

2. Do>d Dyun - First Pregnancy.

On hearing that their daughter is pregnant, her parents start counting days for her delivery. This function is either held in the seventh or in the ninth month of pregnancy keeping in view the health condition of the lady. On the scheduled date and on an auspicious day, the parents arrange bakery, meat cooked in turmeric and other spices excluding chilies, curd, a new dress for the daughter, a packet of salt, an *ATlho>r*, some cash in lieu of bread and meat and '*Atlgath*' for their daughter. On the scheduled day the girl goes to her in-laws with all these articles and the parents of the groom arrange a feast in their house on this occasion. They have also to make arrangement for the distribution of all the things brought by their daughter-in-law among the relatives and neighbours. From this date onwards, the daughter-in-law remains in the in-law's house till her delivery. The rituals and customs which are in vogue at present in our society and are connected with our pre-birth, post-birth functions up to the attainment of '*Grahashtha Ashrama*', as already discussed in the earlier chapters of this book, are again repeated on the birth of a new-comer in the family.

Chapter Seven

IV) Sanskars and Rituals connected with the GRAHASHTH ASHRAM - The Family Life.

The desire for having a child is one of the main motivations in married life. In this way the child is an outcome of a basic desire. Actually life itself is a manifold combination of desires and every one's aim in life is to go ahead and flourish in this world. Man is born with desires or we can say that desires are born along with a man. After ones child-hood, the second stage of life is to attain knowledge through *Brahmcharya* or schooling, and here starts the most important stage of ones first '*Ashram*' which is spread over a period of first 25 years of ones life. This is followed by the second stage or *Ashram*, the '*Grahashth Ashram*' in which one wants to express oneself through all ones actions and achievements. Here the man needs a helper who can stand by him through all thick and thin. Thus, his spouse comes forward as his helper, which necessarily involves marriage *Sanskar*. In order to meet the day-to-day needs and requirements at this stage, man becomes an animal in the real sense having four legs to strive for the fulfillment of his desires.

Though out worldly he concentrates fully for the betterment of his family, yet at his inner thoughts he strives for achieving the ultimate goal of spiritual height, i.e. final 'salvation.' Every man is born with four human pursuits. These are 'virtue', 'wealth', 'sensual enjoyment,' and 'salvation'. Of these, a man attains the first through education during the days of his schooling and the remaining three are left to be achieved by him during the rest of his life. A man tries his utmost to get as much of wealth as he can by all means, fair or foul. The Almighty has also associated five elements with man, known as '*Pancha Su:na*' according to the scriptures, which keep the householder busy day and night. The aforesaid five elements prove a great drain on all his wealth and earnings.

These are, according to our *Dharama Shashtra*, (1) the hearth, (2) the grinding stone, (3) the broom, (4) the mortar and pestle, and (5) water vessels. All these things consume a major part of one's time and are a drain on one's earnings. As the head of his family, he has not only to look after his own requirements, but also as a member of this society and as a part of his immediate environment, he has some duties towards all that comprise it or are a part and parcel of it. It is for this very reason that our scriptures have advised that '*Pancha Kaval*', the five morsels of cooked food be kept aside, one each for a dog, a sinner, a leper, a sick person, and a crow. Though we consider all these praxis as something outdated and un-necessary because of our limited understanding and knowledge, but our scriptures have given due place and importance to them in the society and for the good of our immediate environment. Man has been bestowed with three qualities, '*Guna*'. The first is the quality of goodness '*Satva*'. It is followed by ignorance and darkness called the '*Tama*'. It would have taken all men down into the depths of hell and darkness had there not been the '*Satva*' to save him from going down deeper. The third quality in man is '*Rajoguna*' which develops the worldly desires and passions in him and which is considered to be the main cause of vice in a man. The three pursuits of man i.e., 'love', duty' and 'wealth' remain under the influence of these three qualities or '*Guna*'. Under this influence he always thinks in the terms of either total 'gain', or 'loss' or in the terms of neither 'gain' nor 'loss', i.e., 'equality' in every sphere of his life. The result is that 'love' does not remain absolute. 'Love' when extended as a 'duty' becomes doubtful. This sort of thinking suits a man, who has lust for wealth and who, while embarking upon a project, thinks in terms of 'gain', 'loss', or 'equality'. Once the darkness is dispelled from the mind of a man, his main task of completing the daily ceremonies known as '*Maha Yajnya*' take primary place and bless him with the sweet

fruit of salvation. The five ceremonies thus expounded by the scriptures are :-

1. The study of the religious scriptures,
2. Making of offerings to gods,
3. 'Reasonable reception of guests,'
4. 'Offerings to be made to deities, Rishis and manes, and
5. Putting food on the ground for insects.

According to the scriptures a man after marriage *Sanskar* has to perform the following duties: -

- 1, Duties as head of the family,
- 2, Duties as a father, and,
- 3, duties as a son.

While performing all the above mentioned duties man is obliged to perform the following '*Yajnya:s*', 'sacrifices' on account of his attachment with a family: -

1. *Brahma Yajnya*,
2. *Pitri Yajnya*,
3. *Deva Yajnya*,
4. *Bhu:ta Yajnya*, and,
5. *Nara Yajnya*

As the head of a family and for the betterment of his children, a married person has been advised to perform the '*Brahma Yajnya*' meaning recitations from the Vedas known as '*Swadhyaaya*'. It purifies his heart and pure heart is considered as the abode of God. The goal of attaining the '*Brahma*' also involves '*Deva Yajnya*' by making offerings to gods and deities. For the safeguard of his children and other family members, he performs the '*Bhu:ta Yajnya*' so as to ward off the effects of all kinds of which-craft or black magic on his own self and on the other members of his family. He is also bound to feed all the members of the family for their survival and this service is called as '*Nara Yajnya*'. As a son and as an bread earning member of the family he is to look after to the day to day needs of his parents and looking after parents involves '*Pitri Yajnya*'. Besides he has to get the blessings of his fore-fathers, who are in the heavens now. This is done by performing their '*Shra:dha*.' At the core of his heart, he has great devotion and love for the teachers who have made him able and trained to lead a

successful life. All these acts are included in the daily activities of a person. In order to enable him to fulfill the three obligations like, the 'Deva Rin,' the 'Rishi Rin,' and the 'Pitri Rin' he is brought into the fold of the 'Brahmnical' order by his parents by performing the 'Yagnyopativa' ceremony. This state of affairs continues till a person attains the age of fifty years and during this period his own children grow and they in turn perform and repeat all these duties when they attain the age of *Brahmacharya*, *Grahasth* and other *Ashrams* and thus the un-ending circle continues forever.

Chapter Eight
(V) Sanakars and Rituals connected with the
Va:N PRASTH - Seclusion from the Family Life.

