

According to the custom, the Buddhists of Ladakh cremate their dead except in the case of the great Lama, who is buried in a sitting posture. The death of a child on some holy day is considered auspicious, and the body is, in that event buried under the
wall of a residential house. On the death of a person, the body is not cremated soon after but is kept in the house for many days according to the social status of the deceased. When a rich man dies, a number of Lamas assemble and read prayers for fifteen to twenty days, after which the body is cremated. For a poor man the Lama reads prayers for four or five days, after which the body is cremated. During the mourning a piece of cloth is fixed over the doorways as a sign of mourning.  

It is customary to erect shortens or Pyramids to house the urn containing the ashes of a person of rank. The body of the great Lama is interned in a coffine (Pur- Gam) in which are also placed his rolls of prayers, his praying cylinder and other religious instruments. His cup and plate and some quality of grain is also put in the coffin. Images of Budha and his disciples are also put in the coffin which is then deposited in a Chorten. The funeral feast, locally called ‘Shid-Ton’, varies according the rank and circumstances of the deceased.  

The monasteries in the Ladakh have played a vital role in the cultural and social integration of the rural Ladakh. The poor-class or the peasants attended the monastery lands and cultivated them and provided food-grains and other products of daily use like, butter edible oils, fuel, and all the day to day needs of the Lamas, were fulfilled by the surrounding villages, and in turn, monks were fulfilled by the head of the monasteries for performing rituals in the villages on the ceremonial occasions, I’e on the marriage ceremony, or sometimes on the religious performances on the death of the inhabitant families. This traditional system still exists all over Ladakh.  

Like all other things there also found variation in the architectural designs of houses, depending upon the climatic and other consideration. There were low flat-roofed, mud-walled and single-stories houses in the villages of Jammu region. There was generally a small enclosure formed by low walls in front of it. The roofs extended on all sides in the form of flat and projecting eaves. There were timbered either with the wood of one of the acacias or with prine and one or more pillars supported them. The pillars were capped with a few feet long crosspiece which was often ornamented with carving. The cross-piece made a wide capital beneath the beam.
In contrast to the general type, the components of the walls of the houses in the Kandi areas of the Jammu province generally consisted of loose stones which were held together in various thicknesses by means of mud. Moreover, the whole building was coated with mud on either side to give it a smooth appearance.\textsuperscript{95}

The kitchen was a special room. It was called ‘Chauka’. In many houses, however, only some space, generally 5 square feet, was marked off for this purpose in a big room. This space was coated with mud or cow dung and within it were placed the ‘chula’ or the fire-place and the cooking pots.

In the outer hills, the low-walled enclosures were absent from the houses, each of which was formed into a single blocks with a bare open space in the front. Courtyards were replaced by ‘Deodhis’ (Vestibules) or open verandas. However, there is no difference in the character of roof. Though unsubstantial and frail, it served well and the binding and clayey mud used in its construction rendered it water-proof.

In Kashmir region, mostly frame houses were built. The frame work was made of either the wooden rafters or planks and intervening spaces were filled generally with ‘Kachha’ and sometimes with ‘Pucca’ bricks. While near the forests, the walls of the houses were formed of the whole logs, away from the forests, the sewer made of the axe-cut planks fitted into the grooved beams. The whole house was covered with wooden planks, slopping on both sides and ending in a central ridge.\textsuperscript{96}

\textit{Kangar} was the important thing for every man, woman, and child. In the words of Richard temple-‘Every Kashmiri in the winter, has under his long loose garment, the pheran, a portable brazier or Kangar, known to Europeans always as ‘Kangri’

The houses in Ladakh were low and dingy. These were made of mud or loose stones with the frail and flat roofs of wooden shingles. The singles were put together in a thickness just enough to support a thin layer of earth over it. The snow falling on these frail roofs had to be constantly removed. The walls of the houses were made of ‘Kutch’ bricks of very uncommon size a foot in breadth, two in thickness and three in length.
Sometimes, however, the walls were made only of mud. Over the top of each house, there flew either a flag bearing the sacred prayer of the Buddhists.\textsuperscript{97}

A notable feather of the diet of people of Jammu was the division of their food into two categories, viz, Pacca khana or Pakki Rasoi and Kacha khanna or Kachi Rasoi. While the former was the food fried in ghee, the latter category was that which was not so treated.

