

10. Apavergay Aupanishada Vrita: *All the people present on the occasion, all the hosts and their spouses and the boy/s assemble at the Hawan Shala at this hour to pay their oblations to all the gods and deities by offering flowers. A collective prayer is held on the occasion called 'a:rthi' and the function is also called 'Khe'yama: Po<sh'.*

11. Shri Kama. *Offering thanks to Mother goddess on completion of the function.*

12. Yashas Kama: *Offering of felicitations to all the planets including the moon and the sun on the successful completion of the function.*

13. Goadan: The *Brahmchari*, according to the scriptures, completes the sixteenth years of his life/stay in the *Ashram* at the time when this ritual is completed. On this occasion once again '*ChuDakar*' is done to the *Brahmchari* to enable him to proceed for achieving higher knowledge.

14. *Apvargay Trividhika*: This is the last but one ritual completed in the presence of Holy Fire and involves the following two major rites: -

a) To offer the ceremonial kitchen preparations to gods including *Agni* and what remains or is left over out of the offerings is processed as '*Naived*' for all those present at the function.

b) Presentation of the final offering called '*Ati Pho>I*'.¹

This offering is made by one and all, present on the occasion. Prayers are held for the welfare of the whole world, all people, our rivers, atmosphere and above all, the plant kingdom around us. The flower of a coconut tree '*JaTa Dhari*' is offered by the priest while others make an offering of barley and sugar candy etc. After the last offering is made to the Holy Fire, every body is marked on the forehead known as '*Trayusham*.' It is the residue

from the ghee and the ashes from the Holy Fire mixed together on the ladle-spoon used for '*Homa*' and then marked on the forehead of each devotee. The recitation on the occasion made is: - '*Jamad Agni* prescribed it for the welfare of the followers of *Kashyapa*, it has been the defender of gods in the past, it may defend you too'.¹ The Sanskrit couplet repeated by the priests on the occasion is as under: -

'Trayusham, Jamadagnayh Kashpasy Trayusham, Yat Devanam Trayusham Tattay Astu Trayusham.

After this the host makes offerings from the ceremonial kitchen preparations to his fore-fathers, to the thirty six deities, called '*Anni Kan*', *Agni*, the deity of the kitchens, the birds and the two watch-guards of the *Hawan Shala*, called the '*Kshe'rlpa:ls*', and all get their share from the said kitchen preparation. Final salutations are paid to all the gods, called '*Atsidra*', or '*Achidra*' in Sanskrit by offering followers to them finally.

k). *Snanvidhi*: Code of conduct for bathing

This is the last of the rites, which the boy has to perform at the bank of a river or at any place where water is available. The boy is asked to change his ceremonial dress, to abandon the '*Kusha*' rope, the '*Mriga:zan*' and the '*Dandam*'. He puts on a new dress specially got stitched for the occasion which includes a fine head dress - a turban called '*Dasta:r*' and a decorated umbrella called, '*ChAthlr*'. An expert lady draws a circular figure on the ground with the coloured lime powder called '*Yyu:g*' and the boy/s stands on it facing east. A plate containing some rice, a little of '*VAr*' and a coin is kept on the said circular '*Yyu:g*'. After performing the '*a:lath*' ceremony by the mother/grand mother, the boy is offered

¹ The word appears to have been derived from the Sanskrit root-word '*Ati Phal*', meaning 'Supreme Reward,'

¹ Handoo, Pt. Keshov Bhatt, *Pakhyak Vidhi*, 1919, p. 12.

a little sugar candy to eat three times. A long piece of cloth containing a little rice and a piece of 'VAR' tied on its both ends, is cast over the shoulders of the boy. It is called 'SA:di PhuTlji'. Now the groom is ready to leave for the temple or the water spot 'Ya:rIbal'. The conch shell is blown, the crackers burst, and in this atmosphere of happiness and gaiety the groom leaves ahead of a convoy of cars. The *Kula Guru* accompanies him and explains to him the codes of bathing as contained in the scriptures. Besides the codes of bathing and washing of the *Yagnyopavita*, the boy is made aware of libation of water to the deities/ gods/manes, *Rishis* and other venerable ones, known as 'Div pe'tlr' in the common language. After this the boy is taken to the temple to offer his obeisance to the deity and then all return to the *Hawan Shala*.

In the mean-time just after the departure of the groom for the temple, all the hostesses and the ladies of the house assemble where the 'Vyug' was laid and circumambulate on it. It is known as 'Arun ro>th'.¹ It is the only ladies dance, which, as a ritual, has survived till date during the process of the *Mekhala*. This type of dancing is performed in an attractive manner with the following song: -

Asi karav ArnI ro>th tI be'yi vanIvunye'
HA:r wAtshai ntsIne' tI sA:r so>nIsInzye'. (Asi karav...)
Ha:ri gatshyam De'jiho>r² tI suti so>nIsundyey'. (Asi karav...)
Ha:ri gatshyam aTlho>r tI suti so>nIsundyey' (Asi karav..)

The translation of these lines is as under -

We will perform the 'Arnu Vrita' and also sing,
 The beautiful merle, all made of gold, has come to dance;

The merle needs a swinging ear ornament that too made of gold,

The merle's additional lower part of the ear ornament 'ATlho>r' and that too made of gold,

Here the names of the hostess and other female members of the family are inserted instead of the word, 'HA:r'. After this short form of singing/dancing on the pattern of modern 'VanIvun' the following short-rhythmic couplets are sung while dancing: -

Huml vo>thum tI ve'gi kho>tum

TotI vo>thum Ya:rIbal,

Huml vo>thum tI ve'gi kho>tum

Ra:ji vo>thum Ya:rIbal.

Translation:

Standing up from the *Hawan Shala* (he) came to the 'Vyug';

My parrot has gone to the water spot,

Standing up from the Holy Fire (he) came to the 'Vyug';

My (son) Raja has gone to the riverbank.

The name of the boy/s is included instead of the word, 'Raji'. It is also repeated in respect of all the male members of the family and the dancing continues for a long time till the people return from the temple.

A few young men and ladies clean the place of the *Hawan Shala* and keep it ready for dinner, called 'the *Navi:d*'. All the family members who keep a fast for the full day including the hosts and the hostesses, the *Brahmchari/s* and the priests take their dinner at this place. Seating arrangement for feasting of the remaining guests is made out side this space. As soon as all the guests sit properly, the priest or a representative of the host, brings the pitcher from the place of the 'Kalash' in an open metal basin along with walnuts and the water.

¹ This actually appears to be a Sanskrit word, 'Arnu Vrita'. 'Arun' is one of the names attributed to the sun. It befits the 'Mekhala' as the sun and the moon have a special place in the *Yagnyopavita* ceremony and are adored a number of times during its various rituals. Besides, the formation of the 'Vyug' is also round, hence this name. Ps. Handoo, J. L., *Hindi Aur Kashmiri Kay Lok Geet*, P. 75.

² The swinging ear ornament.

While sprinkling the Holy Water on each and every person, he gives a walnut to every body as 'Naived'. which is followed by serving the dinner again called as 'Naived'. Every body present there has to take food collectively after taking the 'A:tsIman' or rinsing of mouth with water also known as, 'Apu:sha:n'. The host makes payment to the priests and the amount received as 'Abi:d' is handed over to the *Kula Guru* who gives generally an amount of rupees fifty or more to the host for preparation of rice pudding, *Khi:r*, on the day when the yellow coloured *Ygnyopativa* of the boy/s is changed for the white one and the ladies of the house have to take off the 'NA:rivan' bands from their hair-locks for immersion into a river or a canal. The function is known as changing of the 'Yoni' and 'NA:ri'van *Tra:vInI*'. It is held two or three days after the *Yagnyopavita* ceremony. The priest attends to their house on the scheduled date and completes this ritual.

1). *Ko>shal Hom* : - the farewell

The next day of the 'Mekhala' is known as the '*Ko>shal hom*'. The word 'Hom', 'Hum' appears to have been derived from the root Sanskrit word, 'Homa' meaning, 'offerings made to the Holy Fire'. On this date a short ritual is performed. It is a kind of thanks giving to all the gods and deities for their kind co-operation in this magnanimous function. The yellow rice, called 'TAhAr' is prepared on the occasion and after proper prayers it is served to one and all present at the function. The host holds a good feast on this occasion.

Thus the *Mekhala Sa:iskar* comes to an end.

Chapter Four

Sanskars and rituals connected with Grahasta Ashram

Kha:ndar - Marriage.

(Lagan, Vivah, Kanya Dan)

The ambitions of parents develop fore-fold as soon as their child attains youth leaving behind the sweet memories of his/her infancy, childhood, adolescence, and schooling. The time of his/her schooling and college life is the real period of his/her development. The wishes and ambitions of his/her parents get activated as their children grow. It is a period of longings and desires for the parents when their children move into their twenties irrespective of the gender difference. On the one hand they begin to think differently about their children, and on the other hand a host of middlemen start coming to apprise them of a number of marital prospects. Rejecting one, means arrival of another proposal. The middleman puts forward a list of such families along with the natal charts and family records of a number of such prospective families for exploring the possibility of match making. The first thing the parents do is to procure a number of natal charts for the selection of a bridegroom/bride for their own son/daughter. Here they need the services of an astrologer for selecting the right and desirable one of their choice out of a few of the prospective families on the basis of matching and comparing their Zodiac/Lunar positions from their natal charts. Thus they approach the astrologer of their choice and liking who comes to their help at this crucial juncture.

It may be pointed out here that while considering the matches for marriage, the caste and the family '*gotra*' of the matching families, is kept in view. If both the families that of the boy and of the girl, are of the same '*gorta*' called '*Swa-goti*' and that in case seven generations have not yet been completed, (according to

the family tree of a particular family,) in between the two families, there is a religious binding not to approve such a marriage. In case such a marriage is held due to inexplicable reasons or under certain compulsions, the children born out of such a marriage are called '*Varna Sankar*', or hybrid. A person who deserts his caste or creed once, cannot be admitted back to it according to the Hindu way of living called, '*Dharma*' because such a person is called as '*Ko>II Chyut*' meaning one who is dropped out/degraded from his caste/ creed or '*gotra*'. This is perhaps the main reason why the Kashmiri Pandits have retained their ancestral purity of blood and genealogy in the lap of their compressed culture with the result that they still retain their special place in the cluster of world civilizations. Anyway, this is the field of anthropological studies, which requires deeper research. Here it may be pointed out that after assessing the caste and the '*gotra*' of both the families the proceedings for the proposed marriage are set in motion with the help of an astrologer.

Astrology is a well-developed science and, besides having a vast scope in modern science, is used to foretell the coming fortunes and misfortunes. Astrologers make predictions on the basis of the study of horoscopes. Horoscopes of different people are always diverse and the varied planetary positions indicate the thoughts, patience/ force (called "*Bala*"), character, health, wealth and behavior of a person under different planetary positions. So to assess all these compatibilities, horoscopes of a boy and a girl are matched before marriage.

According to the Indian astrology an auspicious Zodiac position of the sun at the time of the birth of a child called, '*Lagan*', (*Lag/In*) is considered to be the body and that of the moon is considered as the heart/mind, ('*Man*') or '*Rashi*'. Love, respect, affection, tolerance and the like feelings, need the involvement of mind/heart '*Man*' and not of the body. That is why the

great Rishis having knowledge of astrology have advised matching of the Zodiac positions of the stars according to the Rashi at the time of birth of a boy and a girl before their marriage. After considering all the astrological aspects, the marriage between the two is accepted by the families.

1. *Tye'kin Millna: vIni* – Matching of Horoscopes.

While giving approval for the marriage, the following factors are looked into by the concerned astrologer: -

1. The Zodiac signs of both the boy and the girl should be friendly or neutral and not rival,
2. Out of twenty seven *Nakshetras*, the one on which the boy or the girl is born must be either the same or they should not fall in the category of rivals like, '*Devas*'-gods, '*Rakshas*' - demons,
3. The Zodiac chart comprises twelve signs. The boy or the girl must not contain '*Mars*' in 1,4,7, 8, or 12th houses (signs) of their birth charts. In this case the boy or the girl becomes '*Mangli*' and such a boy/girl must have the matching zodiac positions in the chart of their would-be match.

More-over, the specific planets stationed in a birth chart at ominous positions are known as '*Bala*'. They change according to their position in the birth-chart. This strength is measured as per the following table: -

No.	Particulars	Forces of power (Bala)
1.	<i>Varnas</i> - Caste.	One (1)
2.	<i>Vashya</i> - Obedience.	Two (2)
3.	<i>Tara</i> - Star/Planet	Three (3)
4.	<i>Yoni</i> ¹ - Source of all animates.	Four (4)

¹ The classes into which animate beings are divided, are known as '*Zi: vI ZA:ts*' in common Kashmiri language and these are considered to be eighty-four lac in number according to the Indian tradition.

5. *Griha Maitri* - Friendship Five (5)
or otherwise of the planets.
6. *Jati Maitri* - Defects, if any, Six (6)
due to caste
7. *Brikuta* - Zodiac positions. Seven (7)
8. *Nadi Dosh* - Short comings, Eight (8)
if any, due to constellation triads.

From the perusal of the above table it is clear that '*Varna*' has the least (one) '*Bala*' and the '*Nadi Dosh*' is at the top of the table having (eight) '*Balas*'. Thus all these make a total of thirty six points of power (adding from 1 to 8, we get, 36) and the girl and the boy must share them proportionately i.e., eighteen in each case or as near to it as possible. Greater disparity between the '*Balas*' of the two is considered inauspicious.

2. *Za:tukh Mangna:vun* - Formal Request for the Horoscope.

After comparing the birth-charts and after having been satisfied with the details and the family position of all the close relatives of the matching family, a formal request to the parents of the boy is made by the girl's parents for sending the horoscope of the boy through the concerned middleman. While sending the horoscope the father of the girl also send a pitcher of sugar, called '*Na:bad No>T*,' along with some sweets, almonds and some dry-fruit as a present in confirmation of the new relationship. Both the families pay the middleman handsomely for bringing the efforts to the desired end. In case any one among the two parties, is not willing to go ahead, they then stop the efforts there without accepting any gifts.

3. *LADdki / LADki: Wuchun* Formal meeting of the boy and the girl.

After receiving the horoscope from the parents of the boy, the middleman rushes to the residence of girl's parents. Now he starts shuttling between the two families. In the mean time both the families get the birth charts thoroughly scrutinized by the astrologer and after getting his affirmation they arrange a formal meeting between the boy and the girl on an auspicious day. The venue of the function and all the allied matters, like serving of refreshments, exchange of presents between the two families, etc., are the things which are decided upon by both the families with the help of the middleman. Earlier, the function used to be of a very simple nature - just an exchange of a bouquet of flowers with a cash present of rupees 101/- as a token of good-will called, '*Sho>gun*'. The father of the girl and the boy or their representative would exchange vows to stick and stand by the new relationship. Hence this function was named as '*Kasam Drly*,' or '*Ta:kh Dyun*.' But nowadays this has taken a very pompous form and involves an exchange of many tens of thousands of rupees on both sides in cash and kind including the hotel charges for the lunch/dinner, tea and drinks, etc. Presents for the bride and the bridegroom include golden ornaments, dresses and different suits of clothing for both. The feasting held by the two families, is not less expensive. Both the families invite all the relatives on a feast. In case the boy and the girl do not approve each other, the process of sending gifts stops there and then and all those gifts, if any, exchanged till date, are returned through the middleman together with cost, if any, incurred on the feasting of each others guests etc. But such things happen very rarely. The boat starts floating smoothly in case both the families approve the selection.

4. *GanDun, (Sagayi) - Betrothal, Engagement.*

After completing all the formalities, both the families decide to hold the betrothal ceremony and with the help of the middleman and the astrologer the horal moment and an auspicious day is fixed. The parents of the bridegroom purchase a new costly Sari suit, a set of ornaments including a golden *Bindi* (A golden mark for the fore-head, and a bangle known as '*Ba:zband*', used in place of the '*NA:rivan*' on the occasion), socks, sandals, hankies, etc., for their would be daughter-in-law. All these things are put in a suitcase, which is taken along with on the date of the function. A list of the relatives is made who are selected to accompany the betrothal party. The list is finalized after much deliberation so as to include the most important and close relatives. It should not be too long to invite a bad name to the family. The party accommodates at least two females, preferably sister of the bridegroom and any of the younger aunts. On reaching the residence or the venue of the function the '*a:lath*' ceremony is performed at the main entrance. The party is led to a room or hall already furnished for the guests. They are served milk, tea, soft drinks and snacks etc. It is followed by a heavy lunch. In the mean time the guests from both the side start assembling in the room soon after the lunch. The sister/aunt of the bridegroom calls upon the bride who is asked to wear the ornaments and the new *Sari* suit brought by her in-laws. Thus the fully decorated bride is brought to the main hall where the 'Ring Ceremony' is held. The bride and the bridegroom exchange rings. Niger is burnt and the hall resounds with the clapping by the guests. Greetings are exchanged and there is joy on every face. The function is a mini form of a marriage and involves almost all its hustle and bustle. In case the Ring Ceremony is held in

the forenoon, the guests are served food immediately after the ceremony. Otherwise, salt-tea is served in case this function is held after the lunch in the after-noon. The gushts and the parents of the bridegroom are seen-off by the host as soon as the ceremony is over.

It may be pointed out that the father of the bride pays the sister/aunt of the groom, accompanying the guests, handsomely, either in cash or in the form of a golden ornament. Besides, the younger brother/s sister/s of the groom or the small kids, if any, accompanying the party, are paid cash presents. The father of the girl also hands over a suitcase to the father of the bridegroom that contains the following items: -

1. Cash present for the bridegroom amounting to rupees five thousand or more according to ones economic status or as decided earlier.
2. A complete suit with a night suit for the bridegroom including sewing charges, if any.
3. A present for the groom in the form of a television set/scooter or any other item mutually agreed upon by both the parties.
4. Ten to fifteen packets of sweets weighing at least of two Kg. each, according to ones economic status.