It is the third stage in the life of a twice-born and covers the span of a man's life from fifty to seventy five years. During this stage a man is directed to opt for seclusion for penance so that he can understand and evaluate religious treatises, elucidate the past experiences and ponder over the good and the bad deeds experienced and executed by him during his previous stages of life. It is the age of introspection, analysing in detail the past acts and experiences of life and evaluating them in the light of the directions given in our Holy Scriptures. He has to do all these things while living in a family yet without involving himself with the family. He shares his experiences with his family members and evaluates all the problems emerging due to the generation gap and its over all impact on the society. Thus he acts as a teacher for the development and betterment of the whole society, besides being the head of his own family. Here his assessment of things and happenings in his family or in the society around him will be better or worse than those experienced by him during his lifetime. It is in the fitness of things for his own self and the society as a whole, to allow a considerable gap between his own self, the society he belongs and the family of which he is a member. More so when a person is in the advanced stage of his '*Va:nprasth Ashram*.' While keeping an eye on all these family matters and dealings, he is advised to develop an attitude of detachment and aloofness so as to prepare himself for the '*Sannyas Ashram*'. A person who learns to live a detached life like a lotus in a muddy pond and yet untouched by the muddy-water, is considered to be a successful person going through this important stage of

life known as the '*Vanprasth Ashram*' according to the Indian way of living.

How can a person, who has spent all his life in comforts, be expected to take to *Sannyas*, i.e., renunciation, at once? There has to be a preparation for taking such a bold step and according to the scriptures, it is necessary that before going for the *Sannyas Ashram* one should take the *Vanprasth Ashram* more seriously so as to practice detachment for a period of twenty five years which ultimately leads a man to complete renunciation. According to the scriptures, the *Vanprasth Ashram* has to begin at the age of fifty years and by the time one attains the age of seventy-five years, he is expected to be mentally and spiritually prepared for total detachment needed for *Samnyas Ashram*, also named as 'complete *Tyaga*'. Adopting a life of complete detachment and seclusion without proper training and preparation can prove disastrous for all, the individual, the family and the society.

Chapter Nine

(VI) Sanskars and Rituals connected with the **SANNYAS ASHRAM** Stage of Renunciation

Sannyas means renunciation or abandonment of worldly ties. It is also named as the asceticism or monasticism. This *Ashram* begins at the age of 75 years of ones life and continues up to the age of one hundred years, provided the blessing of '*Ji-va sharda shatam*' comes true for an individual. This is the stage when a person is required to renounce or abandon family ties and all other family and worldly relations. During all this period a person is advised to give up all his family ties and live like a hermit and spend all his time and energy in the worship of God and in reading the Holy Scriptures. He should be a teacher of his own self through his own experiences and also from the experiences gained by him in the attainment of a heavenly life after the dissolution of his physical body. He should be able to teach and preach the Holy Scriptures to others and must consider whole world to be a large family, which in the real sense is nothingness and an illusion. In the words of some of our great sages and seers, "There is often not much difference between the robe and the rogue." In the world of cheap popularity and constant and speedily developing scandals, it is difficult to think of *Sannyas* as a sacred undertaking. The lust for more has brought the man and the noble thought of being a *Sannyasi* to a very sad state. But still *Sannyas* is the only stage that can take man away from worldly illusions and all other odds because it is the prerequisite of *Sannyas* to alter the state of mind first and then advocate the change of robe or its colour. It may also be safe to say that once we achieve and accept the change in the state of our mind, changing of our robes and our life styles becomes entirely optional. *Sannyas* requires us to think in a new way. At the very first, it makes us to

believe that by adopting it, a man becomes a loser because we have to renounce all our ties with the material world but actually renunciation offers us a chance for winning in the form of self realisation. Once the notion of duality is erased from the mind of a man, understanding becomes clearer to him. In *Sannyas*, we do not see the 'other' and all that we see is "I", known as '*Ananya*', meaning 'without any second'. There is no other divine device that can be considered to be the key to renunciation or to the *Sannyas Ashram*.¹

By adopting the path of *Sannyas* we enter into '*Ananya Yoga*' - a way of thinking in which we lose ourselves in the undivided and unrestricted love for Him which till then we considered as the 'other'. In the language of mysticism losing ones own self is to discover Him. Through *Sannyas* we make it possible for our generations to follow us and to learn the art of survival from negation. *Sannyas* is not something of an externally imposed rule but a guideline for leading a healthier and happier life within through spiritual awareness. It is not an act of mindlessness or ignorance of right action and thought instead it is a path taken to find the Truth and needs our full concentration. There are guidelines in scriptures for our interacting with the outer world. These guidelines, in our relationship with others are based on the five golden pillars, namely, 1. *Ahimsa* (non-violence), 2.. *Saty* (truthfulness), 3. *Asaty* (non-stealing), 4. *Brahmchary* (celibacy), and 5. *Aparigrah* - (non-covetousness). *Patanjali's Yoga Vasishtha* has named them as the five '*Yamas*', (restraints), which, according to him, are followed by five *Niyamas*, (observances). In this way the *Niyamas* form as the basic constituents and are about how we should interact with our own self and with our internal instincts. These provide us the means of

self-regulation and help us to maintain a conducive environment in which we grow. The five *Niyamas* are :- 1. *Shauch* - (Purity), 2. *Santosh*, (contentment), 3. *Tap* - (austerity), 4. *Swadhyay* (self - education) and 5. *Ishwar Parinidhan* - (meditation). The last i.e., meditation is the dedication of all our actions to the Divine. The dedication of *Radha*, towards Lord Krishna has aptly been explained in the *Bhagwat Purana*, (Krishna Lila). It relates that all the *Gopis* were jealous of *Radha* for she, according to their thought, received more attention from *Krishna*. One day the *Gopis* complained to Lord *Krishna* about his adopting this double standard. Lord *Krishna* answered that *Radha* had 'devotion'. The *Gopis* were not ready to accept this explanation. In order to explain the real 'dedication' to the *Gopis*, *Krishna* one day pretended that one of his fingers was wounded and was bleeding profusely. All the *Gopis* ran here and there. Some started searching for cotton wool and others ran for a piece of cloth to bandage it while the finger continued bleeding profusely. *Radha* came to know about this and she came running, tore a portion of her *Sari* and bandaged the finger of *Krishna* while the *Gopis* still continued their search for the cotton and a piece of rag. In this way Lord *Krishna* explained to them the true essence of '*Tyag*' and complete devotion towards the Divine.

¹ *Shrimad Bhagwad Gita*, Chpat. 12, verse 6.

Chapter Ten

(VII) Rituals and Customs pertaining to the Antim Sanskar - The Last Rites.

There are a number of words in vogue like, 'Marun', 'Mrityu', 'So>rgs gatsun' for 'death,' 'breathing last' or the 'Eternal Journey', prevalent in Kashmir for this natural phenomenon. Some of these words have retained the original Sanskrit form while some have undergone slight phonetic changes due to the passage of time. We often think that the dying person loses in a single moment this whole world, his body, home, job, house, his relatives - every thing that he thought belonged to him just a few minutes before. All the losses that could not possibly be experienced in the whole life join together to make one overwhelming loss when one dies. So a man does some pre-thinking and even preparations so as to keep himself ready for meeting his death, which is every body's ultimate lot. It is because of this very fact that a man considers death to be always near him like his shadow.