The use of \textit{bhang} and opium as intoxicating drugs was common in Jammu province. It was rather customary among certain communities of the Dogras, e.g. Rajput, to offer opium to the guests on ceremonial occasions. Snuff was taken in the hilly areas of the province.\textsuperscript{98}

The inhabitants of the Kashmir valley proper mostly consumed rice. Flour made from the \textit{Singharas}, or water chestnuts, was widely used in the locality near the Dal lake. Around the hills, the people mostly took maize and wheat, and higher up buckwheat and barley. While abundant fresh fruits and vegetables of Kashmir sustained a large population in the summer, these, when dried, formed an important article of their diet in the winter. Meat was a luxury. But poultry – fowls, ducks and geese was abundant and the ordinary peasant took fowls about six times and mutton five times a month. But the Hindus did not take poultry and eggs too. They, however, at wild fowl and eggs of the lake birds. Fish was taken wherever at was caught.

The Hindus of Kashmir did not eat garlic, onions and red colored vegetables, such as tomatoes, carrots and red beans.\textsuperscript{99} Tea was the most popular drink with the Kashmirirs. When sweet and mixed with milk, the tea was known as \textit{Shiri}. It was called \textit{Kahwa} when it was saltish and prepared without milk. This Russian Samovar was widely used for its preparations.

In Ladakh, the chief staple food were wheat, barley and grim. The barley meal was either made into a broth or a sort of dough which was taken with butter milk. Kind of intoxicating liquor made from grim or barley and called \textit{Chhang} was also commonly consumed.\textsuperscript{100} It was used in all their social ceremonies, religious observances, and
offerings to their deities. The Ladakhis often used to remark that it was much easier for them to go without food than without Chhang. It is said that once Maharaja Ranbir singh of Kashmir prohibited the drinking of liquor throughout his territory but he made the Ladakh Chhang an exception. This indicates that the consumption of this beverage had become an essential item of the Ladakh diet.\textsuperscript{101} The staple drink of Ladakh was tea.

Jammu region is a region of many languages. The important among them being Dogri, Punjabi and Gojri. Nevertheless, Kashmiri language is also in use in certain pockets of the region. Consequently it was but natural that these languages give rise to as many cultural groups. However, there are certain languages which are not at all spoken in the entire region and yet are important for being the official languages of the state (Urdu) or the national language (Hindi). Thus Hindi and Urdu both being alien occupy of their due place in the region.

Punjabi is the major language spoken and understood throughout the region. It can be considered as a link language between the people of the region speaking different languages like Dogri, Gojri and even Kashmiri.\textsuperscript{102} Dogri is also the major language of the region. It is the mixture of Sanskrit, Punjabi and Persian whose origin goes back to the Indo-Aryan branch of Sanskrit.\textsuperscript{103} Gojri is another important language which is spoken by Gujjars of the state who are spread through the length and breadth of the state.\textsuperscript{104} They are said to be Rajput who migrated from Rajasthan and adopted Muslim faith. Their dialect, Gujari is now identified as a form of a Rajasthani.\textsuperscript{105} Pahari is another language spoken by a large section of population living in the mountainous areas of the state.\textsuperscript{106} Ladakhis call themselves ‘Bo- Pa’ i’e ancient Bhauttas. They speak a Tibetan language which is a dialect of Tibetan. It is written in the Tibetan script. Many words in the Ladakh languages, especially in religious terminology are derived from Sanskrit.\textsuperscript{107}

The language of Ladakh is called Bhoti which is a modified version of the original Tibetan language with a mixture of Ladakhi and Tibetan vocabulary spoken with ladakhi accent. The educated ladakhi can read and write in Bhoti or Tibetan but they speak ladakhi dialect. The official language of ladakh as well as of the state is Urdu.
There are various dialects spoken in ladakh like, balti, dardi, shina, shamme, zanskari, nubre.  