There are, no doubt, some revolutionary people who hold this function in a very simple way without any transactions of money and presents and without any pomp and show or the assembly of any relatives or the like.

At the time of leaving the house of the bride, at least two small kids generally the younger sister of the bride, or her younger brother/cousins, accompany the bridegroom to his house where they are served tea and dinner etc. and on their return journey they are given a cash present of at least rupees 101/-each or more according to ones economic status. Besides, the father of the girl has to return the '*a:lath*' money after doubling it

(paid earlier by the father of the groom at the time of his entrance into the bride's house). He also pays the wages for the coolie who accompanies the betrothal party carrying the trunk/ suitcase, etc., known as '*Mahniv Ha:rl*'.

In this way the two families complete one of the pre-marriage formalities and come more close to each other, and they start making arrangements for the marriage function of their children from hence onwards.

5. *Marriage* - A Historical perspective

Our religious scripture have fixed the four stages of human life they are :-

1. *Brahamcharya*: The stage of student life devoted to study and learning.
2. *Grahashth* : Married life or the stage of taking up the responsibilities of a house holder.
3. *Va:nprasth* Retired life spent in intense prayers within the limits of the family.
4. *Sannyas* Renunciation and preaching of the scriptures while leading a life of total non-attachment.

As per the life-schedule, every one has to go through all these stages in ones life provided luck favours one with a long life. But for some people married life is the final goal because of their acute attachment to this particular stage of life. When one strictly follows the discipline of married life according to the scriptures, it definitely shall lead one to the higher stages after the stage of married life is over. The scriptures emphasize that a better way of approaching God is through '*Shakti*'.

the female energy, which is more compassionate and merciful. It is for of this reason that our scriptures and great Epics put the name of the goddess first, which is followed by the name of the gods. We say '*Sita Ram*' or '*Radhey Sham*' and not otherwise. This principle is true even today. If we want ascension to the transcendental realms, we have to chant the name of '*Shakti*' (in the form of goddess) before we approach the *Shaktiman* (God).

In this way marriage is an important occasion in a man's life. Apparently there appear to be two main reasons why man selects a life partner through marriage. The first and the foremost is to put a check on his sexual behaviour, which would differentiate him from the beasts and thus put him in the list of civilized animates. The other reason appears to be his keen desire to limit the boundaries of his family, which till then was not possible due to his freedom of enjoying sex like a wild beast. In order to achieve this goal and to give a name to his children thus born, he bound himself in a family with a female, which in the long run was called 'marriage'. Thus in the new set up the boundaries of the family were limited and the boy/girl thus born got a family name by his protector¹ It is because of this very fact that the marriages have been given so much importance in almost all the civilizations of the world. There is no denying the fact that the modes of marriage are different in different civilizations but the aim is the same. There may not be even a single sect or race in the world, which does not believe in the validity of marriage. The lust for sex and the desire to have a son as the only support in the old age, are the two more reasons for setting up a family.

¹ *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Ed. By J. Hastings Vol. VIII, P. 423.

The Indian civilization has given a peculiar sanctity to marriage that has now become a part and parcel of our social psyche. It works as a bond for two persons and they become indivisible partners – a couple. The society has owned marriage as a religious and social binding.

During early days, the aim of marriage was to produce a child or more to give continuity to the family and who could also perform the last rites on the death of their parents¹. The *Smritis* clearly mention the ways in which a couple could get united. The total kinds of marriages have been numbered as eight falling under two major headings each comprising four kinds as per details given below; -

a) Marriages of the High Order:-

- 1) *Brahma*, 2) *Deva*, 3) *Arsha*, and
- 4) *Prajapatya*.

b) Marriages of the Low Order :-

- 1) *Asur*, 2) *Gandarva*, 3) *Rakshasa*, and
- 4) *Pishacha*.

All marriages categorized under 'the marriages of the high order' were arranged marriages whereas the marriages under the 'low marriages order' were said to be the marriages by compulsion. The first set of marriages was settled on the basis of wealth, charity, temper/nature and the means of lively-hood. The latter set of marriages was decided on the basis of wars, plunder, theft and forceful abductions. The position of the highest order was given to the '*Brahma*' and '*Manu*' advocated this type of marriage for *Brahmins*. Now this very type of marriage is prevalent among all the Hindus of the sub-continent. The remaining types of marriages do not figure anywhere now

and have been discarded by our society since long. They are not considered as marriages at all in the present set up of the society. There is no denying the fact that a few of the marriage rituals that were observed while performing the above said 'low marriages order', continue to be observed even in our present set-up of marriages. For instance in many parts of the sub-continent the groom keeps a sword attached to his waist while leaving for the marriage along with his *Baratis*. One example is found among the '*Gond*' sect of the tribal people where the groom is asked to catch the fleeing bride at the time of their marriage. If he is unable to catch the girl, the marriage cannot materialize. The marriage is held only after the groom performs this act successfully. This clearly indicates that we have adopted some of the rituals from our diverse marriage patterns to the extent that we are unable to discard or disown them from our present set up of marriages.

The impact of religion must have remained dormant in our early marriage customs/patterns, but with the passage of time and as the castes developed in Hindu society, it must have cast its influence on our marriage customs also. That is why we see some of the religious based praxis in the form of certain rituals becoming more cumbersome than enjoyable. With the development of the caste based society the religious praxis, known as the '*Karma Kanda*' increased in our marriage rituals also because various religious faiths of the society expressed through the rituals, were owned and adopted by the society from time to time. Marriage has been considered as a matter of joy and happiness in our society from the times immemorial and that is why feasting and dancing, assembly of relatives and friends is held on this occasion. The coming of a new member in the family must have made cleaning, whitewashing and decorating the house imperative. These practices appear to have given rise to some of the rituals and customs, which we adhere to even

¹ *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Ed. By J. Hastings Vol. VIII, P. 450

today. They developed and became more elaborate with the passage of time¹. In ancient times when there were no religious bindings, the couple must have been bestowing themselves on one another and thus coming more close to each other². We have adopted and retained some of such practices in our present day marriages and adore them even today. A few of such practices can be detailed as under: -

I. *AthIwas* - Holding of hands.

On the day of marriage, the groom and the bride are asked to sit for a pretty long time holding the hands of one another in such a way that the right hand of the bride remains in the right hand of the groom and the left one in the left. During all this period they are asked to make a number of promises with each other according to the scriptures.

II. *Lonchi gand* : Tying of the Bridal Knot

As per the Indian thought, the bridegroom and the bride are asked to circumambulate seven times round the holy fire while tying a knot to the upper garments of the couple and the ritual is known as the '*Granthi Bandhan*.' No such act is prevalent among the marriages of Kashmiri Pandits.

III. *Wachas AthI La:gun*, '*Hriday Sparash*': Touching of the chest.

During the process of marriage, the priest, while splashing Holy Water touches the chest of the bridegroom, makes him to promise that he will look after the wishes of

his bride and keep adherence to it. This act is also known as, '*Hriday Sparsh*'.

IV. *A:nI Wuchun* - Seeing the reflection in the mirror.

Till recently all marriages were held as arranged marriages and neither the boy nor the girl was allowed to see one another before marriage. Such an act before marriage was considered as a taboo in the civilized society and faith. Religious bindings also did not advocate this practice. The bride and the groom were asked to see one another's reflection in a mirror at the time of marriage. But now a days the boy and the girl enjoy the full liberty from their parents, society and all the near and dear ones to see one another and get acquainted with each other's likes and dislikes before they enter into the matrimonial relationship. But the ritual of seeing one another's reflection in a mirror at the time of marriage still continues. Besides, it is said that mirror reflects the inner feelings of a person and cannot be betrayed by artificiality. In this way if we say that this serves symbolically as the last chance for the boy or the girl to consider their selection finally, may not be an exaggeration. Thus this ritual in a way puts the final stamp on the selection of one another.

V. *Dayi BatI* : Dining together

It is a combination of two words, '*Dayi*' meaning 'from God' and '*BatI*' meaning 'food'. Thus it means 'God's food'. When all those accompanying marriage party finish feasting including those who had come to receive the guests, the bridegroom and the bride are offered the remnants of the same food, which was served, to the guests from both sides from the ceremonial

¹ Panday, Rajbali, *Hindu Sanskar, Varanasi*, 1960, P. 254.

² *Ibid.* P. 259.

kitchen. Here too we see the beautiful idea of serving food first to others and then to ones own self. Food is brought and served by the head cook who waits for this occasion with great expectations. He gets a good gratification from the father of the groom for serving food to the couple on this occasion. The bridegroom and the bride are asked to eat from the same plate in presence of Holy Agni. Besides, curd in a separate bowl, it contains all those dishes, which the host had got prepared for the guests. All this is an attempt to give the couple a chance to know the likes and dislikes and the eating habits of one another.

It is a fact that the rituals of our marriages are very old, as such the actual date of their beginning cannot be specified with certainty. What was the form of our marriages before the time of the *Vedas*, cannot be said with certainty. It is said that the marriages were not as perfect and orderly even up to the age of the *Rgveda*. Scholars are of the view that the marriage customs got their shape and form during the later *Vedic* period¹. It had formalized all its rites, rituals and customs by the time of the compilation of the '*Sutras*'. It had also adopted nearly all the aspects of the present '*Karma Kanda*' by then. A clear picture of it is witnessed when we study the '*Paraskar*' and '*Ashwalayana Grahisutras*'². A considerable change has occurred in the mode of our marriages since the time of the "*Grahisutras*" but the main functions, rites and rituals are almost the same which were adopted by our ancestors earlier and are still in vogue for the last nearly five thousand years.³

With all the changes in the ritualistic patterns, rituals and customs, it can not be denied that the marriages must have been an act of rejoicing and merry making throughout all the ages. The *Karma Kanda*, our Holy Scriptures and the folk songs connected with some of its rites, bear witness to all these facts.

6. *KhandrIki KisIm* - Types of Marriages.

There are the following four well known types of marriages prevalent in the valley :-

- a) *And pyeTh*: Direct marriage between a boy and a girl.
- b) *Andyut*: Marriages based on reciprocity.
- c) *TrIkIvAT* : A marriage involving three families.
- d) *Gari PyeThi* : To have a resident groom for a girl.

a). *And PyeTh* : (Direct marriage).

This type of marriage is common these days. In this type of marriage the girl has to leave her parental house and she has to reside in the house of her in-laws along with her husband or both of them choose a separate residence for their future living.

b). *Andyut* (Marriage based on Reciprocity)

This type of marriage is prevalent among the economically or otherwise backward classes and among the people residing in remote corners of the valley. A boy or a girl not selected for the direct marriage, prefer this type of marriage. The reasons could either be physical, i.e. bodily disability, or economic or social weakness/ taboo. In such a case a boy and a girl of one family are selected

¹ Shastri, Shiv Raj, *Rgvedic Kal Man Parivarik Sambandh*, p. 332.

² a) *Pa raskar Grahi Sutra*, I, 8, 11. b) *Ashwalayan Grahi-sutra*, I and 6.

³ Panday, Rajbali, *Hindu Sanskar, Varanasi*, 1960, P. 262.

to match a boy and a girl of another family of a similar class. Besides being economically backward families, there is a possibility of the couples being of un-even age groups. Though the parents on both the sides try their best to select such matches very carefully yet disparities exist in such marriages. In view of the fact that every family gives preference to the first type of marriage referred to above, either the boy or the girl (one among the two), is generally of the post or pre marriageable age and thus the parents are left with no alternative but to opt for this type of marriage. In case the girl is aged, her parents choose a family where the boy is above the marriageable age and vice versa. In this way the two families come close to one other with certain mutual agreements. It may be pointed out that this type of marriage was very common in the villages till recently. With the passage of time and with the advent of modern thoughts and education, this type of marriage is now very rare even in the remote areas of the valley.

c). TrIkivAT-

(Marriages involving Three families.)

Three different families with due consultation with one another exchange their sons/daughters in marriage among their families. It is a mutual understanding between the three families involved that they arrive at a decision of marrying one another's boys/girls. This type of marriage is considered better than the second type of marriage, but is most un-common now-a-days due to the advent of the modern thoughts and development in our society.

d). Gari Pye'Thi'-
(Resident groom for the girl.)

A person who has no male issue and is bestowed with a daughter only and who wants to make his daughter a support for his old age, prefers the selection of a boy for marrying his daughter who agrees to live in the house of the in-laws after the marriage. This type of marriage is, naturally, acceptable to a person who has got more than one or two sons and who can spare one of them for the family that wants to own such a match for their daughter. In the case of such a marriage the groom has to leave his parental house forever and own the in-laws house as his own and reside there permanently after the marriage.

In the remote villages of the valley, such a type of marriage is very common among the peasantry who are in need of more hands at the peak time of their agricultural operations. So they have no alternative but to choose boys for their girls who could be of great help to them in the fields. It is generally observed that such matches prove to be full of deceit and they lure young men for their under-aged daughters and thus use them for some weeks/months of need and then turn them away from their houses. The Kashmiri language is full of a number of folk songs, folk stories, proverbs and riddles that refer to such marriages. The reason behind all this fallacy is the fact that all the agreements in such cases are oral and, as such, all such marriages, in case they ever mature, do not last long and can be challenged in a court of law as well. It may be pointed out that such deceitful marriages are either an exception among the Hindu families of Kashmir, or in case any such marriage takes place, the concerned parties legally register it.

It may be pointed out that we have already discussed in detail the following post-marriage functions/rituals while dealing with the *Yagnyopavita Sanakar*:

1. *Zyun TsaTun* : Chopping of the fire-wood.
2. *KhAri:dAri* : Marketing and purchasing.
3. *Dapun* : Extending of invitations/distribution of invitation cards.
4. *GarI Na:vay* : Cleaning the house, and
5. *MA:nzira:th, and* the Night of henna.
Kru:l Kharun
6. *Devgo>n,* : The Invocation of the deities, (*Kani Shran and Hom*), Ritual Bath, and Offerings to the Sacred Fire

The following items, which have not been dealt with till now, require a special description in the present context: -

- a) *To>mul tshaTun* - Cleaning/winnowing of rice, spices and cereals etc.,
- b). *Va:kh Da:n* - Final settlement of dates.
- c). *Mas MutsIrun* - Hair dressing,
- d). *Singa:r(Sa:z Karun)* - Bride's make-up,
- e). *LAgnl Chi:ri'* - Official invitation to the Groom's family.

**a) *To>mul tshaTun* -
Cleaning/winnowing of rice ,etc**

It is a general function connected with all celebrations of religious or social nature. Cleaning of rice is held in all the big and small feasts and functions. On the eve of the marriage of a son or a daughter or on the *Yagnyopavita* ceremony of a son, the function attains greater importance. Generally relatives come of their own accord to help the host for such a type of work when the marriage of a daughter is involved and they wait for a

proper invitation on the marriage of a son. But in the case of *Yagnyopavita*, they consider it a religious duty to help and attend to such jobs on their own without waiting for any invitation. The host fixes an auspicious day for cleaning and winnowing of rice, spices and other ingredients to keep these ready for the function and store them properly in different vessels. The ladies in close relation and of the neighbourhood come and extend their help on such occasions. The best quality of grocery, rice and other eatables are kept separately for special guests 'Baratis' of the marriage party in case of the marriage of a daughter. All the helpers on this occasion are served special tea and snacks etc., and thus they enjoy the function immensely.

In the same way, during the days gone by, the spices were ground in big and small mortars as the people disliked and discouraged the use of the ready-made crushed spices. Likewise firewood was kept ready ahead of time, as it was the only fuel used for cooking. Due to the paucity of time and easy availability of most of the things in the ready-made form in the market, all these activities appear to be a talk of the past. The availability of L.P.G., cooking utensils of all kinds and sizes on hire, have made cooking easy as well as time saving for the host and the cooks as well. Now, we do not have any singing or 'Vanlvun' on such occasions. Such 'Vanlvun' is now sung on the eve of either marriage or *Yagnyopavita*. A sample of the type of 'Vanlvun' that was in vogue till recently on such occasions is given below for reference: -

Zyū tso>T janglan da:ni mun ga:man
 Ma:man hyAtsnay bAD hyamtha: ,
 Ba:smati' to>mlas kanl Da:la:n chi:
 So>ndarl chi Ma:līyan sanz kara:n.
 Navi lari kA:ni: isandan da:r chuy
 Go>Dnyuk ka:r chuy shu:b yi: nay
 A:nganas sA:nis shA:di:ya:nay

BA:di:ya:nay mushikh tra:va:n.

Yazman bihith pyeThimis po<ras

Masa:lI bo<ras ganD mutsIra:n

Masa:lI dAgiv so>nIvyan kanzan

Ro>plvyan paryan chonu:yo.

GandarI¹ chi: vanva:n ganDri chi: tsye'Ta:n.

So>ndrI chi ma:līnyuk sanz kA:ra:n

Yazman BA:yi:Yazman chuy kara:n bu:li:

Masa:lI wa:lun tu:li' tu:li:

The translation of these lines is as under:-

Fire-wood was chopped from forests and

Paddy was got pounded in villages,

And your maternal uncle showed mush courage.

We are removing the grit from 'Basmati' rice,

And beautiful ladies are preparing for their parental houses.

The upper story of the house has sandalwood fittings,

And it is your first endeavor of this nature,

May God bless you to come out with flying colours?

There is all merriment in our compound;

The aniseed is giving out its fragrance.

The host is sitting on the uppermost storey,

And he is untying the heavy pack of spices.

We grind the spices in golden mortars and

Strained it with silver sieves.

The nymphs are singing and grinding the spices,

And the beauties are preparing for their parental houses.

Oh hostess, the host is explaining to you through his gestures,

To bring the spices with care and in small quantity.

¹ A celestial musician, a class of singers among the gods.

b. *Va:kh Da:n*- Final settlement of dates.