Scholars have described five stages in the process of coming to terms with death. These are generally known as, denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. In the prime of youth every body denies the existence of death. But with the advancement of age the other stages follow. Of course, it is not necessary for every body to go through all these stages. For some people the road to the acceptance of death as a reality may be too long and full of hurdles and thorns whereas some of us may not even reach to that stage of acceptance at all. Ours is a culture, which is full of beliefs, rites, rituals, and superstitions, which we cannot understand unless we place them against a right perspective. While accepting this natural phenomenon we find ourselves like most other people - facing death as a challenge, as if we have been cheated and consequently we

feel frustrated and angry. Whether it is frustration or anger, we should try to ask the dying person to consider death as a natural process. Feelings of repressed emotions, sadness, numbness, guilt and jealousy may develop in a dying person for those who are still alive and healthy. We should help the dying not to suppress these emotions when they arise. We should be with him as and when the pain of death and grief overtake him. The emotions slowly subside and change into serenity, calmness and sanity. One should neither try to be wise before a dying person nor say something to make things look better. We should remain with him as long as we can. If we feel that we are more anxious or fearful, we should accept it openly before the dying person and tell him about it. This will surely bring one close to the dying person and it shall ultimately open a freer communication between the two. Sometimes a dying man knows far better than any one else as to how he can be helped, and one should know how to draw on his wisdom and let him give to us what he knows better than we do. On a higher spiritual level, the dying person has clear intellect whether he realizes it or not and the dying man has a potential for complete enlightenment. As the dying man comes closer to death, this possibility increases manifold and in many ways. So the dying deserve more care and respect. Here we shall recall that Lord Ram directed his younger brother, *Lakshman* to go with utmost reverence near the dying *Ravan*, who was considered as a man of great learning. He was directed to know from him certain codes of higher values in life. In the same way Lord *Krishna* directed *Arjun* to approach *Bhishm Pitamah*, who had laid himself on a bed of arrows for the same reason. In both the cases, the Epics tell about the 'short term disciples' going before their 'short term *Gurus*' and both stand with reverence near their head side. But the code of conduct is contrary to this, because as a rule the place of the seeker is just near the feet of his *Guru* and once the set procedure is adopted by the disciples, the *Gurus* reveal to

both of them the desired values and experiences of their life, willingly. Death is an eternal fact and it comes either early or late in one's life. It can come slowly due to disease or due to old age or swiftly due to some accident or violence. A curious misconception seems to prevail in many that coming of death turns a demon into a saint. Whatever would have been the deeds of a person but one thing is sure that the moment he dies, we believe, he becomes practically an angel of goodness. Actually casting off physical body no more alters his disposition than does the casting off his clothes. He is precisely the same man after his death as he was a moment before his death, with the same vices and virtues. But in the astral world he does not get any opportunity of displaying them, though they may manifest themselves in the astral life in a different manner. His stay in the astral world depends on the energy of his lower desires and emotions during his physical existence. Once this energy is exhausted only then can he leave for the higher and more peaceful realms of the upper worlds - heavens. Though the worldly passions are for the time being worn out and meaningless for him at this stage but the germs of the qualities that he has imbibed, are still there. They are latent and ineffective. After his death he leaves the astral world and those qualities can no longer find expression. Such wishes, therefore, remain latent, but when centuries later, on his downward course into a reincarnation, he re-enters the astral realm, these qualities manifest themselves once again, and become the blue print of his next personality. The destination of the soul after death depends on how we shape our consciousness throughout our life. If we carefully consider this, we can understand how our consciousness, at any given moment of time directly determines our next destination in space. It is because of this very fact that our scriptures contain '*Anta mati sa eva gati*' 'the last thoughts are a gateway to the new realms'. This consciousness has many contents including identity, intelligence, thoughts, feelings and

desires. All these develop or take shape according to our association and activities. The three humours of human body called 'Tridosh' a.c.: - 1. Bile, 2. Phlegm, and 3. Wind. They are the essential elements of our physical body but their existence comes to a fatal end at the time of death¹. Here the association with saintly persons and spiritual activities are most important to achieve the spiritual consciousness and thus reach to the selected destination at the time of death. Religiousness alone cannot do. No doubt religious teachings explain our relationship with God. We should also know that hell is the farthest point from association and consciousness of God. God-consciousness is very close to heaven. If we are not conscious of God then we are already in hell. Hindu philosophy lays more stress on meditating upon the world beyond than upon the one in which one lives. The living world is considered as a transitory camp whereas the actual abode is the world beyond. That is why more stress has been laid on performing death rituals rightly and regularly.

Sanatan Dharma lays a great emphasis on the rituals performed after the death of a person². Some scholars are of the opinion that a man performs the death rituals of a dead person not for granting any rest or consolation to the deceased but to get rid of the bad and uncalled for repercussions of such happenings to his own self.³ Death is the ultimate reality and can neither be escaped nor altered. It has got a special significance as for the *Hindu Dharma* is concerned. The rituals and customs attached with death are tedious and extensive, known as the '*Karma Kanda*'. A man has been following all these rituals and customs since the times immemorial. A man at the verge of death is asked to perform a ritual called, '*Anti*

Dan', the last charity¹. Those present give a dying man a spoon of '*Ganga Jal*', 'water from the *Ganga*'. A small coin, preferably an old copper coin², is kept in the mouth of the dead and his/her mouth is closed. The rituals for the dead extend over a period of one year. However, the anniversaries are held year after year according to the lunar calendar after observing the first anniversary called '*WaharwA:r*'. The death rites and customs mainly include:-

1. *Anitsre 'Th* or *AnteshTi* - The Last Rites.
2. *Da:h Sanska:r* - Cremation.
3. *AstrIkI Tulni* - Collection of Mortal remains
4. *DAhim Do>h*. - The Tenth day rituals.
5. *Kahim Do>h* - Eleventh day rituals.
6. *BAhim Do>h* - Twelfth day rituals
7. *Challun* - Bathing and Washing.
8. *Pachiwa:rI* - Fortnightly rituals.
9. *Ma:swa:rI* - Monthly rituals
10. *ShaDmo<s* - Rituals at the end of Six months.
11. *Ti:l*. - Offering of oil (ritual.)
12. *WaharwA:r*. - Rituals at the end of one year.
13. *Shra:dha* - Anniversary.
14. *TirthI Shra:dha* - Rituals at a place of pilgrimage.
15. *Dw:adashi* - Performance of *Ba:h*.

1. *Anitsrye'Th-* (*ANTESHTI*)- THE LAST RITES.

As soon as the death of a person occurs, a portion in one of the ground floor rooms is cleanly besmeared with clay and water. The sacred grass known as the

¹ It contains some rice, salt and cash and the dying man is asked to sprinkle it with water.

² It is a conception that after the death of a person, he/she has to cross the stream called the, '*Vaitarni*' while proceeding towards the heavens. Here the person has to pay the ferry charges to the boatman for ferrying him/her across the stream. Hence the coin is kept in the mouth of the dead for the purpose.

¹ '*Pranah priyan samaye Kaf, Vat, Pittah , Kanthah Virodhana vidau sumrinam kutaste.*' Subashitani.