**Customs of Punjab**

Of all the minor divinities, the *Bhumia* or god of the homestead is perhaps the most important. He is the spirit of the founder of the village, and his shrine is easily recognized by its doomed roof which is generally close to the dharma shala or just outside the village site. The *Bhumia* is worshipped on Sundays, at marriages, and on the birth of a son, by the burning of a lamp and the feeding of Brahmans. The first milk of a cow or buffalo is always offered to this god.

Small shrines to *pitr* or ancestors will be found all over the fields, and there is generally a large one to the *Jathera* or common ancestor of the clan. Villagers who have migrated will periodically make long pilgrimages to worship at the shrine of their ancestor, or if the distance is too great will bring away a brick from the original shrines and use it as the foundation of a new one. The fifteenth of the month is sacred to the *pitr*, and a number of Brahmans must be fed on that day.

For instance, the *Jethera* of the Bajwa is *Baba Manga*, and he is revered at wedding, at which the rites of *Jandian* and *chhatra* are also observed. As regards to their birth customs, the expected mother remained in a separate room where no one else except the midwife and some elderly women of the family were allowed to go. When the midwife came some lentil and salt were taken over the head of the mother to be and made over to the midwife. A small pitcher of water, some grains and a small lighted lamp made of flour were kept in the room. An iron knife and an iron bangle were kept under the pillow as a protection against malignant spirits.

The baby was made to taste its first liquid food (*gurhuti*) which was generally administered by some elderly member of the family. Five or seven days after childbirth, the mother was allowed to bathe. A few grains or rice or a few leaves of *methi*, were added to the bathing water. On the eleventh day of childbirth, the khatris make the
mother bathe and also wash her hair, after which the whole house was washed and smeared with dung mixture. Gur (jaggery) were distributed among all relatives and friends. This ceremony was called Dhaman which is still in practice.\textsuperscript{113}

If a child cut his upper teeth first, it was considered an ill omen for the maternal uncle. The maternal uncle, on seeing this child, performed a rite and touched his teeth with a silver cup and then offered it to the child as a gift.\textsuperscript{114}

Of the various considerations that influenced the marriage system, caste and clan were the most important. When all the initial negotiations were completed, the girl’s father took the initiative towards ceremonial commitments, through the family barber. He send to the boy’s family a coconut, dry dates, sugar and some money in the form of the first auspicious gifts. When these things were received by the boy’s father, he called all the relatives and the Shagun or Tikka ceremony was performed.\textsuperscript{115}

A few days before the marriage, bhaji was distributed among relatives and friends and invitations to attend the wedding was given. A few days before the marriage women from the neighborhood and female relatives started coming every evening to participate in singing bridal songs.\textsuperscript{116}

A very peculiar custom generally followed as part of preparations for the marriage was that of Maiyan. It was a sort of confinement of the bride and the groom for a few days before the marriage. The boys and the girls were not allowed to go out of the house or change clothes. They were however, allowed to have their close friends around. During these days Kangna was tied on the right wrist of the boy and left wrist of the girl.\textsuperscript{117} After that Mahndi Raat ceremony was performed.

On the day of marriage, the bridegroom’s bhabhi dressed in her best and accompanied by some other female relatives went to a nearby pool or well and filled a gharoli with water. This water was ceremoniously brought mixed with more water and groom was to be bathed in it. This was called Khare Charna (sitting on the basket).

A small diva was lighted under the stool on which the boy was seated. After the bath, the groom got up from the stool and broke with his feet five earthen lids. The same
ceremony was performed at the bride’s house, the only difference being that the girl’s maternal uncle helps her got up from the stool, and after she has changed, she kept sitting in one corner of the house till the marriage ceremony. This was called as sitting on Chhandalian.\textsuperscript{118}

As regard to their marriage customs, it is customary with most clans for the bridegroom to cut a twig of the Jand tree before starting for the bride’s home. This combined with offering to Brahmans is said to ensure a successful marriage. Another necessary observation is that the bridegroom should worship at the shrines of his Jethera or tribal ancestors.\textsuperscript{119}

Besides this, many festivals have been celebrated by the people of Punjab like Teeyan, Rakhi, Gugga Naumi, Dussehra, Diwali, Lohri. Many fasts have also been kept by the people of Punjab like Ekadashi, Poornamashi (full moon) and Masya (new moon).