The marriage function of a daughter starts from the date of unlocking the hair of the bride. But prior to that the father of the groom and of the bride meet one another for mutual consultations to fix the dates for various ceremonies connected with the marriage of their wards. The function of the meeting of the two is known as '*Vakh Dan*'. It is a combination of two words, both originating from the Sanskrit language. '*Vakh*' means 'word' and '*Dan*' means 'giving'. In this way, besides finalizing the other matters for holding the marriage function, they exchange a word and fix the final date for the marriage. Hence, '*Vakh Dan*'. In the *Rgveda* and the '*Narada Smriti*'¹, we have a reference to this ritual. As such, it is not a fact that this function is a recent addition to the celebrations of the marriages in Kashmir² as put forward by some people. Sir Walter Lawrence has clearly confirmed this fact in his book, '*The Valley of Kashmir*' and he is of the view that this function of social importance was prevalent in Kashmir since times immemorial.³

C. *Mas MutsIrun* : Hair dressing

This is one of the most important functions at the bride's house as no such function is held at the groom's house where the marriage actually starts from the date of '*GarI Na:vay*' i.e. washing/cleaning of the house. The bride takes a hot water bath in the morning. She is given the best available soap for cleaning. Previously wheat husk mixed with curd was rubbed on the whole body of the bride so as to make her skin clear and soft.

Now a day this job is done at a beauty parlour. Besides, treating her body, her hair is thoroughly and minutely washed or dyed and given a special treatment. Various kinds of creams, powders and perfumes are made use of. Her hands, arms and feet, and her nails are given a special treatment. For the first time she makes use of a colourful and glittering '*Bindi*' so as to look like a bride from the *Divgo>n* ritual onwards.

The ceremony has been in practice in the valley since times immemorial and we find a reference to this ritual in our '*Grahisutras*'.¹ From this very day starts the '*VanIvun*' and singing in the house. Some of the lines of '*VanIvun*' are quoted here :

Ba:zIrl animay fAlIll tI hiye';
Ku:ri: wa:rI wa:rI maLA:ye'.
Landan ye'li gA:ye's tsandan han tA:rmay,
Tathi garInA:vmay kangni han.
VasIdi:v Razni cha:nay wa:nay,
Ku:r chakh Divki:maje' hAnz.
Rikhmani o>nunay gAtshihly pa:nay,
Mo>khtay da:nay vurA:se'.
Kangni cha:ni chi sonI sIndi' bAriye'
HA:riye' lyu:khuy Yye'wa'h ka:l.
Rum chi: zA:vili' sun sye'z dRA:yi:,
Sharika: A:yi: Ankl pa:rne'.

As already pointed out, the '*Divgo>n*' of a bride involves some more rites than that of the groom. She receives a number of dowry items from her father on the eve of this *Sanskar*. Under the '*Goadan*' ritual, her friends and relatives decorate her hair. Stress has been laid in our scriptures not to cut short the hair of ladies and girls. The hair, according to our scriptures, is considered essential for our women folk just like wearing of a *Yagnyopavita* is held for the males. The common saying is, '*Mas chu vas*', meaning, 'Hair is the best ornament' for a lady.

¹ Panday, Raj Bali, *Hindu Sanskar*, Varanasi, 1960, P. 264.

² *Keys To Kashmir*, Lalla Rukh Publications, Srinagar, 1953, P. 29.

³ Lawrence, Walter, *The Valley of Kashmir*, London, 1895, P. 260

¹ Panday, Raj Bali, *Hindu Sanskar*, Varanasi, 1960, P. 264.

The above quoted lines include the word 'London' which is a clear indication that this is a recent addition. The translation of these lines is as under: -

Oh sweet heart, I got the special hair oil from the market,
 Oh my daughter, I shall apply it gently on you,
 When I visited London last, I got a piece of Sandal-wood and
 I got prepared a comb out of it.
 It was prepared at the carpenter's- shop of king Vasudeva.
 You are the daughter of mother *Devaki*.
Roukhmani herself brought it.
 Thread up the pearl beads in it.
 Your comb has the golden teeth,
 Oh merle your marriage has already been settled,
 Your hair is very thin and also smooth.
 And goddess *Sharika* has come herself to make your braid.

After the '*Vanlvun*' is over, tea or drinks, as may be the requirement of the hour, is served to all those present and then starts the singing and dancing programme which lasts for the whole night.

It is followed with the functions and rituals like '*MA:ni Ra:th*', '*Divgon*' and making of offerings to the holy fire, known as '*Hawan*' or '*Homa*' and all these have already been discussed under the *Yagnyopavita Sanakar*.

d. *Singa:r* (*Saz Karun*)-Bride's Make-up.

After finishing the '*Kani Shra:n*' and the '*Homa*', starts the decoration and make-up of the bride when she puts on the ornaments made for her by her parents. Our folk songs give a poetic description regarding the preparation and wearing of these ornaments. Some of the lines are quoted here: -

De'jho>r go>r may Ve'jibra:rye',¹
Ma:ji so>mbro<vuy cha:vl tl shokay,
MA:li garlno<vuy Hawlsay sa:n.
Satan Moharan Dye'jho>r kas kori kyutuye',
Yas kori guml Dali buml khanjras.²

The translation of these lines is as under:-
 I mended your '*Dejho>r*' (a hanging ear ornament) from *Bijbihara*,
 Your mother had saved for it all through willingly with keen desire,
 And the father prepared it joyfully.
 The ear ornament costing seven gold coins for the daughter
 Whose (dagger like) beautiful eyebrows are to get sweaty very soon? (The girl with the beautiful eyebrows is to face the hardships of a family-life very soon).

On the same night the bride is decorated for the wedding, which is to take place early next morning. The first thing to do is to decorate her with a headgear, known as '*Tarangl*', which comprises: -

1. A cap with costly brocade fitted skullcap,
2. Inner fine linen short covering with golden embroidery work on its two sides with a depression in the center at the head side to fit on the cap called, '*Zu:ji*'.
3. Ribbon type white cloth, wrapped over the border of the skull-cap called, '*Tarangl La:Th*'
4. White glittering paper ribbon, called '*Mo>harl La:Th*' covering the cloth ribbon, and,

¹ A town nearly forty five km to the south of Srinagar city on the Jammu -Srinagar National Highway. Its ancient name is recorded as '*Vijay Vihar*', but in the common Kashmiri language it is known as '*Vejibror*'. In the revenue records, it is named as '*Bijbihara*'.

² It is a poetic as well as proverbial description meaning that the beautiful girl who has to under go through all the hazards of a family-life, very shortly.

5. A white transparent plastic ribbon covering the paper ribbon, called 'Shi:shi La:Th', and
6. A few pins having black heads for fastening the ribbons to the head-gear on the right and the left sides of the skull.

First of all the cap is put on the head. It is then covered with short fine linen cloth, 'Zu:ji,' so that the glittering and embroidered two side of it cover the ears partly and its tail falls on the back of the bride. Then the cloth ribbon is wound layer by layer round the skullcap. It is covered with the shining paper ribbon and finally by transparent plastic ribbon. In the end it is fastened by two black/gold plated or even golden needles on the two sides near the ear-tops. It is an ancient headgear, which a few of our old ladies wear even today. But due to the change in dress code among the ladies of Kashmiri Pandits, this type of headgear is becoming very rare. The only difference between the bridal head-gear and an ordinary one, is that the outer long linen, that extended up to the feet in a curved shape of a common headgear, is not used in the case of the bride as she wears a 'Sari' dress on the eve of the marriage now. The wearing of the headgear 'Tarangl' is now just a ritual only. With the disappearance of this type of dress code, the experts in making such headgears are rare. Therefore, the expert on the eve invites a special attention. She is given a 'Zang' and some gratifications. Every body congratulates the host and the hostess at this hour of joy and happiness. Every one expresses his own joy and happiness at this hour. Every one wishes a prosperous family life for the bride. These ideas are repeatedly found in our folk songs, which our ladies sing on this special occasion. Here a few lines are quoted for reference: -

*Taranga: go>nDmay ga:hl lo>guy tra:vIne',
ta:h ko>rnay Ma:ji Bhawa:ne'.*

*Tarangl go>nDmay dAchine: da:re',
Ha:re' gatshun wA:riv wo>ni'.*

*Taragas chA:nis so>nI sIndi tykiye'
LAtiye' Dyakl bAD dra:ye'ham.*

Translation:

I arranged your headgear in such a way that it started glittering,

It was folded by Mother goddess *Bhawani* herself.

I made your 'Tarangl' starting from the right side, Because the Merle has to go to her in-laws now.

Your headgear has the golden specks on it,

Oh young lady you have proved to be very fortunate.

All the female and the young members of the family remain busy in singing and dancing for the whole night, whereas the elder male members of the house are busy with the cooks in the ceremonial kitchen or they are preparing for the next day's reception of the *Barat*. The bride is asked to retire to an adjacent room for taking rest for the remaining part of the night, as she has to remain fully active for completing the marriage rituals next day. In this way this ritual comes to an end.

e. Lagnl Chi:ri' :

Official Invitation to the Groom and his Family.

Also known as 'Lagnl ChAndrika', this is virtually the last pre-marriage function held at the residence of the groom. It is generally held a day or more, prior to the date of the marriage, provided the day is an auspicious one and is agreed to by both the families. On this date the *Kula Guru* of the daughter's side attends the groom's house with a properly framed and printed portrait of any of the common gods with spouse in a 'Jai Mala' posture¹. Besides, it includes the details about the Zodiac positions at the time of the marriage with other details

¹ Previously the portraits were hand made—but now printed and ready-made portraits are available in the market for the purpose.

regarding the number of invitees and proper timings for performing various marriage rituals. On his arrival at the main gate, he has to go through the 'a:lath' ceremony. Here he has to pay a cash of rupees 101/- or more as the 'a:lath' money to the lady of the house performing this ritual of his entering the groom's house. This amount is paid back to him in double when he leaves that house after performing the ritual. He is respectfully led to a well furnished/decorated room, where he is served milk/tea, etc., according to his choice. He is offered the best of the sweets and confectionary/ bakery items. After finishing his tea, he uncovers the portrait and reads its contents to all those present on the occasion. While explaining the importance of this function he relates its origin from the 'Shiva Lagan', 'Shiva Parinay' and 'Narada Smriti' etc., that include such references of Narada who acted as a mediator between the Shiva and the father of Parwati for arranging their marriage. The Kula Guru blesses the couple whose names figure in this marriage document. Soon a packet of sweets, some bakery items, two or more Kg of sugar and a 'Tha:l' of rice with a packet of salt and some money for 'Zang' purposes, is brought before the Kula Guru for completing the ritual, called 'pre'pyun'. The groom is invited and asked to perform this 'Puja' and 'Naived' is afterwards distributed among all those present there. What remains is packed and handed over to the priest. Here a cash payment by the father of the groom is made to him as 'Dakshina' according to the economic position and social status of the family. Besides, paying the taxi charges, etc., the amount of the 'a:lath' is returned to him. He offers a portion of the 'Naived' etc., to the bride's parents on his return journey and informs them about the details of his visit to the groom's house.

There are a number of folk songs about this function. A few lines are quoted here: -

GAgnuK do>h khot lAgnlchi ra:she',

KA:shi: Andruk Brahmun a:v.

*Yi: ko>r Vallba:yi Ganish Ra:zastay
Tati a:yi Di:shith yati ko>r ka:r
Rikhamni li:chinam Krishnas lAgnay chi:ri¹
Brihaspath sa:tay yor hyath a:v*

Translation :

The day of the marriage was settled as per the Zodiac signs in the heavens.

The Brahmin from Kashi² has arrived

The same ritual was performed when Valabha³ was married to Ganesha. (The Brahmin...)

There we saw this function and practiced it here at our place

Roukhmani⁴ had got written this paper on the marriage of Krishna,

Jupiter has come along with it on the auspicious occasion. (The Brahmin.....)

In this way all the pre-marriage functions and rituals of day-to-day gatherings come to an end in both the houses and the final day of the marriage arrives. It is a day of utmost importance for both the families because of the fact that the social gatherings and celebrations involved in both the families are totally celebrated in two different ways, (In the house of the bride and the groom respectively). As such, it will be in the fitness of things to deal with these separately.

¹ It is known as 'Lagna Chandrika' in the scriptures. This has changed into 'Lagni Chi:ri' in the Kashmiri language.

² The Brahmins from Kashi have a special respect in our folk songs.

³ Valabha the spouse of Lord Ganesha.

⁴ Rauhmani The spouse of Lord Krishna.

Chapter Five

MARRIAGE - Main Functions

(a) Main functions at the groom's house :-

1. *Dasta:r BAndi:*, (*SeharI GanDun*) – Designing the Turban.
2. *Vyu:g*, The decorated circle.
3. *Bara:t*, (*Yani Wol*), The Marriage party.

1. *Dasta:r BAndi:* : Designing of the Turban.

After shaving and bathing the groom wears the wedding dress, which is followed by binding of the turban. This task is done either by the elder paternal uncle or by the elder brother-in-law (sister's husband). The '*Zang*' ceremony is followed on this occasion also. In view of the fact that binding of the turban is now not a common feature among the males as it was common in the recent past, the host invites the services of an expert for this purpose¹. After completing the designing of the turban, a black-headed needle is pressed into the front tip of the turban just to avoid evil or witchcraft. Finally, the *Kula Guru* applies a Saffron mark on the forehead of the groom and thus he is ready to lead the marriage procession. It is a busy time for the ladies of the house who burn Niger in the decorated fire pot. The cameramen and the video-man are no less busy. The host is busy noticing and examining the arrival of each and every guest so that no body is left from the list of invitees who are to accompany the '*Barat*.' All the people assemble in the courtyard. The man with the conch-shell makes occasional sounds on the conch so as to inform the groom that the guests have assembled. A man with a decorated umbrella, called '*ChAthlr*' can

¹ : Now-a-days ready-made turbans are available in the market for the grooms.

also be seen beside the conch-man. In the meantime the groom proceeds toward the 'Vyu:g'¹. All the means of transporting the guests to the venue of the function are decorated with garlands of flowers and bunting. The car of the groom receives special care. It is decorated more artistically. The whole area is full of well-wishers and spectators. All the young ladies of the family and the relatives sing the folk songs of the hour in to-and-fro -- 'Rov' form on the Muslim pattern, while the elderly ladies continue their traditional folk singing, 'Vanlvun'.

2. Vyu:g : The decorated circle, (At the Groom's House).

An expert artistically lays a decorated circular design on the ground with the coloured lime powders. A plate filled with rice, a coin and a cake of 'VAr' is put on it. The groom comes and stands on it facing towards the east. The grand mother/mother, first of all completes the 'a:ath' ceremony of the groom which is followed by moving over his head a 'tha:li' containing seven number of lamps made of rice-flour lit after applying ghee in its cotton wicks. These lamps are called, 'RAtnI tsA:ngi'² (Pearl lamps). Then he is offered a little sugar candy three times. All the members of the family, friends and close relatives garland the groom with a variety of flowers and ready-made colourful tinsel paper garlands fitted with currency notes. Last of all a special ribbon is

tied on his turban called 'Manan Ma:l'¹. From here the groom is taken in a procession to a temple to pay his reverence to the deity. His family members, the conch-man, the man carrying the specially decorated umbrella, called 'ChAthlr' and some of the invitees accompany him. On his return from the temple, he is led to the car decorated for him and thus the whole party starts for the venue of the marriage function. The host once again checks the guests so as to ensure that all the invitees have boarded the vehicles meant for them.

In the meantime the ladies go on singing the 'Vanlvun' and 'Rov' which highlights the importance of the 'Vyu:g'. Some of the lines are quoted here: -

Vyu:g lyu:khu:yo sami sami jaye',
Sha:ye' shri: Bhagwa:na:ye'.
Vyu:g lyu:khu:yo zange' a:yo
Zange' a:yo Parmi:shwar.
Vyi:gis chA:nis shura:h garay,²
MA:nz, mare'd³ VurA:yo.
Vyu:g lyu:khu:yo Siryi praka:sho,
Naqa:sh Animy le'kha:ne'.

The translation of these lines is :-

The demarcated circle was made on the plain ground just near the place of Almighty.

The 'Vyu:g' was drawn with seven colours, God Himself performed the 'Zang' ceremony.

¹ The word 'Manan' originates from the Sanskrit language and means, 'thoughtfulness', or 'consideration' and 'Mal' means 'a garland'. In view of the fact that groom enters a new stage of family life from this date, hence called, 'Manan Mal'.

² It is the translation of Sanskrit words, 'Shodasha Kala'. On the full moon night the moon is considered as complete, comprising all the sixteen parts of its diameter.

³ The old Kashmiri name for the limestone is 'Mared'. As the white lining demarcated certain 'boundaries', known in Sanskrit as, 'Mariyada'. The word seems directly derived from the word 'Mariyada'.

¹ A circular place decorated with different coloured lime stone powder as already explained under the heading Yagnyopavita.

² Seven lamps (like the earthen lamps) of raw rice flour with its cotton wicks dipped in ghee are burnt and kept in a 'tha:li' which is circulated over the head of the groom three times when he arrives on the 'Vyu:g'. These are called 'RAtnI tsA:ngi' in the common Kashmiri language

Your 'Vyū:g' is complete with all the sixteen portions of moon (*Shodasha Kala*).

And decorated with the henna and the lime stone powder. The *Vyū:g* has been drawn under the broad day (sun) light,

Several artists were engaged to make it.

The ladies of the house accompany the groom up to the car while singing the folk songs and after the procession leaves, they return and start singing and dancing on the 'Vyū:g' just now vacated by the groom. The hostess also takes part in this singing and dancing along with other ladies of the house. This type of song is sung in short and quick rhythm and the words like 'Sonder' and 'HA:r' are replaced with the names of the ladies and the relatives participating in the dancing. The couplets are recorded here: -

SormI lodum shi:shas andar,

So>ndar wAtsIm natsA:ne'.

HA:r watsIm natsIne', sA:r sonI shzIye'.

Ha:ri gatse'm JumkI Ju:ri', so>ti shzIye'.