² Pnaday, Raj Bali, Hindu Sanakar, Varanasi, P. 296

³ *Ibid*, P. 298

'Kusha:' (*Darbhi Gasl*) is spread on it. The dead body is placed with its back on it so that the face remains quite visible. Besides, its head is kept towards south so that the feet remain extended towards the north. At the head side is kept an earthen lamp on a lamp stand. An elderly member of the family recites from the *Bhagvat Gita* while the lady-folk encircle the dead, weeping and wailing. The dead body is kept fully covered with a sheet of cloth. The caps/ turbans of the male members, and the headgears of the ladies, if they wear so, are kept on the sheet covering the dead body from the side of its feet. In the mean time the local potter arrives with a coop containing earthen pots required on the occasion. In the compound, a portion is marked for performing the last rites of the dead and the remaining portion is covered with carpets and sheets, etc. and the male mourners, relatives and neighbours sit on them, in case there is no ample space for sitting inside the house. A person or two start preparing the shroud for the dead. It comprises the inner garment, two pieces of cloth used as under-wear called, '*Shra:nl PaTh*', one before the final bath and the other after it. A head garment or mask known as '*Mo>zuri*' and the outer sheet of cloth covering the bier. The outer sheet and the head garment, are dyed in Saffron-water. In the meantime the elder daughter-in-law heats water in the kitchen in one of the earthen pots brought by the potter and also cooks a small pot of rice and some vegetable, preferably potatoes, for the last rites of the dead. The bathing arrangement for the dead is made in the main corridor of the house on a wooden plank. The grand son of the dead rings a small bell on the gate of the house, the entrance is covered with a sheet of cloth till the bathing of the dead and other rituals are completed.

During yester years the death of a person created huge problems in collecting various items required for the last rites. Now these have been kept in stock by a number of socio-religious organisations. Besides, a number of

organizations attached to various cremation grounds have made available biers and wooden planks for bathing the dead. Previously the local carpenter would prepare the bier and the wooden board. This, besides being time consuming, also involved huge expenses. These arrangements have facilitated the job of cremation of the dead to a great extent. Earlier the availability of dry firewood for the cremation of the dead posed great problems: Now it is arranged by these societies at landed cost. In this way much labour and time is saved due to these facilities. The services of the potter and the carpenter under the changed circumstances, have been eliminated as all these things are readily available with these societies.

The word '*Anltsre'Th*' appears to be a direct derivation from the Sanskrit word '*Anteshti:*' meaning the last rites. Once the last bath of the dead is started, the eldest son¹ of the dead or any other person on his behalf starts the last rites with the help of a priest at the place already besmeared for the purpose in the courtyard. The ingredients required on the occasion are: -

1. Barley 2. Barley flour, 3. Ghee, 4. Flowers,
5. Rice (wet), '*ArJg*' 6. Milk, 7. Curd, 8 Saffron
9. Incense, 10. A piece of cloth on which the name '*Ram*'-'*Ram*' is printed, known as '*Ram-Ram PaTh*'
11. Sesame, 12. Honey, 13. *NA:rivan*, (a special red coloured raw thread) 14. An earthen saucer '*Tok*' for kindling the fire in it. 15. Faggots for kindling fire, 16. Earthen pots, one big and two small, '*Va:ri*', 17. Earthen saucers two '*TA:kyi*', 18. Small earthen lamps '*tsA:ngi*' ten Nos., 9. *Yagnopavita*, 20. Vermilion, 21. Cotton, 22. Slippers, 24 Thread, and 25. *Pawitra/Pawethlr*', (a ring made of *Kusha:* grass).

¹ Abul Fazal, the famous Historian narrates that during the medieval times the younger brother would perform the last rites of his elder brother. P.S., *Ayeen-i- Akbari*, Part III, P. 335.

In the meantime the dead body is taken out into the corridor for the last ritual bath. In case it is a lady then the ladies of the house handle the job. A new piece of cloth is tied as an under wear to him/her before bathing which is thrown away after the bath. Till then the priest and the person completing the '*Kriya KarIm*' of the dead complete the last rites of the dead. The dead body is bathed with the ritual water known as the '*Anti Snan/Shra:n*'. It comprises the sanctified water used for the 'last bath' while the priest makes recitations from the Holy Scriptures. After the bath the second new piece of cloth is used as the fresh under-wear of the dead. Then the nine outlets of the body, known as '*Nava dvar/da:r*' of a human body are closed with small round pieces of incense. The nine doors of the body thus closed are : - 1. Mouth, 2. Two eyes, 3. Two nostrils, 4. Two ears, and 5. Rectal and urinary outlets.

The priest writes the reverse "*Ga:yitri Mantra*" on the cloth meant to cover the head of the dead provided it is a male body. First of all the cloth, '*Ram Ram PaTh*' bearing the letters '*Ram-Ram*' is put on the dead so that the marked portion remains confined up to the chest of the dead. The inner long gown stitched on its two sides with two arms attached to it follows it. In case of a male, the old *Yagnyopavita* worn by the dead previously is taken out and a new one is put on him from the side of his feet and then kept in the left arm and the neck of the dead. The '*Anath*' of the dead is changed with a fresh one made of '*NA:rivan*', in case however, the dead wore it when alive. It is followed with the '*Pawitra*', (the '*Kusha:grass-ring*') which is put in his/her third finger. The slippers are covered from inside with cotton and put left one on the right foot and the right one on the left foot after rubbing a little honey to the feet-soles of the dead. Vermilion/ saffron mark is made next on the forehead of the dead and it is covered with the head mark. Here *NA:rivan* is tied to his right wrist if it is a male body and

to the left one in case of a female. When all these formalities are complete, the body is put on the bier and the people start decorating it with flowers¹. The things required to complete a few rites and formalities at the cremation ground, are put in a basket and the members of the family and others make arrangements for the dead body to be taken to the cremation ground. Three balls of barley flour (four in case the death has occurred during the days of '*Panchak*' commonly called, '*Drathl Pantsuk*'), are made and offered to various deities called the '*Shumshana Bhairav*' at different intervals/places, during the course of last journey of the dead to the cremation ground.

Meanwhile the bier is properly decorated with silver paper coated potatoes, flowers and *NA:rivan*. The potatoes are fixed at its sides. The upper portion of the bier is filled with mulberry branches arranged in a curved shape to make ribs of a canopy over it. The dead body is covered with the shroud dyed in saffron water. A shawl is thrown over the ribs of the bier so that it appears a decorated palanquin. All this decoration is done if the dead is an aged one otherwise not. The bier is commonly called the '*Arthi*:' and the decorated one for an aged person is called, '*Viman*' or '*Vye:man*'. All the relatives, friends and neighbours pay their reverence to the departed soul by performing the '*a:rthi*:' After finishing the '*a:rthi*' the elder/ son of the dead one is asked to place a lump of barley flour '*Pind*' or '*PyanD*', at the right side of the head of the dead and after girding his loins with a piece of cloth or a towel, he lifts the right corner of the

¹ In earlier times a carpenter was called to prepare a fresh bier for the dead. The bier thus prepared, was put to the flames along with the dead body. This system was very costly due to the high cost of timber. But now not only the bier but also the board of wood used for bathing the dead, is kept in various temples and societies in big cities and towns. No doubt the old system is still continuing in the far-flung villages where the people consider that the bier once used becomes impure and cannot be made use of again for a pious thing like carrying or bathing a dead body.

bier on his shoulder to give a start to the last journey of the dead. After just initiating the process he is replaced and given a pot containing sanctified water to spray it over the path on which the dead is taken to the cremation ground. The younger son or grandson of the dead or a close relative lifts the bier in his place. The person performing the last rites, '*Kriya Karīm*' and some of the close relatives of the dead, take the pot containing the Holy Fire and other items in a basket. These are required for the rites to be performed at the cremation ground. In this way the procession of mourners starts for the cremation ground also known as '*Ra:zbal*'. One of the younger ladies showers raw ground nuts toffees, sweetmeats and some small coins on the bier while it is lifted from the courtyard for the cremation ground.