**Customs of Himachal Pradesh**

Regarding the death customs of the region, all kinds of food-grains, oil, ghi, gur, cotton, fruit, sweetmeat, and even more substantial things, such as couches, shoes, umbrellas, were given in charity to the Brahman. A cow, especially, was considered an indispensable gift on the part of a sick man, if he can possibly afford it, during the death agony. If there was no cow convenient, the price of one may be given instead. This charity was called antrishthi, i.e., the offering made at the time of death.\textsuperscript{120}

When this ceremony has been performed, til and Kusha (a kind of grass) were spread over the floor, the sick man’s bed was placed above them, and the sick man himself laid on the bed face upward and his feet towards the south. Then he was made to listen to the path (or recited) of the Gita, and the Ganga jal was given to him to drink. In the last moment, the tulsi patta and panjratni were put in his mouth. The pind dana ceremony was performed by the dead man’s son, or in the absence of a son, by some near relatives. The dead body placed on a sheet of wooden planks made for the purpose called bahwan.
The planks were covered with a red cloth and decorated with flags and flowers. All the women gathered round and made a loud and prolonged ‘keening’ over the corpse and beat themselves with their hands. The younger male members of the family shave their heads and faces, and then carry the body to the burning place, accompanied by the relatives and neighbors. Women do not go to a funeral. On the way almonds and raisins, were thrown from behind over the bier. Conch shells and bells are sounded during the journey. The bier was occasionally laid on the ground to give the bearers a rest. At each stop the *pind dan* was again performed and the ‘keening’ renewed.\(^{121}\)

When the procession reached the burning place which was always on the bank of a river, the body was placed on the funeral pyre. The son performed the *pind dan*, and the near relatives take small pieces of wood, light them, and walk round the pyre and then the performer of the *pind dan* applies his torch at the head of the deceased, the other relatives following his example at the feet and sides. When the body has been completely burned. They then gathered the bones and ashes, which they subsequently bring to the house. Before going, however, they wash away the remains of the pyre and bathe themselves in the river. All who accompany a funeral were obliged to bathe before again mixing with the people. Women performed their ablutions indoors and the whole house was purified with *gobar* (cow dung).\(^{122}\)

Brahmans remained for ten days in mourning, Rajput for twelve and Khatris for fourteen, after the day of the death. When this period was over the ceremony of *kirya karm* was performed. There were two sorts of *kirya karm*; the first was called *brikhod surg*, and on that articles, such as clothes, ornaments, and domestic utensils, are bestowed in charity. The proper recipient of these was a Brahman who was called Acharaj. The second sort of *kirya karm* was called *suphandi*, and on that day charitable offerings were made or female according to the sex of the deceased. On the day of *kriya karm* the Acharaj was dressed up in all the clothes bestowed in charity, and loaded with the ornaments so given. On the conclusion of these ceremonies the performer of the *pind dan* and the other near relatives went to some temple of Vishnu and drink there the *charnamrit*. This ended the mourning period, and the relatives might then resume their
ordinary avocations and religious duties. They were strictly debarred from the latter during the days of mourning.\textsuperscript{123}

The \textit{Naga} and \textit{Devi} cults are the oldest in the hills. They are everywhere predominant among the people and have a much stronger hold on their minds which can be seen in their life. In times of sickness in their families or disease among their cattle and flocks, it was to the village shrines people resorted in the hope of obtaining relief. Almost every village has its own special deities. Sacrifice of animals was a universal religious rite, and many traditions are still current pointing to the fact of human sacrifice having been prevalent in former times.\textsuperscript{124}

The \textit{Nag} shrines are very numerous, and there are also \textit{Nagni} shrines, but the later are not common. The image in these shrines is usually of stone in human form, with the figure of a snake entwined around it and a serpent canopy over head. The shrine also contains figures of snakes in stone and iron, with a trident, a lamp, an incense holder, a \textit{gurj} or weapon like a sword, and finally the iron chain or \textit{sangal} with which the \textit{chela} scourges himself. Springs of water are believed to be under the control of these snake godling, and, in some parts of the hills, to such a degree are springs and wells associated with snake influence in the minds of the people that \textit{Naga} is the name in common use for a spring of cool and refreshing water.\textsuperscript{125}