Translation:

The collyrium was put into a bottle,

The beautiful one has got up to dance.

The Merle, that too golden one, has stood up to dance,

The merle wants earrings, those too made of gold.

The ladies accompanying the groom up to his car, start returning and on their way back they sing the following song: -

Lakhimi: sA:ti' sA:ti' Ro>pl Bo>wA:ne',

SonI ma:l mo>khlI ma:l tshInI tas nA:li:.

So>nI ja:mI gAnDinas Koshalya:ye',

Sha:mI rI:pl Ra:mI gatshi SI:ta:ye'.

VasishTh tI Brahma: Vi:d para:n dra:ye',

Brahma:, Veshin tI I:shwar dra:v.

Namaska:r bo>vinay KaramIli:kha:ye'^d,

¹ She is the goddess of fate in charge of deciding marriage.

(Sha:mI Rl:pl....)

YAndra:zI DarmIra:zI Varuk' anda:zay,

Cha:v kara:n Ki:ki: vanIva:n dra:ye',

Bharath ra:zI Sho>turgo>n rathI hyath dra:ye',

(Sha:mI Rl:pl)

The translation of these lines is as under: -

The goddess of wealth accompanying *Ro>plBhawa:ni²* garlanded him with gold and pearls.

Kaushalya offered the golden brocade³.

The black beauty *Rama* has gone to bring *Sita*.

(*Maharshi*) *Vasishtha⁴* and *Brahma* came reciting the *Vedas*,

Brahma, *Vishnu* and God Himself have proceeded (towards the venue of the marriage.)

Our hand folded salutations are to the goddess of fortune, (The black beauty..)

The marriage party of the groom looked as if the

Procession of *Dharma Raja*,⁵ god *Indra*

Wishful *Kaiki*: followed them while singing folk songs.

King *Bharat* and *Shaturgun⁶* accompanied along with the chariots (The black..)

¹ One of the names attributed to the groom

² The eighteenth century saint poetess of Kashmir also known as '*Ro>pl Ded*' or '*Alkeshawari*'. More than one hundred and fifty '*Vakhs*' are attributed to this mystic poetess explaining the secrets of *Shaiva* and *Vaishnava* philosophies simultaneously. She is revered by the people of Kashmir as the incarnation of goddess '*Sharika*' P.S., *RupI Bhawani-Akh Sa:m* by S.N.Pandit, Post-graduate Department of Kashmiri, Kashmir University, Srinagar, 1983

³ She is the mother of Lord *Rama*.

⁴ *Vasishtha*, is one of the ancient sages of India. He has compiled the '*VasishthiTha Purana*'. Also known as '*Yog Vasishtha*'.

⁵ He is considered an epithet of *Yama*, who judges virtues and sins of a person after death, and awards hell or heaven according to ones deeds. Hence called *Dharamaraja*. King *Yodishthara* of the famous epic *Mahabharata* too was called as '*Dharmar-Raja*' for his truthfulness and virtues.

⁶ Both of them are the characters of the epic the *Ramayana* and the stepbrothers of Lord *Rama*.

3. *Barat* : (*Yani Wo<I*) : Marriage Party.

The marriage party comprises all the close relatives and friends. The newly weds, the in-laws and the neighbours are give a special preference while making selection. The family members and the host consider it their duty to seat them well in various vehicles of transport. Every care is taken for their smooth journey. The procession starts from the house of the host and it is lead by the car by which the groom travels. All the way the other vehicles remain very close to the groom's car so that they reach to the venue of the function in time and in a procession. Here too the groom has to pay his first reverence to the deity in a nearby temple. The rest of the guests wait outside the venue of the function till the return of the groom from the temple. The people who reach direct to the place of the function and are the guests of the groom, have to wait outside till the arrival of the *Barat*. The groom heads the '*Barat*' party and they enter the venue. At this time too the conch-man and person carrying the decorated umbrella, '*ChAthlr*' flank the groom. It appears as if a king is entering his court in the accompaniment of his courtiers. The conch-man blows the conch repeatedly informing the new host about the arrival of the groom. From here start the functions at the house of the bride.

b) Main functions at the Bride's house.

The main pre-wedding and marriage functions and rituals at the residence of the bride can be classified as under: -

(1) *Pre-marriage functions/rituals* :-

1. *Swa:gat* - Reception
2. *Jai Ma:la*: - Bride and groom garlanding one another

3. *Vyu:g* : Decorated circular pattern laid on the ground
4. *Sab* : Feasting the guests.
5. *Da:rl Pu:za*: : Obeisance at the door.
6. *Kanya: Da:n* (*Kani Da:n*) : Giving away the girl.
7. *Yoni Po>rud* : Casting the Holy Thread to the groom by the father-in-law.
8. *Gangl Ve's*; : Personification of *Ganga* in the form of a friend .
9. *Athl Wa:s* : Holding of hands.
10. *La:yi Bo<y* : The Spotless Brother
11. *Safil PAdi*: : The seven steps - seven vows.
12. *Abi:d* : Receiving alms.
13. *Pa:ran Du:ni* Offering walnuts.
14. *Dayi batl* : :Sharing of the food '*Naive'd*' .
15. *Poshi Pu:za*: : Showering flowers on the couple.

1. *Swa:gat* - Reception.

On reaching the venue of the function, the groom is followed by his close family members, his maternal relatives, flanked by the conch and the man holding the '*ChAthlr*' and all his friends. The video men and the photographers enter the venue first to make the arrangements for their respective recordings. All the guests from the bride's house stand in a queue on both sides of the lane in order to welcome the groom and the marriage party. The father/grand father of the bride is at the head of the party ready with garlands of flowers. He, after garlanding the groom, proceeds towards the father/grand father of the groom and after garlanding them he welcomes the other close relatives. All this takes place in a very happy mood and after hugging the close

ones, he leads the guests to the large canopy or the hall, which is already decorated to receive them. Besides the fathers of the couple, the uncles (maternal as well as paternal) of both the families meet and garland each other. The groom is led directly to the dais on which two well-decorated chairs are placed. He occupies one of the chairs; the other chair to his left is kept un-occupied for the bride. All the guests sit in the chairs arranged in the hall on all sides in a well-organized manner. The guests of the brides' side too sit in this very hall and they generally occupy the back seats. In the mean time a few boys enter the hall with trays of soft drinks if the marriage is held during summer months. The drinks are served to one and all according to ones choice. Light refreshment cum breakfast comprising tea/Saffron-flavoured black tea called '*QhAvl*' with biscuits, cheese *Pakora* and some salty snacks follow. Photographers and video cameramen are all busy in covering all the major events that take place in the hall. In the mean time the bride arrives and she is led to the dais by her friends and there she occupies her seat. Most of the video and camera coverage is given to the people who come to greet the groom and the bride. The couple is served milk preferably in silver cups and saucers. They are served some sweets '*Bufri*' with milk, as they have to keep a fast till their marriage rituals are completed.

2. Jai Ma:la: -

Bride and Groom Garlanding one another

In the meantime two young girls of the bride's family come to the venue with two big '*Thalis*' carrying two bulky garlands of flowers known as, '*Jai Ma:la:*' Facing each other, the bride and the groom get up and take the garlands in their hands and the groom garlands the bride first and then she garlands the groom while all the

guests, present in the hall, clap loudly. It is a hectic time for the photographers and video makers. The hall/canopy remains filled to its full capacity during all this period. The hosts, the guests and their families exchange greetings.

In the meantime the ladies continue their '*Vanlvun*' in a room adjacent to the main hall. The songs of this hour, besides being humorous and exciting, are also satirical in case there is any draw back on the part of the groom or the guests accompanying the *Barat*. To quote an instance, on the late arrival of the groom, they repeat: -

Vushi'kl dra:yi hye'li tai da:ni kar pu:re;

Du:ryuk yaniwo<l kar wa:te'.

Translation:

How could paddy crop suffice? The ears of barley have started sprouting.

When shall the marriage party from a far-flung area reach here?

There is long time-gap between the ripening season of barley and the season for setting of the paddy plantation. Thus the lines quoted show a long time for which the people of the bride's family had to wait due to the late arrival of the groom. Besides these lines clearly show that rice could not suffice for the full year to satisfy the hunger of the common man. During the days of autocracy the major portion of this crop was taken by the Government and the landlords as their share with the result the man who produced it, was left to starve. In order to save himself from starvation and hunger, he sowed barley as a fodder crop. Thus the peasant ate barley and its husk was used as fodder. The Government or the landlord would impose tax on the animal but growing fodder was exempted from any tax.

On the arrival of the groom every body feels happy and excited and ladies sing the following folk song: -

*Ko>hl tall dra:kho no>mnye',
 Brahma ji ko>niye' sozu:yo.
 Gahl pyav da:re 'n tai darwa:zan,
 Mahara:zI a:v tI tsa:v baji da:re'.
 Ra:zI po>thur tsa:kh ma:li baDi darwa:zay,
 Kyamkha:bI wathurmay preth sha:ye'.
 Hastis chA:nis thAz ambA:ri.¹
 PrIshitos kami ba:zA:ri: a:v.
 Ya:ro wA:tsly BAgi tai Du:li:²
 Zanak ra:zInI Ku:ri:ye'.*

The translation of these lines is as under:

You appeared behind the mountain (just like the sun),
 Brahma, the Creator, was sent to you as the
 messenger.

The doors and the windows became bright,
 The groom came and entered through the big gate.
 You entered like a prince, my dear, through the big
 door.

We kept the brocade spread everywhere.

Your elephant has a high canopy,

Ask him through which streets did it come?

Oh my friend, tell the daughter of King Janak (father
 of Sita, the spouse of Lord Ram),

The chariot and the palanquin have come for you.

Welcoming of the marriage party has been in
 vogue in the sub-continent since times immemorial. The
 guests and the groom on their first arrival were served with
 a soft drink. It was a mixture of honey and water flavoured
 with saffron. In the present set up of the marriage rituals
 we perform this ritual in a mini form on the eve of

'Kanya:da:n' ceremony wherein the drink is offered to the
 new couple by the father of the bride. We get reference of
 this kind of welcome in the *Atharva Veda*,¹ the
*Grahisutras*² and the *Shiva Purana*. It is known as '*Madhu
 Park*'³ The father and the mother of the bride now
 complete this function when they pay their blessings to the
 groom soon after the '*Kanya:da:n*' when they offer their
 daughter in marriage to the groom.

On the arrival of the marriage party, the father of
 the bride and the groom meet and greet one another which
 is called, '*Milni*' as per the Indian way of marriage. The
 ladies who sing the '*VanIvun*' express it in the following
 words: -

So>ni tsa:v a:ngan lAgnki hi:tay,

Bu:tan Di:v ma:li ratI chyape'.

So>ni so>ni mi:li: manz poshiwa:re',

Myul gov totas tI van ha:re'.

Translation

The Father-in-law (of our daughter) has entered
 the courtyard with the excuse of marriage,
 My son, it is as if the gods are being sacrificed for
 the demons,

The two Fathers-in-law meet each other in the
 midst of flower garden,

It was a meeting, as if, between the parrot and the
 wild merle.

Till recently seating arrangement for serving
 lunch to the guests was made under a canopy, which
 involved much labour besides being time consuming.
 Now the standing lunch/ dinner buffet is kept ready for
 the guests who arrive and eat according to their choice
 and liking. This has lessened the burden of the host

¹ From the root Sanskrit word, '*Ambari*', meaning a small canopy
 used by the royalty while they sit on their elephants.

² A kind of closed litter used to carry brides and ladies of well-to-do
 families.

¹ *Atharva Veda*, 12 - 14

² *Paraskar Grahisutra*, 32, 3.1.

³ Bhatt, Pt. Keshov, *Mekhala pustak, Vivah Vidi*, 1925, P. 23

besides being economical and involving less wastage and labour.

After completing the '*Jai Ma:la:*', it is the time for '*Da:rl Pu:za:*', but prior to that the couple is required to complete the '*Vyu:g:*' function. Thus the groom and the bride are asked to proceed towards the '*Vyu:g:*'.

3. *Vyu:g:-*

Decorated circular pattern laid on the ground.

After completing the '*Jai Mala:*' function, the guests start proceeding towards the hall where the arrangement for their lunch has been made by the host. The bride and the groom are led to the place where the '*Vyu:g:*' function has been arranged. The persons with the '*ChAthlr*' and the conch shell accompany the couple. The person with the '*ChAthlr*' remains just behind the groom and the conch man blows the conch occasionally to inform the people of the arrival of the '*Shah*', the 'King' as the groom is called on the occasion. The gait of the groom and the scene remind one of ancient aristocracy which is now a thing of the past. Previously the function of '*Jai Mala:*' was held in a Kashmiri- Pandit marriage, and the bride was brought by her maternal uncle up to the '*Vyu:g:*' and he would request the father of the groom for the double shawl, commonly called '*Dusl*' for bringing the bride wrapped in it. Now this function is completed by the maternal uncle by just placing the shawl on the bride's shoulders and leading her up to the '*Vyu:g:*'. On the '*Vyu:g:*' are kept two earthen plates, called '*TA:ki*' filled with rice, a coin and a piece of '*VAR*' on each of them. The couple stand on the '*Vyu:g:*' facing east and the bride stands to the left side of the groom. The grand/mother-in-law of the groom comes and performs the '*a:lath*' ceremony and the father of the groom pays for this

'*a:lath*' which is re-paid to him in double, at the time the bride leaves for the groom's house. It is followed with the ritual, '*Ratnl tsA:ngi*'¹. The lamps thus lit are moved over the heads of the groom and the bride² three times. Then the ribbons tied on the headgear of the bride and the turban of the groom, are exchanged. The groom's ribbon is tied to the brides and vice versa, known as changing of the '*Manan Malas*'. Last of all they are offered a piece of '*Barfi*' or sugar candy, which the bride and the groom have to eat three times simultaneously. First of all it is offered to the groom and then to the bride alternately. Here the groom is again garlanded by those who have not been able to do so earlier, and thus ends the function of the '*Vyu:g:*' on the arrival of the groom for marriage to the bride's house. It may be pointed out that during the days gone by, the bride and the groom used to enter the hall/canopy where the seating arrangement for the guests was arranged by the host for serving the lunch, after completing the '*Vyu:g:*' function. This has undergone a change in the present set-up because earlier the '*Vyu:g:*' ritual was completed on the arrival of the groom and the marriage party prior to serving of break fast to the guests at the venue of the function.

¹ These are the lamps resembling the earthen lamps in structure but are made of rice flour and fitted with the cotton wicks soaked in ghee.

² Previously the grooms had to travel all the distance up to the bride's house either on a horseback or on foot as the facilities of the modern transport were not available. In this way there was every apprehension of his having come under the influence of some evil spirits. The '*a:lath*' and the '*Ratnl tsA:ngi*', ceremony was held just to ward off the evil spirits.

4. Sab - Feasting the guests

The ladies at the 'VanIvun' room continue singing the folk songs all this time. The folk songs concerning the hour of feasting comprise three categories, namely: -

- a) *Asun tl Tasnl*, - Humorous and satirical songs,
- b) *Sa:l*, - Feasting the guests, and
- c) *Samaj Sudhar*, - Social reform.

a) *Asun tl Tasnl*- Humorous and Satirical songs

Humour and satire are an essential element of expressing happiness and merrymaking. This is a common feature among a number of existing world civilizations. The Greeks too had this practice on such occasions. It is of its unique nature in the whole sub-continent and Kashmir is not an exception. No doubt, it is not followed so vigorously in Kashmir as it is pursued in other parts of the sub-continent, mostly in the north and northwestern parts of the country. The Kashmiri society is considered one of the most civilized societies of the world, so it has not always associated itself with any such vulgarity. Thus the songs depicting such satirical ideas have always been used in a very polite and civilized manner. For instances, in the by gone days, 'Hukahs' were arranged for the guests as cigarette smoking was un-common. Separate arrangements were made for the different age groups, as it was not considered polite to smoke in the presence of elders. In one such party no such arrangement appears to have been made by the host and the folk singers have made the following remarks to show this deficiency: -

Ma:r pyach ho>kl tl qA:li:n barda:r.
Yim sarda:r¹ bi:Thi' sabe' syo>d

¹ There is pun on the word 'Sarda:r'. This word has two meanings. One is the 'head' of a regiment/group and the other is used for a 'Sikh', the follower of Sikh religion. They have religious binding not to smoke.

Meaning:

Hukahs with the flexible pipes and the carpets spread all over,
 Yet these 'Sarda:rs' have gone straight for feasting.

After the feasting is over, the guests occupy all the windows of the house where the marriage rituals are held leaving no space for the guests from the bride's side to watch what is happening outside. The folk singers cast a satire on such people in the following lines: -

Ka:kan hlnz hA:ri: kanl du:ri.,
WA:riv bi:Thi: ta:kan¹ pyeTh.

Meaning:

Oh; fragile ear-ring-like merle of elderly people,
 Your in-laws have seated themselves on the upper shelves of the windows.

The rich and the poor, the upper class and the lower class, the affluent and the common, all these divisions have always been present in human societies from times immemorial. In a marriage where the two families have not been of equal social/economic status, the folk song singing ladies have dealt with the aspect in the following manner: -

Kyah Karizi LA:nis tl la:ninis karmas.
Slh ru:di Sha:lan Pya:ll barnas.

Meaning:

Alas, the ways of fate and how these work, always differ,

Look, the lion is serving the jackals.

Here the word, 'lion' stands for an affluent person and the word, 'jackal' for an ordinary or a common man.

¹ The root Sanskrit word 'tak' meaning shelf or an opening.

b) *Sa:l*, - Feasting the guests.

The folk songs pertaining to the feasting are most colourful. In the past generally vegetarian feasting was held on the eve of marriages. The folk singers address the guests in the following manner: -

Kha:san kyut ro>n Ba:smati po>la:v,
Mytran kyut ro>n ChAtray Ha:r.
Asi rani to>hi kitsI navi tarka:re',
Mi:thi pa:lakh tai do>dI wa:ngan.
So>rgi: bu:zan istyamA:li:,
Asi rAni ko>ngI tarkA:ri:ye'.