2. DA:H SANSKAR - Cremation.

Cremation of the dead comes under the list of '*Sanskars*'. The other exercises connected with the death of a person can be categorised as 'rituals' while as the cremation has clearly been described as '*Da:h Sanskar*' in our scriptures¹. However, the cremation is not advised in case the dead is an infant and has not cut its teeth yet¹. All others are advised cremation. No doubt holding of certain rituals after the date of the cremation differ according to the age of the dead. The person performing the rituals of the dead is asked to gird his loins with a towel or with a piece of cloth. A clean towel is also put on his shoulders and he lifts the pot containing the Holy Fire on his shoulder and another son or any close relative takes the pot of water and sprays from it while the procession

¹ Burial is advised for such infants. P. S. Vijayshwar Panchang, Ed. O.N. Shastri, No: 380 P., 119

proceeds towards the cremation ground also called the '*A:vrē'ni*'. All other accessories are placed in a basket and taken along with for the completion of a few rituals at the cremation ground. The procession of mourners reaches the destination while chanting '*mantras*' from the Holy Scriptures. Now some societies connected with a few cremation grounds; provide transportation facilities for the dead and the mourners up to the cremation ground on usual transportation charges.

On the raised platform, called the '*Thakī PyAnD*' or 'the Last Resting Platform', built just near the cremation ground, the dead is kept for a while on it and the person performing the last rites is asked to have a last look of the dead known as '*Anti Darshan*', or '*Siryi Darshun*', i.e., to show the sun to the dead for the last time. Here the second lump of barley flour is placed on the bier on the right side of the dead. The dead is carried near the place where the pyre is to be raised for the dead¹. The place of the pyre is cleaned with water and clay properly. With the help of either barley flour or thread, the priest makes a rectangular shaped figure on the besmeared place. It is known as '*Indra Ja:l/Za:l*' or '*tsita-va:s*'. It is a big rectangular shaped figure made with the help of thread or rice/barley flour. It is further divided into five smaller rectangles of the same width, all with a cross-marked diagonals made within the bigger rectangle. These are known as '*Pancha Maha Pra:n*', namely, 1. *Pra:n*, 2. *Apa:n*, 3. *Vya:n*, 4. *Dhya:n*, and 5. *Maha: Pra:n*. The left over soaked barley flour and cooked rice and vegetables are kept at different corners and crosses of the said '*Indra Za:l*'. The priest performs certain rituals after making offerings to the Holy Fire brought all the way from the residence. The third lump of barley flour is kept on the bier. The

¹ In the villages the people and the relatives accompanying the dead prepare the pyre. But in big cities and towns, the societies have employed men for performing this duty. The man who prepares the pyre for the dead is called '*Ka:vuj*'.

remaining soaked barley is kept under the pyre along with a part of the cooked rice and vegetables, etc. The logs of wood are kept on it and the pyre is completed. The dead body is taken out from the bier and placed gently on the pyre. The bier is returned to the representative of the society from where it was brought. The person who makes the pyre removes the Shawl of the dead before it is laid on the pyre. Faggots wrapped with cotton and soaked in ghee are lit with the help of the Holy Fire that was lit earlier for completing the last rites of the dead. The man performing the last rites of the dead is asked to light the pyre starting from the head side of the dead. The other members of the family follow. As soon as the fire encircles the whole pyre, the person performing the last rites, is asked to take the earthen pitcher full of water sanctified by the priest on his shoulder and he is directed to spray a little water from it on the way while circumambulating the pyre three times and then he is asked to strike the pitcher against the axe/stone kept at the head side of the pyre so that the pitcher breaks into pieces. It is held that by doing so the person severs his worldly relations/affection with the dead and vice versa. The remaining cooked rice and vegetables are kept at a solitary corner for the '*Shumshan Bhagirava*'. People accompanying the dead body also make a round of the pyre and leave for the bathing place where all the persons take a bath¹ and all offer water to the dead along with a little seasmum, known as '*Tiludhak*'. They again return to the place of the pyre for the last look if every thing goes as desired. Here all make a circumambulation of the pyre three time and every time a piece of fire-wood is thrown into the pyre by each person and they are now ready to return to their homes. A small heap of grass is burnt outside the cremation ground, preferably on the roadside,

¹ According to the *Atharva Veda* (10-11-23) all those persons who accompany the dead body have the '*Ashouch*', a kind of mourning impurity till they take a bath and circumambulate the fire three times lit outside the cremation ground on their back home journey.

and all the people go round it three times and then leave for their respective homes. This process is called '*Tshaya Za:lni*'. In this way, it is presumed that the '*Ashouch*' or impurity of all the persons out side the '*Gotra*' of the dead person is removed. A few people accompany the person performing the last rites of the dead, up to his residence while others lave for their homes from here.

In the meantime the ladies of the house clean the corridor, where the dead had been bathed. The earthen lamp lit for the dead earlier, is placed in the corridor near the place where the dead was given the last bath. The lamp is covered by a wicker basket lest it should extinguish. The person performing the rituals is asked to enter the house and look under the lamp¹. He then puts off the lamp and proceeds towards the inner room where the dead had breathed his/her last. The persons accompanying the man performing the last rites line up outside the house at the main gate till his return from inside the house. A knitting needle called, '*Salai*' is kept on the main door on a small pestle-stone and the man removes it to one side and re-enters the house. Till then the daughters of the family/house prepare some tea etc. for all and it is after returning from the cremation ground that the members of the family including the householders and the relatives etc., can take any tea or breakfast as the case may be. The married ladies of the house including daughters-in-law are not allowed to prepare or cook any kind of food or tea on account of their impurity, *Ashouch* called the, '*Mritak*' that is observed for the first ten days from the date of the death of a person in a family. The daughters of the house/family (both married and unmarried) do all the kitchen work for the first ten days, as

¹ The purpose of looking under the lamp is to look for the signs, if any, cast near the lampshade. It is believed that the figure made under the shade of the lamp is to be the future incarnation of the dead.

they are considered free from this impurity. In case there is no such availability in the family, the relatives and the neighbours come to their help. All those who take any kind of cooked food that is prepared by a lady having such an impurity, get this 'Ashouch' for a period of ten days from the date of taking such food or a drink.