The \textit{Devis} are female deities, and are believed to have power to inflict and remove disease in man and beast. They are not associated with springs like the \textit{Nagas}. It is common to find a \textit{Nag} and a \textit{Devi} temple side by side, and similar attributes are ascribed to both. The worship is similar to that at \textit{Naga} temples and the offerings are disposed of in the same manner.\textsuperscript{126}

There are many traditions current in the hills which points to human sacrifices having been frequent at Naga and Devi temples in former times. In pangi and other parts of the Chandrabhaga valley a singular custom obtains in connection with Naga worship. For a fixed time every year in the month of \textit{Sawan}, and sometimes for the whole of that month, all the milk of the village is devoted to the land local Naga and is then said to be \textit{sucha}. The villagers do not use it themselves, that is, they do not drink it. The milk is
churned as usual, and ghi, is made from it, the butter- milk being stored and used up at feasts held on certain days during the month. Every few days an offering of milk and sweet bread is made to the Naga, some of the milk being sprinkled over it. A final feast is held at the end of the month.\textsuperscript{127}

\textbf{Festivals and melas}

\textit{Baisakhi or Basoa}

This festival is held on the first of \textit{Baisakh}, the Hindu New year’s day. Earthenware pots (gharas) full of water are placed on some grain strewn on the floor with other fruits of the season. After puja by a priest these are given in name of the \textit{pitr}s (ancestors) to Brahmans or to a sister’s children.\textsuperscript{128}

\textit{Somavari Amavas}

The new moon falling on a Monday, women go round the \textit{piple} tree a certain number of times with fruit.

\textit{Puran mashi or Punya of Sat Narayan}

This fast is observed at every full moon. The family purohit recites the story of \textit{Sat Narayan}, and people present sweetmeats to him, some of which he keeps, and the rest he returns, and this is called \textit{parshad} or a holy thing. Newly born infants are taken out to look at the first full moon after birth.\textsuperscript{129}

\textit{Sankrant of Asar or Har}

Falls on the first of \textit{Har}, called also \textit{Sila Suhale Ki Sankrant}. Starch is cooked with sugar and \textit{ghi} by the people, and distributed among their friends.

\textit{Sawan ki Sankrant or Barsale ki Sankrant} Held on the first of \textit{Sawan}. People draw a line with cowdung round the walls of their houses, about three feet above the ground. The meaning of this is unknown, but is probably a superstition connected with the averting of sickness and calamity during the rainy season.
Minjran ka Mela

This mela is held on the third Sunday in Sawan. In its main features it is peculiar to Chamba, though the name is known, and some of the ceremonies are observed in other parts of the hills. The essential part of the mela consists in the throwing into the Ravi of a male buffalo as a sacrifice to the river god. A week before the time comes round each person has a silk tassel made, which is attached to some part of the dress and worn. This is called a minjar. On the day appointed, the Raja gives the signal by throwing into the river a coconut, a rupee, druva grass, and some flowers, and thereupon the live buffalo is pushed into the flood. The Raja throws his minjar in after the buffalo and all the people follow his example. The animal is then closely watched, as its fate is believed to foreshadow prosperity or adversity for the coming year to the reigning and state. This mela is probably of aboriginal origin, and connected with the earth—worship, which was so prevalent among the aborigines of the hills.\textsuperscript{130}

Anant Chaudas

A fast held on the fourteenth day of the dark half of the moon in Bhadon, and one day before the Rath Rathni mela. An anant or armlet is put on the arm, which may be either of thread or silver. If of silver, it is left on for good; if of thread, it is renewed at the end of a year with certain ceremonies. Every night in Bhadon, a number of divas or earthen lamps, are lit for a short time in name of the p\textit{itrs} (ancestors), and after burning a little while are allowed to go out. The number varies from five to seven.\textsuperscript{131}

Besides this many other festivals like Bhojri, Bhadon ki sankrant, Durgashtmi, Janam ashtmi, etc., are also celebrated by the people.

The discussion indicates that there are customs within the region which are also obtainable outside the region. Yet, when we look at them more closely, we see variations in details. It is this variation both, within the region and outside, which lends uniqueness to apparently homogenous cultural traditions at local and trans-local levels.
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