Translation:

For the special guests we got prepared the special sweet *Basmati* rice and
 For the friends we cooked the rice made from the '*ChatrI Ha:r'*¹ paddy
 We got prepared new vegetables for you,
 Like fenugreek, spinach and brinjal in curd.
 The heavenly dishes were got arranged,
 We got prepared the saffron flavoured vegetables.

It is a day of fasting for the groom till the marriage rituals come to an end. Once he shows his presence in the hall where feasting is held, the folk singers address him in the following manner knowing that he has not tasted anything due to his observing a fast till the marriage ritual is over, but still they ask him about the taste of different vegetables sarcastically: -

Sabi chuy bihith WAliye' Za:day'²,
Qaliyas³ prItshitos sa:d cha: ja:n.

MA:ji' lAjiyo ja:man cha:nyan,
Kho<bA:ni tse'ran kyuth chuy sa:d.
Bishmakh Ra:zIni' so>day bra:ryo,
Do>day nadre'n kyuth chuy sa:d.
MA:ji' pA:ri' lAjiyo cha:nyan achin,
Mye'Thyan nadIryan kyuth chuy sa:d.
 Translation:

The prince is seated ahead of the feasting guests,
 Ask him the taste of '*Qaliya'*,
 Let mother dote on your beautiful dress,
 How tasty are the big apricots?
 Oh simpleton of king *Bikshana Bhatta*,
 How tasty are the lotus stalks cooked in yogurt?
 Let your mother dote on your eyes,
 How tasty are the sweet stalks of lotus.

c) *Samaj Sudhar* - Social Reform.

From the advent of the Muslim rule in Kashmir up to the first three decades of the twentieth century, the use of meat was common at the marriage feasting, etc., though it was confined to certain affluent families and some special guests¹ alone. During the late thirties of the twentieth century, a staunch revolutionary of '*Arya Smaj'*, named *Champa Nath* is reported to have visited the valley of Kashmir for the propagation of his creed. He was a vegetarian and preached against meat eating. He was shocked to notice the use of meat by the Kashmiri Pandits in marriage parties. Being a reformer, he wanted to reform the Kashmiri Pandit society. He contacted some of the Pandits like, *S/S Har Gopal Kaul*, *Mr. Anand Kaul Munshi* and *Suraj Kak* who had respectable positions in the Pandit society of the valley in those days. In this way a movement was started on a large scale to stop the use of meat on such feasting. The preachers and reformers were

¹ It is one of the old varieties of paddy grown in the valley. Its rice is famous for flavour, taste and fragrance

² This is an Arabic word, meaning 'prince'. This shows that the couplet is a recent addition to the folk songs.

³ Cheese, meat or vegetables prepared without the use of chillies. It looks yellowish due to the use of excessive turmeric while cooking.

¹ Handoo, J.L., *Kashmiri Aur Hindi Ke Lok Geet.*, 1971, P. 201.

sent throughout the towns, villages and cities, big and small. A large number of people gave their support to this movement but the number of the people opposing it was not small. They opposed the vegetarian feasting tooth and nail. This fact is referred to in the folk songs sarcastically, a few lines wherefrom are reproduced below: -

Tsho>tl pyathl Lisl' kho>t Darmi Saba:ye'².

Champa: Nathlni' A:gnya:ye'.

Har Gopal Kauls vAki:l Sarda:ras,

Ra:khisas kati a:yi divlta: bo>d.

KaTh mo>kllA:vin baji bala:ye'.

Champa: Na:thlni'; A:gnya:ye'.

A:nand Munlshi' tsa:man kAd kra:ye',

Su:raj Kolan do>pus tsaye' raTh.....

Translation:

From the heap of garbage the green wild amaranth, (Li:s)l reached to the upper house of *Dharma*,³ with the permission of *Champa Nath*.

Har Gopal Kaul, the head of lawyers,

How that demon attained the godly wisdom?

He freed the poor sheep from the clutches of great hardships (death), (with the permission...)

Anand Munshy took out the fried cheese from the pan, and

Suraj Kaul asked him to hide it

In this way the ladies deputed for the '*Vanlvon*' express their views regarding different varieties of vegetable and the other varieties of food got prepared by the host on the eve of the marriage of his daughter. It is because of this very fact that the hostess keeps a constant eye on these ladies when they come to the dining hall and she presents her best services to them.

5. *Da:rl Pu:za:* - Obeisance at the door.

After being free from the '*Vyu:g*' the bride and the groom are led to the gate of the building where the arrangement for the marriage ritual has been made. On the main gate of the building the groom and the bride are asked to stand bare footed on the paddy grass, which is laid in front of the door for observing the '*Da:rl Pu:za:*' ritual. The father of the bride stands at the right side of the groom whereas the father of the groom takes his position to the left of the bride. The groom, the bride and her father pay their obeisance to the door as contained in the scriptures. Here the father of the groom and the host exchange a nutmeg along-with a hundred rupee note and a coin and the groom makes a pledge that he shall consider the door of the in-laws as sacred as the door of his parental house and shall defend it against all odds.

Our scriptures consider home as a 'workshop' for all the 'evil' and the 'good', '*Dharma*' and '*Adharma*'. Both these thoughts and notions breed and develop in a home and work for the development of it. Besides, there is a saying in Kashmiri which reads, '*Yus yasund gharl tsa:v, Su taslnzi Ma:gi za:v*', meaning 'One who enters into the house of a person, should consider that he is born of the 'Mother' of that house.' That is why the groom pays obeisance to the bride's house before his entry into it. The door is also considered as the place to welcome the guests. Hence, the father of the bride welcomes the father of the groom at the gate first. In this way the groom becomes as good a member of their family as are the other members of that house. Now that the marriages are solemnized in hotels or guest-houses, the ritual of the '*Da:rl pu:za*' seems to have become irrelevant. As a major portion of our beliefs is symbolic, the Kashmiri Pandits have continued with this ritual in exile too in a symbolic form.

¹ It is a green wild vegetable.

² A nick name for the '*Sanatan Dharma Sabha*,' promoting the '*Arya Samaj*' movement.

³ The word used for the *Sanatan Dharma* movement in Kashmir.

After exchanging the nutmeg 'Za:faI Badla:vun' and completing the ritual, all enter into the house. The priest leads the marriage party to the 'Hawan Sha:la:' for the marriage ritual. The following folk songs give a vivid picture of this function: -

VasIdi:v Ra:znis da:rI tI hangas,
A:li tI Ro>gas¹ chi da:rI pu:za :
da:rI pu:za: kar ma:li VishvI Karma:ye',
da:rI pu:z ma:li kar Sa:liga:mas.
Bhishmak Ra:zIni VishvI Karma:ye',
VasIdi:v Ra:znis Sa:liga:mas.

Translation:

At the gate of king Vasudeva and at its arch,
The cardamom and the cloves are
paying their benedictions to the door.
Oh dear, you pay your respects to Vishvakarma²,
You pay your respects to 'Saligram'.³
You pay your benedictions to the court mason/
architect of Bikshan Bhatta.

To the little one of king Vasudeva, (Lord Krishna).

The obeisance at the gate ends and now the groom and the bride have to enter the room for the marriage ceremony. From the upper windows of the house, the friends of the bride make a shower of flowers on the head of the couple as they step in. The folk songs make a mention of the entry of the new couple into the house in the following words: -

He'rI chay so>ndar tI he'rI chay DA:ntIwi,

¹ Cardamom and cloves are similies used for the bride and the groom. The cardamom is less pungent but flavoured like the bride but contrary to this, the cloves are more pungent like the groom.

² Vishvakarma, the Architect and Engineer of the gods.

³ A small idol of 'Veshnu' is called Sa:liga:m'. Here it is used for a handsome boy / groom. In the past it was also used as a proper name for the kids.

He'rI chu khasa:n Di:va: di Di:v¹
So>ThkI he'rI kho>tkho paThkI dith tsha:ye',
Tsa:nDa:n I:shwar Ma:ya:ye'.²
DharmI he'rI kho>tkho marmI dith tsa:ye',
tsa:nDa:n Ko>ll Ko>ma:rye' a:kh.

Translation:

The staircase is beautiful, and the steps are ivory.
The lord of lords is ascending the steps.
You ascended the stair made of hard stone,
Hiding your face with the tail of your turban,
(It appears) God Vishnu is searching for the
goddess Lakshmi.
You ascended the stairs of Dharma,
Under the secret cover of understanding,
You came here searching for the girl of the high
caste and family.

6. Kanya: Da:n (Kani Da:n): Giving away the girl.

After the reception of the Barat, Kanya: Da:n is the biggest ritual of this function. Kanya: Da:n is considered as one of the oldest marriage³ rituals. The first mention of it is contained in the *Grahisutras*, wherein the right of the 'Kanya: Da:n' has been given to father alone⁴. Later on it has been extended to some of the close relatives in the 'Smriti' period as is contained in the *Yagyavalkya Smriti*.⁵ The need may have been felt in case the father of a girl died before her marriage. In order to solve such problems, the addition appears to have been

¹ One of the names attributed to lord Shiva.

² The names attributed to Lord Vishnu and goddess Lakshmi.

³ Panday, Raj Bali, *Hindu Sanskar Varanasi*, 1960, P.260-61.

⁴ 'Pitri Pramata mahaya' Paraskar *Grah is utra*, 1,6; 4, 1.

⁵ 'Pita, Pitamah, Bhatah-sakulayo Janani tatha pradah, Poorvamshe Prakritishtah Parah Parah', *Yagyavalkya Smriti*, 1. 6. 3.1.

made in the 'Smriti' and the right of giving away the bride has been extended up to certain close relatives like the grand father, brother and even to the mother. This ceremony is completed in the valley according to the procedure described in the Scriptures. The importance of 'Kanya: da:n' is considered an act of great virtue in the whole country. According to the scriptures it is one among the three all time great donations, like (i) *Bhu:mi da:n* - Land grant, (ii) *Goa da:n* - Donating a cow, and (iii) *Kanya: da:n*. There is no denying the fact that among all the castes and creeds of the sub-continent, it is considered the most auspicious one. Our holy scriptures, folk songs and folk stories have given due description to this ritual of social importance.

A man performing 'Kanya: da:n' is considered to be the most fortunate one. Our folk songs consider it more pious than performing daily rituals and praying. One of such folk songs says that, 'who could be so fortunate as one who continues bathing even during the month of Ma:gha? (December - January, when the cold is at its peak in the valley) and also performs the 'Kanya: da:n' of a girl. All these facts have been stated in the following folk song elaborately: -

Yus kari Ma:ghI shra:n nyath po:zi Sa:ligr:m,

Suyi kari satI vArishi' Kanya:da:n.

Yus Phal Gur¹ Ga:v be'yi Gufurda:nas,

Tami khotI phal chuy Kanya:da:nas.

Translation:

One who takes a bath² in the month of Ma:gha³,

¹ 'Gur' means 'horse' and its donation appears to have been an act of feudal lords as there is a mention of donating a 'Vahana' in the 'Dhan pratishtha': see 'Karma Kanday, Pt. II by Keshav Bhat, P. 303. But offering of a horse in donation is uncommon among the general people now.

² Taking the bath in a running stream and that too during the month of Ma:gha, mid of winter season, in the valley is considered a super-
man act.

³ It is the tenth month of the Vikram era.

One who performs the *Kanya: da:n* of a seven-year-old girl?

For him donating a horse or a cow is of a lesser virtue than giving away a girl in marriage.

At the scheduled time and after venerating the deities and burning of the sesame so as to drive out evil spirits or any witchcraft, which might have influenced the groom, the bride and her father, proceed towards 'Kanya: da:n'. The mark of 'Swa:stika:' is laid on a clean place and it is covered with paddy. A tumbler filled with water and a nutmeg, a 'Thali', (out of the utensils already donated to the girl on the eve of 'Divgo<n'), is placed on it. The 'Thali,' also contains, a walnut, some curd, two straws of "Darbha" a *Yagnyopavita* consisting of three strings, a belt-like three-fold rope made of 'Darbha:', called 'Darbhi Raz' and two ribbons called the 'Manan ma:l'¹. The hostess is asked to bring the 'Ma:ml na:bad', a present for the maternal uncle of the groom, which comprises a metal pitcher containing sugar candy, some pieces of 'Barfi:', and other presents in the form of a suit/cash. The bride is asked to circumambulate the said water tumbler put on the 'Swa:stika:' and sit on the right thigh of her father who takes her right hand in his right one and the left in his left one. After sprinkling a little Holy Water on the hands of the groom and the bride, the groom sits on his feet and extends his hands for receiving the bride on three promises made by both. These are:

1. *Dharmay Cha* - For performing the acts of Dharma,
2. *Arthay Cha* - For material and economic prosperity, and
3. *Kamay Cha* - For the sake of sensual pleasures.

¹ This is the second one. The first one was exchanged on the eve of 'Vyug' ritual.

The priest completes the ceremony of '*Kanya: da:n*' while pointing/touching the persons involved, (the groom as the receiver, the father as the donor and the bride as the donated one), three times with the tip of the two straws of '*Dharba:*' which had been kept in the '*Thali*' put on the tumbler over the '*Swa:stika:*'.

After the ceremony of '*Kanya: Da:n*', the bride and the groom are offered a mirror so as to see the reflection of one another in it, known as '*A:nI wuchun*'. The reasons for such an act seems to be: -

- a). To make both of them familiar with one another's appearances before their marriage is finalized. In the absence of the modern facilities and freedom of movement, a girl till recently was not allowed to see the boy who was going to become her life partner. It was the first chance for both of them to see each other.
- b) The more accepted version is that while seeing the face of each other in the mirror, the priest who performs their marriage rituals, recites from the scriptures which is a kind of prayer, saying 'let the thoughts, speech, whims and wishes of both of you be the same as is their replicas in the mirror'.

7. Yoni Porud -

Casting of the holy thread to the groom by the father-in-law.

At the time of the Holy Thread Ceremony, the grand/father casts a thread of three strings on their son so as to bring him into the fold of the Brahminical order. According to the scriptures the girls too wore the thread during the early *Vedic* period just like the boys did. The Holy Thread is commonly called '*Maha Gayatri*' and has been revered by one and all since times immemorial. The girls had to part with it during their periods. It was

probably during the *Samhita* period that the right to the holy thread was extorted from the women folk and men only were allowed to share this responsibility. In this way the father of the girl gives the three additional strings to the groom and thus makes his *Yognyopavita* of six strings on the eve of the marriage.

At the time of wearing of the Holy Thread, the groom receives the benedictions from the parents of the bride. The mother of the bride once more ties the '*Manan Ma:l*' to the groom and the bride. Then they are asked to eat a piece of '*Barfi*' or sugar candy three times. The remaining sugar candy and other presents, called '*Ma:mI Na:bad*' are offered by the groom to his maternal uncle as a present from his in laws.

In the meantime the father of the bride or the person at the helm of affairs makes arrangement for sending all the dishes got cooked for the feast in the ceremonial kitchen including the rice of different tastes and varieties to the groom's house. This function is called, '*BaI syun sozun*'. Every care is taken so that all the eatibles reach safely to the destination in a presentable manner. In addition to this, at least a fifty Kg. bagful of rice or more and ten Kg. of yogurt is sent to the groom's house in the evening along with other presents, which is in addition to the cooked eatables as mentioned above.

8. GangI Vye's -

Personification of Ganga in the form of a Friend.

It is a combination of two words, '*Ganga*' and '*Vye's*'. Besides, other shades of meaning, '*Ganga*' also means '*mother's milk*'. In case two babies breast feed from a single mother, they are called '*do>dI BA:y/Be'ni*'. In reality there might not be any relationship between the families of the two children but the relation of having

taken milk from the same women make them more than blood relations. The bounds of breast-feeding from a single mother are so strong that the marriage between such children is strictly prohibited. Two girls with such a back ground become fast friends and are called 'Gangl Vyesl'. Now taking the other shade into consideration, the 'Ganga' is the holiest of all the rivers of India. A small girl from the family of the bride is invited and placing the water tumbler in her hand (kept previously on the 'Swa:stika'), the priest sprinkles water over the bride and the groom while reciting from the Holy Scriptures. The small girl is the witness to the fact that the bride is as pious as the water of the Ganga in the hands of the little girl. During this ritual a red shawl is spread over the couple and the decorated umbrella is kept open over their heads. The Scriptures call this ritual as 'Abhisheka', meaning sprinkling or dripping of water over an idol and here it purifies the couple by sprinkling the Holy Water while reciting from the scriptures. Needless to say that the couple is considered as pious as the deities like, 'Shiva' and 'Shakhti' or 'Lakshmi' and 'Narayana'. The father of the bride rewards the girl functioning as 'Gangl Vye's', handsomely, after completing the ritual.

9. Athl Was - Holding of Hands.

A clean carpet is laid on the place where the priest has laid the 'Swa:stika' and covered it with paddy prior to the 'Kanya Dan' ritual. The groom and the bride are asked to come to this place leaving the holy fire to their right side. Here the groom stands facing the holy fire i.e. facing westwards while the bride stands before him facing east. The groom is further asked to take the right hand of the bride in his right one and the left hand in the left one. Both of them make four mutual agreements at this point and they are asked to sit on the carpet. A shawl is spread

over their hands. It is generally believed that their married life is going to be as smooth and close as tightly they hold the hands of one another at this hour. At this time complete austerity is maintained by the couple for they have completed most of their marriage rituals and hence they enter into the realm of giving assurances for leading a purposeful married life which is the ultimate goal of this Sanskar. But, unfortunately, the modern generation has generally discarded almost all the ancient values, either due to their ignorance or due to the lack of understanding of the Sanskrit language in which all our rituals are recorded. The generation gap could also be a reason, with the result that the ritual, which contains life-long well wishes for the newly married couple, has become a fun for the so-called modern boys/girls. It has been observed that the two make an attempt at this thoughtful moment to take off either a ring or a wristwatch from one another's wrists. This sort of action at such a serious moment appears to be highly objectionable and against the accepted practices. However, it deserves to be mentioned here that this bad practice of taking out each other's ring, etc., has been discarded to a great extent due to the recent educational, economic and social changes in our society.