During the medieval times there were professionals for singing the death songs or dirges just like the 'Vanlvun', which we have on the occasions of marriages etc. These songs are called 'Va:n' and the professionals, generally ladies, were known as, 'Va:nre'ni'. The place where they sang the dirges on the death of a person was called 'Wadan Va:n'. They were considered as important on the death of a person as are considered the ladies who perform the 'Vanlvun' at a marriage ceremony¹ The singing of 'Va:ns' or dirges on the death of a person was prevalent in almost all the civilizations of the world in one way or the other². The early man must have felt sad at the demise of his/her parents. He and his family must have lamented and wept on such occasions but with the passage of time, the feudalistic order developed and the affluent families entrusted this task of weeping and wailing to the professionals to make the occasion more showy. In the long run it developed into a custom and a means of living for some families. This custom has disappeared from our society now in such a manner that there are neither any such 'Va:nreni' in our society nor does any one require the services of such persons on the death of his near and dear ones.

Presently, the place/house where the mourning is held, is known as 'Maran Van.' The word 'Va:n' means a shop or a place for holding a certain function and 'Maran' means, 'death.' The practice of assembling of near and dear relatives, friends and neighbours on such occasions has been in vogue in almost all the civilizations of the world.

There are a number of references in the *Rgveda* where the journey of a soul on its way to the heavenly abode has been described in detail. These references tell how 'Yama', the god of Death allows a pious soul to take rest at a solitary and a beautiful place¹. There are a number of references in the '*Paraskara Grahisutra*' that tell us how to lessen the sorrow of the family that has lost a close kin by talking about the qualities of the departed one². All this was a means to divert the attention of the members of the bereaved family from the human loss suffered by it.

There are similar references of wailing and lamenting in the great Epics like the '*Mahabharata*' and the '*Ramayana*'. *Kalidasa* has given a vivid description of the lamentation of 'Rati', the spouse of 'Kama Deva', on her husband's death at the hands of 'Shiva'³. While lamenting on the death of *Kama Deva*, *Rati* narrates the qualities, which he possessed. *Bhana Bhatta*, the great Sanskrit dramatist has narrated in his famous composition, '*Harsha Charita*' that *Harsha's* sister *Rajshree* sang the '*Ruditaka*'. song on the death of her husband⁴. There is a reference to the expression of grief in the Love Lyrics of the medieval times⁵ *Abul Fazal* has narrated in *Ayeen-i-Akhbari* that there was the precedence of recitation from the

¹ *Rgveda*, (a) 10. 14. 9. and (b) 17. 14. 7.

² Panday, Raj Bali, *Hindu Sanskar*, Varanasi, 1960, p. 323

³ Upadhyaya, Krishen Dev, *Lok Sahitya Ki Bhoomika*, p. 571

⁴ *Raghuvamsha* by *Kalidasa*, 8. 67.

⁵ Upadhyaya, Krishen Dev, *Loka Sahitya Ki Bhoomika*, p. 581

⁶ Roopenra 'Bramer'. *Hindi Sahitya Main Bhakti Tatva*, Allahabad, 1965, p. 219

¹ Solomon, Y. N., *Russian Folk Lore*, Trans. By Smith Macmillan and Co., New York, 1965. P 225

² *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Ed. By J. Hastings, (4th Imp.) New York, vol., IV, P. 416

Holy Scriptures, narration of stories containing heroic deeds of our ancestors during the days of mourning on the demise of a person in a family¹

The lamentation depends on the customs of a particular caste or creed and the age factor of the deceased. If the deceased is a young person, the less will be the 'show' though the religious rites and rituals are of the same order for one and all as there is not any caste difference among the Kashmiri Pandits. In case the dead is of an advanced age, a special kind of wailing known as 'Ba:kh' is arranged. The children (both, sons and daughters) of the deceased rise up early in the morning next day, when it is still dark and utter the following dirges in case the dead is their mother: -

Do>n dohan hlnzi gari dramltshi MA:ji;

Bo>chi ma: Laji: MA:ji;

Tre'sh ma: lji: MA:ji;

So>rgas manz ja:y A:sinay MA:ji:

Translation:

Oh; mother you have left the house two days ago,

Don't you feel any hunger, Oh Mother?

Don't you feel any thirst, Oh Mother?

Let you be in the Heavens, Oh Mother.

The word, 'Babo' meaning 'fatherly,' is used instead of 'MA:ji:', 'mother', in case the deceased is an elderly male person or father, and the reference to the number of days in the dirges is increased as the days pass. In addition, recitation from scriptures is arranged in the evening on all the ten days of mourning in which, all the members of the family, close relatives and neighbours take part. Some very religious minded families arrange the 'Do>hl Krayi' - day-to-day rituals for the smooth heavenly journey of the deceased. In this case the person performing this daily ritual, has to prepare food in a small and freshly

cleaned pot, using fresh water. It is cooked in a separate corner of a room, well besmeared with clay and water and on a separate stove not used in the general kitchen. The person has himself to remain very pure in body and mind during all the days of these rituals. Besides, there should not be any gap in the continuity of this ritual. The rice thus cooked is to be spread on a plate so that the birds eat it early in the morning. In this way it is believed that the food thus served reaches the deceased directly and his/her appetite is subsided. Some people continue this ritual up to the six-monthly *Shra:dha* of the deceased while others continue to do so even for the whole year. The person performing these rituals has to keep an earthen lamp burning for the first ten days during which period it should not get extinguished for any reasons. Its extinction is considered to be a bad omen for the whole family and it is believed that in that case another member of the family might pass away very soon.

The custom of weeping and wailing has been in practice in the valley of Kashmir from the very ancient times.¹ Two types of expressions are commonly found in these lamentations. The qualities of the deceased are counted and the difficulties that the family may face in his absence are listed in the said wailings. The wailing may contain that the deceased was a pious, honest, truth loving and a straightforward man. Thus the deceased is given a very high status of 'Brahma' and other great *Rishis*. Only the virtues of the deceased are highlighted and no mention of any acts of his/her sinful life is made. No doubt such a practice is prevalent in some of the parts of the world as we see in the dirges of Scotland². An example of our dirges is given under: -

¹ Lawrence, Walter R., *The Valley of Kashmir*, London, 1894) P. 262.

² (a) Upadhyaya, Krishen Dev, *Lok Sahitya Ki Bhoomika*, P. 62. (b) Solov, Y.M., *Russian Folk Lore*, Trans. By Smith Macmillan and Co., New York, 1956, P. 229.

¹ *Ayeen-i-Akbari* by Abul Fazal, Trans. By Sarkar and Jarrett (Supdt. Govt. Printing, Calcutta) 1948, Vol. III. P. 354

*Yi: tse' vontho ti: a:m jama:h,
Brahma¹ juvlni' Ka:ko, TApi:sho>r Ka:ko
Mani:shwor Ka:ko, Yu:gi:shwor Ka:ko,
Ahanbi: Po>z Chakh vana:n tai.*

Translation:

It happened so as you said it, Oh! Father of *Brahma Ji* (here the name of the younger brother or the son),
Oh! Elderly person, you did much penance,
Oh! You were chief among the ascetics,
Oh! You, were a person of real piety,
Oh! You are telling the truth, (asserts the elderly lady),
Oh! Chief of the ladies you are telling the truth. The daughters and the daughters-in-law sing all virtues of the deceased that he may never have had. Some of the lines for one of the deceased who had been idling all through his life are quoted as under: -

*Ka:k gov Barzul ba:gandar
No>shi ko<ri anyan kya:h so>ndar,
Lari ja:yhi lazan kya:h so>ndar,
Vi:da pArinay kya:h so>ndar,
Waqta:h guzornay kya:h so>ndar
Yu:ga:h so>runay kyah so>ndar,
Ahanbi: po>z chakh vana: tai.*

Translation:

Ka:kh, the elderly person, went into the garden situated at *Barzula*

He got constructed houses and dwellings so beautiful;
He brought daughters and daughters-in-law so beautiful,
How beautifully he recited from the *Vedas*?
How handsomely he spent all his time?
How majestically he practiced the ascetics?
Yes, you are telling the truth (comes the reply).

There are some instances where the others refute such baseless virtues of the deceased. There is a description about a peasant who had been idling all his

life and the dirges on his death goes as under: -

*Da:nd wa:ynas laglyo Ka:ko,
Nye'ndI karnas laglyo Ka:ko,
Ahanbi swa A:sIs shu:byl*

Translation:

Oh! father, how dedicatedly you ploughed the land?
Oh! respected one, how intently you weeded the land?
(The other lady mocks)

Yes, yes, he had all these qualities, (he had none).

There are other types of wailings, which move the hearts of the listeners. These are philosophical in nature and carry more meaning than the words are supposed to imply. A few examples are as under: -

*Dam dith ko>rtham damIkuy shabdah,
Bram dith tsalimIti Ka:ko,
Path kun kharIchmlti bronh kun trA:vimIti,
Bram dith tsalimati Ka:ko.*

Translation:

Resting for a while you made a permanent resting sound for ever,

Oh father; you left, keeping all of us in confusion.

What you had, you have already spent and what you have left is for us to spend?

Oh elder one; you left all of us in a dilemma.

It may be recalled that the people of Kashmir have a belief that the dead must bless all including the members of the family and even the people who live in the neighbour-hood. The living people respect the dead lest it should put a curse on the house inmates including those in the neighbour-hood. It is because of this very fact that when the dead body is taken out for cremation the mourners recite: -

*Babas mAngiv A:hiya Ahlas mAhlAs A:hiya,
Yath mAjilisi tI sa:ri'nly pu:shin A:hi:ya.*

Translation:

Make a submission to the father to bestow on all of us, his blessings,

¹ Here the name of the younger brother or of the son is also included.

The whole neighbour-hood and the surroundings should have his blessings.

This gathering and all of us should have ever lasting blessings from him.

In this way the mourning of the first day comes to an end. The youngsters put the house in order and the rooms are kept open and clean so as to receive the mourners and other relatives who start pouring in from the next day when they hear or are informed about the sad demise.

3. *Astriki Tulni* - Collection of the Ashes.

On the third or fourth day of cremation, if it is an auspicious horary moment and day, the mortal remains of the dead are collected in a small pitcher. Though nearly all the bones are burnt in the fire but still some hard ones survive. One such is the atlas bone, called the '*Po>rush*'. This one and all the other left over pieces of the bones are collected carefully and the remaining ashes are collected in a bag to be immersed in a river after spraying all the ashes with milk. The place of cremation is cleanly besmeared and then again sprayed with milk. Dry fruit like almonds, sweetmeats, raw groundnuts, toffees and some coins are spread over it. Incense sticks are burnt at the place and obeisance is paid before leaving the place by showering flowers on it.

Our scriptures clearly direct that the mortal remains of a person should be immersed at a confluence of two or more rivers, known as '*Sangam*' or '*Prayag*', within ten days of the cremation of a person. But in case it is not possible to do so within this period, these should be immersed in the waters of the *Ganga* within one year on an auspicious horary moment and day. Generally the people of Kashmir immersed the mortal remains of their ancestors at *Shadipur*, commonly known as '*ShA:dipo<r*',

a place about thirty km. away from *Srinagar* and at the confluence of the rivers *Jehlim* and *Sindh*. Its earliest name was '*Sha:radha: Puram*', and it has been a place of great pilgrimage from the times immemorial as is mentioned in the *Vitasta: Maha:tamyā* and the *Nilamata Purana*¹. Now due to the exodus of the Hindus from the valley, the people immerse the mortal remains of their dead in the local rivers out side the valley.

After leaving the cremation ground, the person carrying the mortal remains, proceeds to the place of immersion where a special '*Shra:dha*' ceremony for the dead is held and the mortal remains are immersed into the river. These rites are performed at the bank of a river or a lake. It may be pointed out that carrying of the mortal remains into the house is strictly forbidden after these are collected from the cremation ground. In case, however, it is not possible to perform this ritual on the scheduled date, a hole is made on the left side of the main gate-wall of the house, called '*A:riv*' and the box or the pot containing the remains of the dead is kept in that hole and then plastered so that it remains safe. On some future date, the container is taken out of the hole on an auspicious horary moment and day and the ritual is performed either at *Haridwar* or at a place of pilgrimage meant for the purpose and as contained in the scriptures. It may be pointed out that before the partition of the sub-continent the people of Kashmir used to immerse the remains of their fore-fathers in the '*Ganglbal*' lake on their annual pilgrimage to the '*Harl MukuTa Ganga*:' on the eighth day of the bright fortnight of *Bhadrapada*, (August/Sept.), also known as '*Ganga Ashtami*'. A pilgrimage was held every year on this date before the partition of the country. It falls on the other side of the Line of Control and forms a part of present Pak Occupied Kashmir. Besides, *Haridwar*, the Kashmiri Pandits

¹ *Rajatarangini*, by Kalahana, Trans. Stein, M.A., 1979, Vol. II Ps. 329-38.

immerse the mortal remains of their dead either at Akhnoor or at Purmandal in the Jammu Province after their exodus from the valley of Kashmir.

4. *DAhim Do>h* - The Tenth Day Rites and Rituals.

On the tenth day of the death of a person, a ritual called, '*DAhim Do>h*' is performed necessarily at the bank of a river, stream or a pond. The scriptures stress the observance of this day for all young and old and for both men and women¹. Our scriptures have named it as the '*Uddak Kriya*' meaning the 'water ritual'². On this date all the required articles like, milk, curd, honey, fruits, barley flour, rice, sugar, sesame, cotton, oil, a number of earthen ware, a barber's towel, a glass tumbler, cheese, bedding, umbrella, a stick, some clothes of the dead for the '*Achari*'³, a stove and a few utensils for cooking rice for making the balls of cooked rice, are taken to the river/pond bank. Two pieces of cloth, one red and the other white, a little wool, flowers and a small mulberry stick, is required while performing the rituals. The person performing the ritual, besides clean shaving his hair and the beard has to change his clothes and take a bath at the riverbank. As such, he should have a new set of clothes to change⁴. First of all the person performing the '*Kriya*' is asked to immerse the rice balls and offer water to the dead. Offering of the barley flour lumps follows it. This

ritual is performed with the help of the '*Achari/A:tsA:ri*'. Two earthen pots, one depicting the dead person and the other as the Messenger of Death, called '*Yam! DI:t*' are filled with cooked rice, wet barley flour, all kinds of fruit, some pieces of radish, sesame, milk, curd, a little ghee, flowers and honey. Both the pots are then covered with a lid and with the white and red cloth and tied with a garland of flowers alongwith with a small mulberry stick called the, '*DanDam*'. Here the '*Achari*' is served a cup of hot milk and is given some gratification in cash. The person performing the ritual determines all the articles brought for the '*Achari*' by spraying a few drops of water while the priest makes certain recitations. The performer is next shaves his hair. After taking a bath the person lifts the pots covered with cloth one by one on his left shoulder and throw them on a stone on the bank of the river in such a way so that both the pots break into pieces, and all their contents are washed away. Thus by doing so, it is presumed, that the dead severs all his connections with the material world. The person performing the '*Kriya*' takes a dip after both these rituals and wears a new set of clothes. The priest makes a saffron mark on his forehead and burns a few seeds of sesame in the fire kindled for the purpose.