During all this time the father of the bride completes the ritualistic portion of making offerings of different ingredients to the Holy Fire while recitations from the scriptures continue. The priest makes the vermilion mark on the fore-head and binds the sacred wrist-thread, 'NA:rivan' to some of the guests who are groom's close relatives accompanying the 'Barat' and who want to participate in the ritual and earn the blessings of the couple considered to be as Shiva and Shakhti at this time of the ceremony. The folk songs of this hour are varied but all lay stress on holding the hands tightly. A few examples are quoted below: -

Athlwa:s kara:n yuthnl athl Daliye',
Kathl kar HA:riye' Totas sa:ti'.

AthIwa:s kara:n athI raTi: chi:ray,
KathI kari si:ray bA:jis sA:ti'.
Cha:ni kori ditsnay shayitrIh nAhlje',
Pheri Ku:ri' va:je' athIwa:s kArith.
Yitsh ku:ri rAchinakh RIkhnani ma:je',
Tyuth nay hyaki: nI kanh ti rAchith.
Khye'ni ditinay khaDI kha:li' chyeni do>dI pa:je',
Pheri Ku:ri' va:je',

Translation:

Don't let loosen your grip while holding each other's hands.

Oh starling! Have a sweet conversation with the parrot, the lovebird.

While performing the handshake hold your hands tightly.

Start a conversation with the one who is to share all the secrets with you.

Your daughter has been bestowed with thirty-six senses.

Oh, dear daughter you turn after completing the handshake.

Oh daughter, the manner in which you have been looked after by mother *Roukhmani*.

No body would have taken as much pains to bring- you up.

She gave kernels and sugar candy to you to eat and plenty of milk to drink.

Oh; dear daughter you turn after

10. *La:yi Bo<y* - The Spotless Brother.

Derived from the Sanskrit word, '*Lajah*', '*La:yi*' possess a special significance in our all religious rituals. Besides, being in the purest form, the white colour is considered as a sign of good will and prosperity. The paddy is first soaked in water for a day or so. The wetness is the sign of love and affection. Then it is put in red-hot sand, the sign of fire, and hence a position leading the

seeker to the higher realms and final salvation. The colour of the soaked paddy becomes white as the rice bursts out of it and its husk is burnt; thus the white colour, the sign of purity and holiness, emerges. As in the path of salvation, a small negligence can drift a seeker away from the main path, in the same manner a simple mistake can change the colour of the puffed rice which can get a colour other than the white one on being heated and once the colour changes either due to excess or insufficient heat, the puffed rice becomes unfit for use and it is thrown away. In the same way the obedience and good manners are the best ornaments of a child. During the marriage ceremony, the younger brother or a close relative of the bride, coming under the category of brothers from the parental side, is brought to the '*Hawan Shala*'. After applying the vermilion mark on his fore-head and tying the wrist knot of '*Na:riwan*', a packet of puffed rice is given in his hands after proper benedictions. The groom and the bride are asked to make a round of the Holy Fire from the left side (because till then they are seated to the east of it) with the groom taking the lead till they reach their actual sitting place in front of the fire where they were previously seated. Here the groom and the bride are asked to keep their right toe on a stone pestle, '*Ka:jwaTh*,' already placed there and they confirm the first oath of standing by the side of one another in all situations of life. After receiving their confirmation, the priest takes a handful of puffed rice from the packet and throws it into the fire while chanting the hymns from the scriptures along with the name and '*Gotra*' of the groom. Then they are asked again to circumambulate the Holy Fire but this time from the right side and again reach their seats. They are asked to take the second vow of fulfilling sensual desires of each other, which both of them speak out and agree to it. Again the puffed rice is put to the flames and the couple start for the third round. Coming back to their original seats, they again put their right toes on the pestle

and make the third promise of maintaining complete harmony in their family life. After confirming it the rest of the puffed rice is offered to the fire.

The brother, besides being a guardian of the sister, is a witness to her purity and chastity. In the social set up too the brother has always remained as a guard to the whims and wishes, likes and dislikes of his sister. He has always been a protector of her vows and wishes and this very fact is repeated at this ritual of the marriage. After completing the ritual, the father of the groom has to give a good reward to the 'brother' for his gracious presence at the function.

11. *Safti PADI*: - The Seven Steps/ Vows.

According to the Indian way of marriage, after completing the '*Kanya Da n*' ceremony, the bride and the groom's outer garments are knotted together and they are asked to circumambulate the Holy Fire seven times and thus leaving her original '*Kula*' or '*Gotra*', the bride she enters into the *Gotra*/family of the groom after making seven vows. In Kashmir this function is performed in a different manner. Here the bride is asked to walk over seven coins and thus leave her parental '*Kula*', or her family caste and enter and adopt the '*Kula/Gotra*' of her husband's family¹. All these coins are arranged by the father of the groom to the northwest of the Holy Fire in such a way that the bride can take her steps on them very easily. Each coin is kept on a straw of '*Darbha*:' and covered with a currency note. The seven steps towards the north are mentioned in the '*Grahisutras*'² as making seven promises. It is also stated that the bride would walk

¹ a). Yadav, Dr. Shankar Lal., *Haryana Pradesh Ka Loka Sahitya*, Mitra Prakashan Allahabad, 1960, P. 163. and b) Khadi Boli *Ka Loka Sahitya*, Indian Academy, Allahabad, 1965 P. 53.

² Paraskar Grahis utra, 1, 2, 1.

seven steps and each step contains a promise, which is a binding on both the parties. These are: -

- 1 For the sensual enjoyment, you be '*E'kl PADI*:', like a one legged person, i.e. slow but cautious.
2. In the field of wisdom and thought, you behave like '*Dwe PADI*:', like a human being
3. For increasing the number of family members, you be like a '*Tri PADI*:'¹ cunning and heeding.
4. For comfort, you be '*Chatush PADI*:', hard-working like a beast.
5. For the house-hold animals, you behave like '*Pancha PADI*:' i.e. in complete uniformity like the, '*Pancha Maha Butas*'²
6. For the house-hold chores, you be '*ShAT PADI*:', i.e. to work with all the six parts of the body³.
7. For a companion like me (groom) you behave as '*Safta Padi*:'⁴ i.e. in perfect harmony like the seven tones of music.

In this way the bride pays her benedictions to her father-in-law and all those present there bless the

¹ The Kashmiri word, '*Tri PADI*', meaning a cunning person appears to have been derived from this word, The root Sanskrit word, '*Stri Pada*', meaning 'a cunning person'. In the past, as else where, the court ladies/dancers have played a great part in making the future kings of Kashmir. The lady would go in a dancing posture and point out to the Emperor, the person to be the future king of the land. Hence, known as '*Stri Pada:h*'. A person who cheats at the game of three cards of the card game 'Flash', is also called a '*Tri PADI*'.

² The '*Pancha Maha Bhuts*.' In a body are, 1. Water. 2. Fire, 3. Earth, 4. Ether and 5 'Man'. These form the complete circle of this universe. Here it is used as the re-cycling process of food, i.e., the left over of food crops is the food for the animal and what ever the animal give in return is the food for the soil and for the man. Thus completing the circle of existence.

³ The six parts of body known as '*ShaDanga*:' are; 1-2, Two Arms. 3- 4 Two legs, 5, Head and 6. Man.

⁴ The seven notes of music, which give the final shape to a musical formation.

couple. The bride again is lead to sit in front of the Holy Fire where she was seated previously to the left side of the groom. While extending her hands upwards with open palms, 'Vo>pastha:n' posture, the Kula Guru blesses the bride, saying that by showing the obedience as contained above you shall be the queen of 'your new mother, father and the sister/s-in-law'.¹ Stress has been laid on taking these seven steps in the Yagyavalkya and the Manu Smritis also. These contain:-

*'Nodkeyna na va vachah Kanyayah patiruchyayat,
Panigrihana Sanskarat patitwom saftamay paday.'*²

Translation:

Neither drinks, nor feasting, nor by taking of oaths, not even by completion of the 'Kanya: da:n Sanskar', can justify a person to be called the husband of a girl. He achieves this position only after the girl completes the seven steps.

During the medieval period, this ritual had currency in the Indian society and marriage was considered incomplete without this ritual.³ This ritual is still having a dominant place among all the rituals of the marriage ceremonies of Kashmir. This forms one of the most important rituals of marriage according to the *Grahisutras* and the people of Kashmir consider the marriage incomplete with out this ritual. The posture called, 'Vo>pasthan' is a direct derivation from the root Sanskrit word, 'Upasthan' meaning 'coming close to.' Here she pays her reverence to her new father by touching his feet in a traditional Indian way of showing reverence to elders. The father-in-law also blesses her affectionately.

¹ Panday, Raj Bali, *Hindu Sanskara*, Aushadyalaya Press, Varanasi . P. 278, b). Bhatt, Pandit Kesho, *Mekhala Pustak, Vivah Vidi*, 1925, P. 42.

² Ibid, P. 41

In a Kashmiri folk song this ritual has been given due description. It reads :-

MathIra: Nagri: hund Mo>rli:dar' chuy,

Sheri chis mukaT tay alanka:r

Nishi chas Rikhman tAmi sund var chuy,

Har chuy saha:vat kar pratikhyan.

KA:shi: nAgri: hund Ve'shambar chuy,

JaTi chas Ganga tI haTi Va:sukh²

Nishi chas Pa:rwati tAmi sund var chuy, (Har.....)

Zanak Ra:zun³ so>yamvar chuy,

Ram Ji danurdanD⁴ tulnay a:v,

Ayodhya Nagri hund Sha:ml So>ndar chuy,

Translation :-

He is the Flutist from the city of *Mathura* (Lord *Krishna*).

The pearls and the ornaments are decorated on his forehead.

Roukhmani is sitting near him, as she is his beloved,

Lord *Shiva* is your helper you circumambulate.

He is the *Vishembar³* of the city of *Kashi*

He has Ganges in his matted hair and '*Vasuki*' round his neck.

Parwati is near him as he is her Lord, Lord *Shiva*....,

It is the 'marriage by choice' held by King *Janak*,

Ram has come to lift the bow,

He is the Black Beauty from the city of *Ayodhya*,

Lord *Shiva*

¹ Lord *Kri shna* is known by this name also.

² The name of the cobra put around the neck by Lord *Shiva*.

³ The famous King *Janak* father of '*Sita*' of the great Epic, *Ramayana*.

⁴ The lifting of the legendary bow of Lord *Shiva* was the per-condition for marrying *Sita*.

⁶ The names attributed to Lord *Shiva*

12. *Abi:d* - Receiving Alms.

After completing the ritual of '*Saftl PADI*' and paying respects to her father-in-law, the bride comes to her seat before the Holy Fire and in this way the marriage as a *Sanskar* comes to an end. Now the couple has to offer '*Abi:d*' to their *Kula Guru* for completing this *Sanskar*. Thus comes the stage of asking for '*Biksha*:' from the bride¹. Here a '*Thali*:' with a walnut, a straw of *Darbha* and a little of curd is handed over to the bride. The groom, her father-in-law, her mother and father, each present at the moment, offer an amount of at least rupees one hundred each as '*Abi:d*', according to their economic status, to the bride just as is presented to a boy on the day of the '*Yagnyopavita*.' The difference is that: -

1. The girl gets the '*Abi:d*' while sitting at her place in front of the ritual fire and she has not to ask for the same like the boy;
2. No stick of a *Plash* or mulberry tree as '*DanDam*' is given in her hand as she at the moment is considered as '*Shakhti*:' nor has she to wear any ceremonial dress on the occasion as is prescribed in the scriptures for the males, and.
3. The scriptures have allowed only the above said persons for this pious act and giving *Abi:d* at this ritual, is not open to the general public.

¹ The three strings of the *Yagnyopavita* which previously were worn by the bride according to the Dharam Shastra, are offered to her husband by her father. Hence she is entitled to ask for the '*Abi:d*'. This act of '*Abi:d*' further indicates that the girls were entitled to *Yagnyopavita* in the past.

13. *Pa:ran Du:ni* - Offerings of Walnuts.

After the '*Abi:d*' ceremony, the groom gives ten walnuts and a coin to the bride who, taking all of them in the loose end of her *Sari*, hands them over to her father-in-law. He receives them in his handkerchief. Here again the bride pays reverence to her father-in-law in the traditional Indian way and the father-in-law again blesses her. This ceremony is called, '*Pa:ran Du:ni*'. After completing the ritual of '*Pra:ya:chit*' the groom and the bride is offered yoghurt out of the offering made to the holy fire. The *Kula Guru* bestows both of them with the blessings of good health and prosperity. The word '*Pa:ran*' appears a derivation from the word '*Parayana*' meaning finishing, completion or breaking of fast. As the couple is asked to take their food in a common plate called '*Dayi Batl*' immediately after this ritual and the bride has to give a present to her father-in-law as a token of completing the ritual successfully, hence '*Pa:ran Du:ni*.' Our scholars and thinkers have given a high place to the walnuts at such functions of religiosity and it is probably due to these very facts that walnuts are closely connected with all our *Sanakars* like the coconuts which have a similar importance in all such rituals performed in the rest of the sub-continent. The ten walnuts presented by the bride to her Father-in-law are preserved for some time and afterwards buried in the soil of an orchard, back yard or at a sacred place of pilgrimage. The coin is preserved as a symbol of bringing good fortune to the family of the new wed.

14. *Dayi Batl* - Sharing of the 'Naived'

This function is connected with the general kitchen. The cook waits for this hour very eagerly. All the guests of both the sides have already finished their

lunch/dinner. The cook is now called in and a 'Thali:' from the utensils presented to the girl, called 'Satra:th', is handed over to him to bring all the dishes prepared for the guests, for the new couple. The place before the groom and the bride is cleaned with water and pasted with clay. The cook along with a cup of curd presents the 'Thali' to them and it contains all the dishes, which were prepared for the lunch/ dinner of the *Barat*. The cook washes their hands. After making a few offerings to the Holy Fire as contained in the scriptures, the bride and the groom keep a small portion of food outside their plate called 'Hu:ni' Mye'r' and thus they start eating from the same plate. They are asked to take seven morsels and then offer three morsels to one another. This time is more hectic for the photographers and the video men. After finishing their ceremonial lunch, the cook washes their hands and he brings back the 'Thali:' after cleaning it properly. Here he receives a good gratification from the father of the groom as a good omen.

This ritual is very old and there is a vivid description of this function in the '*Paraskara Grahi-sutra*'.¹ According to the Hindu way of life this is the first and the last chance for a couple to dine from the same 'Thali:'. Scientifically, combined dining from the same plate is not considered hygienic and our scriptures have strictly prohibited doing so. According to the scriptures dining from the same plate tells upon the longevity of the groom. The bride, if she wishes so, may take the leftovers of her husband, but this is not a binding, though the scriptures describe it as a boon for the bride. The aim of allowing the two to dine from a single plate at this ritual is allowed just to make them understand the inner feelings, likes and dislikes of one

¹ Panday, Raj Bali, *Hindu Sanskar*, Aushyadhialaya Press Varanasi, 1960, P. 285

another.¹ The folk song describes it in the following words :-

*Kori ko>ma:ri: ma:mI Ju: Dakhi chuy,
Nakhi chuy Tso>tur Bo>z Na:ra:yan.
BonI kani vAnitos lo>ktis bA:yis,
Dayi BatI kha:rihay Mahara:zas.
Gori hIndi onmay do>dI tsaDivo<ruy
So<ruy da:ml da:ml chata:mo.*

Translation:

Oh dear daughter; the maternal uncle is by your side,

And you are near the *Narayana*, having four-arms
Let her younger brother, who is below, be asked
To bring the 'Dayi BatI' for the groom.

I bought a small pitcher of curd from the house of
the milkman.

Please take all of it slowly in single mouthfuls.

The friends of the groom and the bride come forward and pass remarks to tease both of them. Addressing the bride, the friends of the groom say, "His mouth is watering, and you have taken the leftovers of this dirty fellow." The friends of the bride address her in the following words, "Her nose is always running. Have you taken the leftovers of such a mad girl?" The ritual ends in the midst of all this humour and satire.

15. Po<shi Pu:za:

Showering flowers on the couple

The scriptures and the holy books, the *Grahi-sutras*, all contain couplets and verses which, besides containing the poetic imagination, are full of good wishes and blessings for the betterment and well being of the newly wed couple. Both are asked to honour the whims

¹ Panday, Raj Bali, *Hindu Sanskar*, Aushyadhialaya Press Varanasi, 1960, P 285

and wishes of one another. The comparison of the couple is made with great lovers, deities and various incarnations of gods as contained in Indian mythology and all pray for the betterment and the welfare of the couple. This practice is not prevalent in Kashmir alone but in the whole of the sub-continent. In Kashmir the couple is not adored just verbally but they are revered and worshipped in the form of *Shiva-Shakhti*, or *Lakshmi-Narayana*. All the people of the bride's house take part in this hour of devotion. Not only the young, but the elders, even the parents and the grand parents also pay their obeisance by showering flowers on the new couple. After completing the ceremonies involved in the wedding, it is considered as the last rite of the function. The members of the family, the relatives and neighbours also take part in this highly devotional act of adoring the couple with flowers, commonly known as '*Po<shi Pu:za*'.

First of all the groom and the bride adore each other by showering flowers on each other's heads three times alternately. The bride takes the lead by standing up with a handful of flowers and showers it on the head of her groom while the *Kula Guru* chants hymns from the scriptures. Then the bride sits and the groom gets up and repeats it in the same way. In this way the process is repeated three times involving three promises. Then the groom and the bride are asked to sit cross-legged. A red shawl is thrown over them and the function of the 'showering flowers' by all those present starts. The priests start reading from the Holy Scriptures in a loud and melodious voice. All the members of the family, old and young, stand around and adore the newly wed couple by showering flowers. Every person is in a serious mood paying his/her obeisance to the couple regarded as *Shiva* and *Shakhti* at this special ritual. In the other corner of the hall the folk singers are busy paying their reverence in the following words: -

*Mo>khlI kani ta:ra:khlI chis ta:pl da:nas¹,
Cham I:sha:nas poshi pu:za:
RathI ba:nI kani chis sA:ri: divta:,
Sa:yiba:n bano>vmut chukh asma:nas, (Cham..)
Dye 'kas pyaTh tsAndram prazla:n la:las,
Chis pa:nI Lu:kIpa:l² kara:n gAji' ga:h,
Brahma tI Veshin chis hyath zA:npa:nas,
Cham I:shanas
DharmI Ra:zI vo>thmut chus darIm da:nas,
Ganga: sa:gar hyath chas Gang
Lakshmi: mi:Thi chas diwa:n da:ma:nas,
Cham I:shanas
Zangi tha:l anInas chas pa:nI Sandhya³,
Vyu:g le'kha:n chas KarmI Li:kha⁴
Vucl za:la:n chas dl:i'pl da:nas,
Cham I:shanas
Vasuk⁵ tI Varun⁶ kharIch barda:r chis,
Soruy swargI da:r sl:ti' sl:ti' chus.
RathI chus gonDmut manz mA:da:nas,
Cham I:sha:nas poshi pu:za:.*

Translation :

There are stars instead of pearls on his forehead,
Lord Shiva is being showered with flowers.
All gods are his charioteers,
The whole sky is transformed into a canopy, Lord...

¹ "Ta:ph", means 'sunshine'. It is a skylight where from the sunlight enters into the room or basement.

² The name of a deity who protects a region of the universe.

³ The goddess of twilight.

⁴ The goddess of fate who decides the fate of every creature.

⁵ The second one out of the eight prominent Nagas. Lord Shiva wears it round his neck.

⁶ The rain-god, *Va:runa* and god of the oceans, *Va:suki*: are considered as the guardians of *Kube'r*, the keeper of the treasures of gods.

On his forehead, the crescent is shining,
Deities of different regions are whisking him personally.

Brahma and *Veshmu* are the carriers of his palanquin, Lord *Shiva*

The Lord of *Dharma* has himself bestowed him with *Dharma* (Charity),

And the goddess *Ganga* is present with a spouted jug.

The goddess of wealth is kissing the borders of his garments, Lord *Shiva*

The goddess of twilight (*Sandhya*;) has herself come with a 'Tha:l' of 'Zang'

The goddess of fate has laid the 'Vyug' personally,

They are burning Niger in the ceremonial lamp, Lord *Shiva*

Va:suki: *Na:g* and the god of oceans, '*Varun*' (the ministers of *Kubera*, the lord of wealth) are his accountants,

All the heavens are accompanying him,

The chariot has been stopped in the mid-field, Lord *Shiva* is being

After concluding the benedictions with showering of flowers, the heaps of flowers thus accumulated on the heads of the groom and the bride, are exchanged on one another's heads. All bend low so as to show their reverence for the newly wed considering them to be *Shiva* and *Parwati*. After spraying the water from the '*Kalsh*' and giving a walnut as '*Naived*' to each present, the rituals connected with the main functions of the marriage, come to an end.

Chapter Six

Post-marriage functions /Ceremonies

Post-marriage functions can be classified under the following categories: -

- a) Functions held on the date of the marriage,
- b) Functions held on subsequent days,
- c) Functions connected with the festivals of the year of marriage, and
- d) Other miscellaneous functions of general nature.

a) Functions held on the day of the marriage

These can be discussed under the following heads:-

1. *Ro>khsat* - Departure,
2. *Kadil Ta:r* - Crossing of the bridge by the newly wed for the first time after marriage.
3. *SatIra:th* - Welcome to the new couple on their evening arrival at the bride's house.
4. *ZA:m Bra:nd* - Gratifications to the groom's sister on the bride's first entrance into the groom's house..
5. *MAti' Mo>har-* presents for the mother-in-law. at the time of first entrance of the bride into the new house.
6. *KuTh Dyun* - Allotment of a separate room.

b) Post-marriage functions of the subsequent days :-

These mainly comprise:-

1. *Pra:ya:chit* - Expiation at the bride's house.
2. *Ko>shal Hom* - Thanks giving (at the groom's house).
3. *TrankI ha:vum* - Displaying the dowry.
4. *Sha:ndI KA:r* - Presents for the Father-in-law's sister, '*Po>f*'.
5. *RoTh Khabar* - Welfare Information.
6. *PhirI sa:l* - First invitation to the son-in-law.

7. *PhirI laTh* - Second invitation to the son-in-law.
8. *HA:zi:ri:* - Visit of the close relatives of the bride.
9. *Cha:y chavIni'* - Serving of tea by the bride for the first time.
10. *GarI Atsun* - First formal invitation to the two families for entrance in one another's house.

c) The festivals of the First year of marriage.

The festivals of considerable importance of the year for the newly wed couple comprise-

1. *Vo>har VA:di* - Birthdays.
2. *Ne'trI Vo>har Vo<d* - Marriage anniversary.
3. *Shra:vnI Punim* - *Raksha Bhandhan*.
4. *Zarmi Satam* - *Janam Ashtami*.
5. *Shishur la:gun* - Festival on the First Winter.
6. *He'rath* - *Shiva Ratri*.
7. *Navre'h* - New Year's Day.
8. *ZangI Tray* - Third day of the New Year.

d) Other functions of general nature:

1. *NavI Sheeh* - The first snowfall.
2. *Do>d Dyun* - First pregnancy.

a) Functions held on the day of the marriage.

1. *Ro>khsat* - Departure

After the completion of the '*Po<shi Pu:za:*' ritual, the groom and the bride take a little rest. The majority of the guests leave immediately after lunch. Only a few of the closest relatives of the groom stay behind till evening to accompany him back to his parental house. Every body is exhausted after the day's

hectic schedule. The couple is again asked to take the dinner at an odd hour. But it is considered as a good omen to take a few morsels before leaving for their home. They do so just to accomplish the custom and they make preparations for their return to the groom's parental home. It may be pointed out that they have to come back again to this house the same evening for '*Satra:th:*' - 'a return evening journey' as it is called in the common Kashmiri language.

The time of leaving for the groom's house forever has finally arrived for the bride. This is really a sad parting scene, which makes wet the eyes of even an onlooker. The groom waits in the car while the bride takes leave from her near and dear ones, with wet eyes. She tightly embraces her aunts and brothers/sisters. She holds her parents so fast that at times others have to intervene to separate them. The weeping and wailing at this hour of joy is the actual essence of human life. What we see, is not a reality and what is presumed, is the reality. The philosophers have named it as the web of '*Ma:ya:*', 'Illusion', which repeats here itself on this particular occasion. Every thing reaches its determined goal giving in return wet eyes. Any way, in the midst all these mixed feelings they leave for their home.

The feelings of separation have been given due expression by the Indian scholars. Whether it is the moment of the departure of '*Shakuntala*' from the *Ashrama of Kanava Rishi*, or the lamentation of the king *Dasharatha* at the time of departure of Lord Rama for fourteen year's exile, or bewildered '*Gopis*' of '*Gokula*' when they were left deploring by Lord *Krishna* on his departure for *Mathura* or the desperate and veiling condition of '*Urmila*' when she was left behind by *Lakshmana* who accompanied Rama to the forests.

The belongings of the bride or the items of dowry either accompany them or stand already transferred to the groom's house during the day or on

some earlier occasion. At this time the bride is given a pot of curd called 'Do>dl Dul' and some cash called, 'Atl-Gath'¹ and a sack full of rice.

The scene on the departure of the bride from her parental house has been described adequately by our folk poets and these songs contain the sobs of the parents and the relatives, the good wishes of all those present and the eagerness of the groom's relatives for the early departure. A few lines are quoted here.

The bride is advised: -

Ma:linichi kunzI kar ma:ji hawa:lai,
 Ne'ri' ku:ri' wA:riwiki' sA:wA:lA.
 Vunyukta:m A:s ham hyari bo>nI rA:chi:,
 Ma:ji hinz TA:chi: garI gatshIkhay?
 HA:r cham mA:lis ro>khsat he'vA:ni:,
 Ashi kani khu:n ha:rA:ni:ye'.
 ZA:npa:n kAha:ro chuvI swa:Iya,
 Du:li' pakInA:viton varI va:rai.
 Yuth na sA: zA:niv du:li' chavI tsArIye',
 Ath andar go>la:b thArIye' chav.
 A:nI zA:npa:nas dAchhini' kini' dA:r chay,
 Ath andar hA:r chay va:rI wuchizye'n.
 Do<lay chanay so>nIsund kubI chuy,
 tse' kusuy gam chuy bab chuy sA:ti'.²

Translation:

You hand-over the keys of your parental house to your mother,

¹ 'Atl Gath' means coming and going. Hence, these are the expenses for to and fro transport. Actually the bride has to pay this money to her mother-in-law. On the first arrival of the bride at the in-laws house, her mother-in-law also pays 'Atl Gath' to the bride but only once, which the parents of the bride have to return after doubling it. From thence onwards, the bride is paid 'Atl Gath' whenever she visits her parental house. She also gets some bakery breads an 'Atho>r' and a packet of salt on some special occasions.

² The Urdu/Persian words like, Ro>khsat, Ka ha:r and Sawa:l' used in the folk song depict some recent additions made in it.

Oh dear daughter, you now leave for joining your in-laws.

You acted as a guard to my whole house till now, Oh you beloved of your mother, are you proceeding towards your home?

The starling is taking leave from her father, and weeping so profusely.

Oh palanquin bearers, for God's sake, you should carry the palanquin very slowly.

Don't think that the palanquin is empty; there is a rose plant in it.

The palanquin, decorated with mirrors, has a window on its right side,

The starling is in it you check it thoroughly.

Your palanquin has its dome made of pure gold, Why are you worried? your sire is with you.

The groom is approached by the ladies folk with an appeal in the following words: -

SonI sInzi' gangIje' ro>pl sInz hi: chay,

Dayi' sInz drly chay wa:rI rAchizyan.

PA:mpIri Ko>ng mond that no tAchize',

Ko:r no rAchize' lukI hund ma:l.

Sa:ni' kani' Sha:rika: tuhIndi kani Vetasta'.¹

Yihay gAr tsyatIa: thA:vi:ze'.

ChandIkuy hA:vi:zes dIlIkuy bA:vi:zes,

Kasam chuy mol mA:ji mAshirA:vi:zes.

Translation:

The small golden urn has a silver spout,

For God's sake you should look after her carefully.

It is a Saffron bulb from Pampore and it should not be scraped repeatedly,

One should not bring up a girl, for she is the treasure given to others.

1. 'Vitasta', the river Jehlim has been personified and brought at par with goddess Sharika whose abode is on the hillock of Hari Parbath, near Srinagar city.

Goddess *Sharika* is our witness and *Vitasta* Yours,
 You should always remember this moment.
 You should show her the belongings of your pockets
 and always apprise her of your inner thoughts,
 Take an oath that you will love her so much that she
 forgets her parents.

2. *Kadll Tar* - crossing the bridge for the first time after marriage.

On leaving the venue of the marriage function, the groom and the bride proceed to the groom's house in a car. On their way while reaching the middle of a bridge, the car stops. The driver makes hundred and one excuses and the car remains motionless. It is only after the groom gives the driver a good gratification that the car starts moving ahead. This pleasure payment to the driver, is known as, '*Kadll Tar*'.

3. *Sailra:th*: Welcome to the new couple on their first arrival at the bride's house.

After completing the marriage rituals, the groom leaves for his parental house along with the bride after completing the ceremonial dinner at the bride's house. All the members of his family, the relatives and the neighbours, are waiting at the groom's house eagerly to welcome the newly wed. The loud singing, dancing and playing on the musical instruments at the groom's house can be heard from a considerable distance. A big '*Vyu:g*' is laid in the front courtyard with two plates of rice, a little '*VAR*' and a coin on each of them. They stand on the '*Vyu:g*' and the mother or the grand mother of the groom performs the '*a:lath*' ceremony. This late hour ceremony is witnessed by a large number of neighbours who have been waiting there till the arrival of the bride. Besides, the guests, who stayed back in the house for the past couple

of days, witness this occasion. In this way the new couple is led to the main gate of the house in a very joyous and jubilant mood.

4. *ZA:m Bra:nd* -

Gratifications to the groom's sister on the first entrance of the bride into the house.

The groom and the bride, after the usual '*Vyu:g*' function, come to the main gate of the house and here they are stopped by the sister of the groom who, at heart, is more joyous and cheerful than all others on the arrival of the bride as her new companion. Firstly her joy is due the fact that her brother has been married and secondly, she gets a sweet sister-in-law as one of her best friends in her family. The bride too has a soft corner for her and, as such, while bringing presents for the new parents and for all their family members, her parents give a golden ornament or some other costly present, which she offers to her sister-in-law on this special occasion. It is named as, '*ZA:m Bra:nd*'. It is in addition to the normal gifts, which she brings from her parents for the whole family including her sister-in-law. Thus both of them are allowed by her to enter into the house. In earlier times the mother-in-law would lead them into the kitchen because these were made of brick and mud and such mud-ovens had a number of top-holes. Here the couple was asked to sit on two such holes and the mother would serve three spoons of curd to each. In view of the present L.P.G. stoves the formality is completed by their presence in the kitchen. Then the bride is taken to the place where the priest had made a mark of a creeper like plant on the wall called, the '*Divl Mu:n*' with the help of lime stone powder and the vermilion on the eve of *Divlgo:n* of the groom. Actually the seating arrangement of the entire guests and the couple is arranged in this very room on the arrival of the bride.

5. *Mati' Mo>har* -Presents for the mother-in- law.

The bride enters the house of her in-laws with her face veiled¹. No body can remove her veil unless her mother-in-law observes a glimpse of her face first and for this purpose she has to please her by presenting a golden ornament, cash present or a costly shawl/suit/sari, etc. This is in addition to the gifts brought by her for her mother-in-law and other members of the family. It is only after performing this function that other younger people and other ladies of the house can see the bride.

On the face of it, the custom appears to be a superfluous function under the present circumstances where the boys and the girls move freely every where much earlier to their actual marriage. But if we go a little deeper to locate the purpose behind such an act, things will automatically become clear. As already pointed out, the display of a girl was not considered as a healthy sign by the ancient society of Kashmir Pandits. In my opinion, it was giving the mother an occasion to manage the situation in case the bride was not as beautiful as they expected her to be or possessed some physical defect affecting her beauty.

After having a look of the bride, the young ladies take her to a separate room and change her dress and the headgear etc. She is now beautifully dressed in a sari, decorated with the ornaments, which have been made for her by her in-laws. The groom too changes his dress, takes off all the garlands and removes the turban. After brushing his hair and resting for a while they take a cup of tea and leave for the bride's parental house for dinner. At this time

they travel alone by a car or taxi, as they have to return back the same night to their residence.

On reaching the bride's parental house the father-in-law of the groom leads them into the house. The son-in-law exchanges a nutmeg and a coin with the ones presented to him by his father-in-law who, besides the nutmeg and a coin, gives a golden ornament to him as a present for his first entrance into the house after marriage. This function is called, '*Za:phal Badla:wun*'. At this time the younger people assembled at the bride's place, ask her questions about her first experiences at the in-laws house. After taking a few morsels they are given a send off with a number of gifts. Besides this, two small kids, preferably the younger brother and sister of the bride, accompany them. The female folk at the groom's house are still busy with dancing and singing till the new couple arrives. On their arrival all the singers and dancers stop playing and remain busy till food etc is served to the guests accompanying the couple. It, generally, is a late hour feast at the groom's residence.

6. *KuTh dyun* - Allotment of a Separate Room.

In the meantime the friends and the younger brothers of the groom decorate the room for the new couple artistically. All scents and incense sticks, flowerpots and bouquets make the room charming. The mother of the groom, taking a cup of curd and a few pieces of bread in her hand, leads the new couple to their room and while checking all arrangements she serves the curd and bread to the couple. After this function all the members of the family and the guests take a night's rest.

In the past when child marriages were common, this function was held as a separate function after a few years when the groom and the bride attained the age of maturity. In Kashmir child marriage was called, '*Ro>nyan PeTh*'. Hence the function of giving a separate

¹ The custom is recorded here on the basis of the social structure of the Valley during by gone days. In the modern age of freedom and frankness all these things appear to be a narration from a fairy tale.

room to the wedded couple was celebrated with greater pomp and show, though after a few years after the actual wedding.

b) Post-marriage Functions held on subsequent days.

1. *Pra:ya:chit* - Expiation.

'*Kanya:da:n*' is considered to be the greatest act of charity in the Indian ethos. It is viewed more sacred than all the charities including '*Bhumidan*', '*Goadan*' and even the '*Ashawadan*'. To pay his reverence to the gods and deities for the smooth completion of the function, the donor of the girl, holds a special function on the next day of the marriage, called '*Pra:ya:chit*'. A salted yellow dish of rice called, '*TAAr*' is prepared and after offering different ingredients and ghee to Holy *Agni*, the priest makes oblations to a number of gods and deities according to the scriptures. The ceremonial kitchen for all these days, the stove/oven on which the dishes/rice were prepared, the birds and all other deities get the portion of their share from the oblation and the rest is served to all those present on the occasion along with the members of the family. It is only after making the offerings of various ingredients and ghee to the Sacred Fire that the members of the family, who have kept a fast on the eve of their daughter's marriage known as '*Ka:h*', can break their fast and can eat any solid food after performing this ritual called '*Pra:ya:chit*'.

This is the last ritual of the wedding function held at the bride's house. The guests have since returned to their respective homes. Things, which had been brought on hire, have already been returned. The guests who had made cash presents to the host on the eve of the daughter's marriage called, '*Gulimyu:Th*' and those guest-ladies who fall under the category of daughters, they and their husbands are

given cash presents in return, called '*AtI-gath*'. In this way the family members are now free to re-set their house and its belongings according to their need and choice. From now onwards the family feels the absence of the daughter and with the passage of time they get used to her absence.

2. *Ko>shal Hom* - Thanks giving at the Groom's House

It is a function held by the groom's father at his residence on the next day of the marriage or *Yagnyopavita* of his son. He performs a small ritual in order to offer his thanks to the gods and deities for the smooth performance of the function called, '*Ko>shal Hom*'. Here too the special yellow rice, called '*TAAr*', is prepared and after making offerings to all the deities and gods, the sanctified '*Naived*' portion of it is given to all those who are present there on the occasion. The father of the groom arranges a feast on this day and invites some of his close relatives and friends to this special feasting. After the lunch is over the guests leave for their homes. The articles taken on hire are returned to the concerned. The daughters and daughters-in-law who were invited to the function as special guests and who had offered '*Gulimyu:Th*' to the hostess on the marriage/ *yagnyopavita* (as the case may be), are paid '*AtI Gath*' and '*Ho>rIvInI*'¹ respectively and they take leave. In this way the house is as calm as before from now onwards.

¹ '*AtIgath*' is paid to those ladies who attend the marriage/ *yagnyopavita* and fall under the category of daughters and '*Ho>rIvInI*' is paid to those ladies who fall under the category of daughters-in law. The ritual of '*Ko>shal Hom*' is held in the case of son's marriage or '*Yajnyopavita*'.

3. *TrankI Ha:vun* - Displaying the Dowry.

On a specific day decided upon earlier, all the close relatives of the family assemble at the groom's house for this ceremony. It is more or less a ladies' function and is generally held in the afternoon after the lunchtime is over. The mother-in-law gives the keys of the trunks to the bride, which till then had remained with her, partly due to the busy schedule of the bride and partly out of reverence towards her mother-in-law. The daughter-in-law in turn hands them over to any of her elder sisters-in-law (*Dirka:kani* or *Za:m*, as the case may be) as a gesture of respect. All the trunks, suitcases, etc. brought by her from her parental house, are brought in the middle of a room and opened one by one. The presents brought by her are shown to one and all that attend the function. The suits of the bride, the presents made to the groom by the in-laws, and those meant for the family members, called the '*Pariwa:r*' are all shown to each person turn by turn. A display and a mention is made of the items presented to the groom/bride either on some earlier occasions (prior to marriage) or one the eve of the marriage by their friends and relatives. The presents meant for the family members which include the grand/mother-in-law, all the aunts from the parental as well as maternal sides of the groom and all her sisters-in-law in her new house, are handed over to the concerned at this very moment. The remaining items are kept back in their respective trunks. Last of all, the trunk containing house-hold utensils, known as '*SatIra:th*' is shown to the gathering and in this way the function comes to an end. The trunks, etc., are shifted into the room of the bride from this date, so that she keeps all the things according to her own choice and liking.

4. *Sha:ndI KA:r* - Present for the Father-in-law's Sister.

On the eve of marriage or *yagnyopavita*, the sister of the groom's father is the most important female member in the whole family after the hostess. She performs all-important services in her brother's house on all religious functions including marriage. Her presence, as we have seen, is essential at the time of preparation of '*VAr*', chopping of wood or grinding of spices either on the eve of *Yagnyopavita* or marriage. She formally starts the cleaning of the house. She arranges all the essential items on the '*Divgo<n*' ritual, and she makes the night of 'henna' more charming. She prepares the rice, sweet milk-rice pudding, cakes of rice flour and '*Moong*' '*Mon>gl Wari*' on the eve of '*Divgo>n*' and the rice prepared by her is used as an oblation for all the rituals held during the *Yagnyopavita Sanskar*. Hence her importance on the arrival of the bride in the house cannot be ignored. She gets a special present from the bride known as, '*ShandI KA:r*'. Literarily this is a combination of two words, '*Sha:ndI*' and '*KA:r*'. '*Sha:nd*', meaning the 'head rest of a bed-stead -- a 'pillow' or 'the upper most part of a bedding'. Besides, there is a pun on the word '*KA:r*'. The literal meaning of this word is the 'link/beam' or 'the rafter'. We have seen that all the house-hold chores on such functions of joy is supervised by the '*Pu:fi:*', as she is commonly called and, in these circumstances she might have been in charge of arranging the bedding, etc., for the new couple. Hence named as, '*Sha:ndI KA:r*,' or '*Shayn KA:r*', meaning a tax/gratification paid to the *Pu:fi:* for arranging the nuptial room for the weds. It is an admitted fact that the pillow, '*Shand*' is an important item of the bedding. In this way she arranges a comfortable night's resting place for the couple after the hectic day. Hence known as '*ShandI KA:r*' in a changed phonetic order.

In the days gone by, a special piece of brocade was considered as the piece of decoration among all the presents brought by the bride, including those which were meant for the family members as well. This piece of brocade was meant for the 'Pu:fi:'. Due to the changed conditions, a suitable *Sari* suit is kept for her along with a piece of brocade in the trunk now. But this much goes beyond doubt that this present has a special significance and is in addition to the presents meant for the family members out of which the 'Pu:fi:' also gets her due share.

5. *RoTh Khabar* - Welfare Information .

Soon after the bride's father is free from the marriage rituals, he fixes a day for sending a messenger to the groom's house to invite his daughter back to her parental house as a good will gesture. It may not befit the first messenger of the parents to go to the in-laws of the daughter for such an invitation without any presents. Therefore, arrangement for preparation of a special bakery, called '*RoTh*' is made well in advance. Besides, ground nuts, sweetmeats, sugar candy, toffees, walnuts, almonds and a few packets (at least eleven or even more) of sweets preferably '*Barfi*' weighing two Kg. each, are arranged for the occasion and put in a big steel trunk and sent to the daughter-in-laws house either on the coming Saturday or Tuesday after the marriage¹. This function is known as, '*RoTh Khabar*'. On receiving the '*RoTh Khabar*' the bride is at liberty to

¹ It is the only ritual of social nature which is performed either on a Saturday or Tuesday, otherwise considered as the most inauspicious days of the week for initiating any new job, according to the Indian ethos.

come to the parental house on any of the auspicious days.

On receiving '*RoTh Khabar*' the activities at the groom's house increase, as they have to distribute all these items among their relatives, friends and neighbours.

6. *PhirI Sa:l*

First invitation to the son-in-law.

After a few days rest, the father of the bride fixes a date for the first invitation to the newly wed. On the scheduled date the bride and the groom, his younger brothers/cousins and a few of his fast friends, all reach to the in-law's house of the groom at the schedule time. It is a function of considerable importance for the host. He also invites some of his own relatives on this occasion and in this way the function becomes an extended one. After the lunch is finished, the bride and the groom are presented gifts in the form of a suit each for the bride and the groom or some golden ornament for the bride and a wristwatch or an article of groom's choice. The young boys/girls accompanying the couple, are given cash presents of rupees one hundred and one or more, on the basis of reciprocity. All the guests' leave after taking tea in the afternoon, the bride is given a packet of salt, a *Sari*, *ATlho>r*, loaves of bread, and pocket money, '*ATl gath*', at the time of her departure.

During the earlier days this function was extended over a number of days and nearly all the guests would stay at the host's house for a number of days but now this function is completed in a single day

7. *PhirI LaTh*

Second Invitation to the son-in-law.

After a lapse of a fortnight or so from the date of the marriage, the father invites his daughter and the son-in-law a second time on an auspicious day. It is a very simple function and after taking tea and lunch etc., the couple is at liberty to leave. After this function the bride and the groom or both can pay a visit to their house as and when they wish so. At the time of their departure the bride is given a packet of salt, a Sari, some loaves of bread and '*All Gath*.' It may be pointed out that the groom has a social binding not to visit the in-laws house on his own, unless otherwise necessary, till this function is held by his in-laws.

8. *HA:ZIRI:*

Visit of the close relatives of the Bride.

During the days of stay of the bride at her husband's house, relatives from her maternal side, '*Ma:ta:ma:l*' aunts, '*Ma:si:*' and '*Pu:fi:.*', show their presence at the bride's house with their presents etc.,. Though they come to the residence of their daughter but they do not enter the house until the formal entry on the date of '*GarI Atsun*' function is held by the father of the groom in consultation with the father of the bride. This type of formal attendance is called '*HA:zi:ri:*' The said relatives of the bride come along with various presents just to express their good wishes to the newly married couple. Giving of such gifts depends on reciprocity extended by the parents of the bride earlier to such of their relatives at the time of marriage of their children.

9. *Chay ChawIvIni* -

Serving Tea for the First Time.

The bride is given rest for a period of a week or so. Besides, she remains busy with invitation schedules during all this time and thus, she is not asked for any help in the day-to-day chores of the house. The fact is that the father of the groom had wished for this additional hand to help the members of the family in the day-to-day household chores. With this fact in mind the head of the family asks the bride, on an auspicious day, to prepare tea for all the family members. The bride arranges all the ingredients for such a special tea a few days earlier and on the scheduled day she presents herself before every member of the family with a cup of hot fragrant tea. All the members, after taking tea, place their presents in cash in the cups. The elderly people pay more while the young pay according to their own choice and age. Some affluent people present golden ornaments to their daughter-in-law on this occasion. From this date she takes the charge as a helper in the kitchen and thus she becomes a helping hand to her mother-in-law in her household chores. The presents thus given to the daughter-in-law at this function are a kind of good will to her to act as a helping hand in the family chores from thenceforth.

10. *GarI Atsun* -

First formal Invitation extended by the two families for entrance in one another's house.

It is one of the post-marriage functions. Some people celebrate it just after the marriage while others postpone it till such a type of function is again held in the family. The heads of the two families meet and arrive at an agreement to hold the function on two consecutive

days, one meant for the bride's parental relatives and the other for the groom's people. It is considered as one of the major functions after the marriage. The concerned families invite some of their close relatives, friends and neighbours on the basis of reciprocity, to attend and participate in the function. The rationale in respect of the function is the same as discussed under the heading, 'Yagnyopavita' (*Divgo>n*), but it differs when the groom's family is invited on a similar occasion. They have neither to take any trunks nor any kind of clothes/dresses, etc. instead the parents of the bride offer presents to their son-in-law and his parents besides the cash offerings. In both the cases the feasting is held on a large scale and in a friendly but formal atmosphere.

In this way the rituals and social functions, which follow soon after the marriage, come to an end. There are a number of other rituals and social function, that continue for the full year, and even some of these are of such nature that the parents of the bride have to wait for a few years for the performance of those rituals and rites. A description of all such rites and functions will follow.

c) The Festivals of the First Year of Marriage.

1. *Vo>har VA:di* - Birth Days.

Soon after the hectic engagements that follow the marriage ceremony are over and the daughter-in-law feels a bit relieved, she prepares a table of the birth dates of all the relatives of her in-law family members with the help of her mother-in-law. She brings '*Sho>gun*'¹ from her parents for further transfer to the persons concerned on such birthdays. It may be pointed out that such lists are

¹ An omen or a gift in cash or kind presented to the bridegroom after the settlement of marriage or thereafter.

prepared on the advice of the mother-in-law and on the basis of reciprocity, i.e. she includes the names of all those persons in the list from whom she or any member of her family has received a similar kind of '*Sho>gun*' on some earlier occasion/s. Such lists generally include almost all the members of the family and some of the selected uncles on the paternal as well as maternal sides of the groom.

Among the birthdays of the family members, the birthdays of the grand/father-in-law and that of the husband, top the list because on these occasions the father of the bride has to arrange many more gifts. For instance on the birthday of the father-in-law of his daughter, he has to arrange some vessels of curd and bakery items and some sweets besides, the usual '*Sho>gun*' in cash. On the birthday of his son-in-law, the bride's father, besides the things listed above, has to arrange a costly suite and some golden ornaments for his son-in-law and the daughter. She has to arrange just cash present ranging from rupees one hundred and one up to five hundred and one (based on reciprocity) for the birthdays of the rest of the relatives. It may be added that cash payments on such occasions differ according to the social and economic status of the two families.

2. *Ne'trI Vo>har Vo<d* - Marriage Anniversary.

After the expiry of one year from the date of marriage, the 'Marriage Anniversary' is celebrated. The husband and wife get a suit each from the parents of the bride. They also get presents from their parents and relatives and friends. As on all the birthdays, yellow rice, known as '*TAhARr*' is prepared and after due benedictions, it is served to one and all present or invited on the occasion. A good feasting is also held on this occasion at the house of the groom. Affluent families arrange big gatherings on this date and enjoy it in the company of their

relatives, friends and well-wishers. The solitude loving couples enjoy themselves on an outing at a hill station or at a health resort.

Besides the above festivals of the year, there are a number of other festivals of general nature on which the newly wed girl has to bring the presents from her parents. Though the number of such festivals is large yet a mention of a few of them is included in this narration.

Shra:vnI Punim - Raksha Bandhan.

Though the presence of a recently married girl is most essential in her new house on this date yet her in-laws allow her to visit her parent's house to tie the '*Rakhi:*' on the wrist of her brother if she is fortunate to have one. She returns to her in-laws house soon after completing the ceremony along with gifts of fruit and sweets for her in-laws and some clothes for her self as '*Sho>gun*'. The father of the groom has to distribute the sweets and the fruit among his neighbours and close relatives on the same day.

4. Zarmi Satam - Janam AshTami.

On this day too fruits and sweets come from the newly married girl's parental houses, but on this date the quantity of such presents is much more than the presents offered on the earlier occasion of '*Raksha Bandhan*'. The girl gets a suit of clothing from her parents, besides the sweets; they arrange curd and milk for their daughter on this day. The father of the groom has to arrange for the distributions of all these things among his relatives and neighbours on the same day.

5, Shishur La:gun - Festival of the first winter.

This is one among the most important functions, known as '*Stushur*', held at the grooms residence in the beginning of '*Po>h*', the ninth month of the *Vikram* era. One day preceding the function, provided it is an auspicious day of the week, a little of seasmum and a pinch of lime powder is put together into a duly stitched triangular patch made of brocade, and it is known as '*Shishar Goar*'¹. It is then stitched or pinned on the head side of the '*Sari*' of the bride, which she has got from her parents on the occasion. Besides, the *Sari* suit, the bride gets some cash presents and a hunted wild duck as a present from her parents for her in-laws. She also gets a *Sari* suit from her in-laws on the occasion. Early in the morning on the day of the function all the relatives, friends and neighbours who are invited by the host on a special feast, assemble. The daughter-in-law, well dressed in her new suit along with a decorated fire pot known as '*Shishar Ka:nglr*' in her right hand, enters into the room of feasting. Both, the suit and the fire-pot, for the bride come from her parents. The fire pot is without any fire or charcoals in it. After feasting is over, she approaches every person with a box of tooth picks in her left hand and the '*Ka:ngari*' in her right hand. Every body, whether young or old, puts some cash present into the '*Ka:ngari*' as his/her share to the bride on this special feast. Everybody, whether old or young, has to pay for his/her participation in the feasting on this occasion.

In addition to the presents mentioned above, the father of the girl has to arrange a good number of loaves of bread, thirty to fifty kilos of curd and considerable quantity of cooked meat, called '*QAliyi*' to be presented to the in-laws of his daughter and send it to the house of

¹ This function is held in the month of '*Pausha*' or '*Po>h*' on the first year of the birth of a new-born also.

the groom. The father of the groom has to make arrangements for its distribution among all the relatives and neighbours on the same day. Due to the exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits from the valley, making of such presents in kind have subsided but making presents in cash has increased four-fold.

6. *He'rath* - *Shiva Ra:tri*.

On the eve of the first *Shiva Ra:tri*, the father of the girl has to arrange a new dress for his daughter, a costly '*Ka:ngri*', cash and other presents for all the small and younger children of the family, called the '*He'rIts KharIch*', and after the festival is over he has to arrange a good number of walnuts and loaves of bread and some cash called '*He'rIts Bhog*' for distribution among the relatives and neighbours at the in-laws house of the daughter. In addition to this the maternal relatives of the bride too send their share of '*He'rIts KharIch/Bhog*' in the form of walnuts, loaves of bread and cash presents to the in-laws of the bride on the eve of this festival for the first year.

7. *Nav Reh* - *New year's day*.

The parents of the girl arrange a new suit for their daughter on this date and send it to her in-laws early in the morning. The in-laws arrange an outing for the newly married couple and other children of the house on this day.

8. *Zangl Tray-*

Third day of the New Year for Ladies.

On this day the ladies, all young and old, go to their parent's house early in the morning and return in the evening with gifts like a packet of salt, an '*ATlho>r*' and '*AtI gath*'. The parents of the newly married girls arrange for an outing for their sons-in-law and the

daughters and celebrate the day in a very special way. In the evening they return to their homes with all the presents mentioned above.

In this way all the festivals of the year come to an end. It may be added here that the presents like the packet of salt, an '*ATlho>r*' and some cash in the form of '*AtI gath*' is always paid to the daughter throughout her life when ever she visits the parental house on their invitation.

d) Other functions of General Nature.

1. *Navl Shin* - *The First Snow Fall*.

The members of the family where the marriage of a son has taken place recently, wait eagerly for the first snowing of the winter. They peep through the windows early in the morning. In case it is snowing, a member of the family gets up and wraps a little of snow in a piece of paper so as to look as if something has been kept well protected and duly wrapped. When they are satisfied that the thing looks just like a parcel, they manage it to be kept near the bed of the bride while she is asleep. When she wakes up she opens the parcel unknowingly and soon there is a loud clap and the members of the family, mostly the younger ones, cry joyously '*Navl Shi:n*', the 'new snow'. Every body enjoys this moment in the family including the bride who has to arrange and bring a hunted wild duck as a present from her parents to her in-laws. The case could be vice versa as well provided the daughter-in-law is witty enough to apply the same formula to any elderly member of her husband's family. In that case the person thus caught, has to arrange a wild duck for the family feasting.