It has been a general practice among the Kashmir Hindus that almost all the male relatives, friends, neighbours, show their presence at the river on this day whereas the ladies folk call at the residence of the mourners. After completing the ritual, all those who are present on the occasion, line up in two rows at the bank of the river. At the end of the row is kept an iron needle on a stone pestle. After walking between the two rows of the people, the person puts aside the needle with his left foot and proceeds towards his home followed by all those who are either very close relatives of the person or reside in his

¹ P.S. *Vijayshwar Panchang*, Ed. Shastri, O.N. No: 380, P.119. However, this ritual is not held if the dead has not yet dropped its milk teeth.

² Bhat, Keshav Handoo, *Karam Kanday*, Pratap Press, Srinagar, 1920, P. 49.

³ It is the professional name for the person who receives all the articles of the dead after these are determined by the person performing the ritual. He also helps in performing some of the rituals here. He is commonly known as '*Pa.nyo>ch*' in Kashmiri language.

⁴ Till recently the in-laws brought such clothes for their son-in-law for this change in case the person performing the ritual was married. This practice is no more in vogue now.

neighbour-hood¹. On reaching home the person enters the house up to the spot where the dead was put at the time of death and then again shows his presence at the gate. The neighbours retire to their homes whereas other members of the family and some near relatives enter into the house. The last function to be performed on this day is the 'Nu:nl Shra:dh' to be performed by an unmarried daughter/grand daughters of the deceased (either from the son's or daughter's side). In the scriptures it is called, 'Lavan Shra:dh'². As the lumps on this occasion are made out of salt, which are offered to a cow after being duly determined by the priest. Sweet rice-milk pudding, 'Khir' is served to small children on this occasion.

5. KAhim Do>h -

Eleventh Day Rites and Rituals.

This is one of the most important rites on the death of a person in a family. The family members have already taken a bath and washed their clothes except the elderly ladies who continue with the observance of the mourning for some days more according to the ladies 'Dharma Shastra' which has no scriptural evidence or authority but the concurrence of the precedence and tradition. There are no such demarcations made by our Holy Scriptures and these contain equal codes of conduct for men and women mourners, both old and young.³ The priest of the family attends the house early in the morning and serves a few drops of 'Panchagavya' to all the members of the family excepting those who have neither taken a bath nor changed yet. The ladies of the house are happy on this day

¹ Some people perform this rite at the residence of the person performing the rites, which is more desirable as for our scriptures are concerned.

² Some people perform this rite at the riverbank, which is not desirable according to the scriptures.

³ The scriptures contain that no eleventh or the twelfth day rites should be performed in case the dead (of what ever age he might be) is without being invested with Yagnyopavita. P. S. Vijayshwar Panchang, Ed. O.N. Shastri. No: 380 P., 119

because it is after more than ten days that they are allowed to look after their kitchen. It is believed that after taking the 'Panchagavya' the impurity on account of the death, called the 'Mritak' (Maran Hontsh) is cleared off.

On this date the 'Shra:dh' ceremony of the deceased is performed collectively by the son/s. The married daughters of the dead also participate in the rituals, called 'Karlm Karun'. As such they invite their own priest/s for the said purpose. The host invites some local 'Brahmins' to participate in the function in addition to his own priest. The scriptures call it a collective rite known as, 'Ekodishti', the 'Eleventh Shra:dh' ceremony performed for the deceased. In reality, all the rituals for full one year are completed for the dead on this date as contained in the scriptures. The rituals performed after the expiry of the fortnights, monthlies and six-monthlies, etc., are just an extension of this rituals performed in respect of the dead on the eleventh day. The main rituals on the occasion are: -

1. Kalshi Puza: - Reverence to the gods,
2. Pratima Puza: - Reverence to Lord Vishnu,
3. Goav Da:n - Venerating a cow, and
4. Shra:dh - Obeisance to the departed.

According to our Holy Scriptures the day of the heavens above, is equal to twelve days on this planet. On the eleventh day of the departed one, it is considered that he has reached close to the 'Vishnu Loka', the abode of eternal peace. Hence the deity is adored in the form of a 'Pratima', a small image of Lord Vishnu. Besides performing the 'Pind da:n' and other rites, it is believed that the departed one has to cross a stream known as the 'Vaiterni Nadi' The scriptures further contain that the departed one can cross the stream by catching the tail of a cow, because the tail of a cow is considered to be most pious¹. Here the ritual is observed symbolically. The

¹ This narration is contained in the 'Shiv Purana'.

invited priests and other guests are treated well on this ritual.

6. *BAhim Do>h* -

The Rites and Rituals of the twelfth day.

It is the concluding rite performed on the first fortnight of the death of a person. It is presumed that the soul of the departed meets his forefathers in Heavens on this day as he completes one full day of the upper worlds on this day. It is because of this very fact that the rite known as, 'PyenDI Millwan' or 'Sapindi Karan' i.e. the obsequious rite of uniting the dead with the manes is a part of the rituals held on this day. The person performing the ritual connects the departed soul with his ancestors by uniting the balls of cooked rice etc., as contained in the scriptures.

The dates and timings for performing certain other connected rites in respect of the departed one are decided on this date provided it is an auspicious day. These include: -

1. The recitations for the daily offering of water (*Pitri Rin*), known as '*Ko>mb Dyun*'¹. The priest explains to the concerned person the performance and the *Mantra* to be recited along with the day and date of the lunar month for offering water and the other ingredients² to the departed one for one year.

2 Installation of wooden stand at an appropriate place on the outer wall of the house and accessible to the

¹ It is a small toy pot made of copper used for offering water to the departed one. Offering of water with the pot, known as '*Ko>mb Dyun*' has a special significance according to the scriptures. This ritual is performed by the kin on the day of the deceased for a period of one year before his breakfast and on the eve of the Anniversary of the dead, the pot is resolved.

² The other ingredients for offerings are a few seeds of seasmum and a straw of *Darbha*, known as '*Ve'shThur*'.

birds, for keeping food and other eatables in the name of the departed one for a period of at least one year.

3. A list of auspicious days for presuming various activities of daily routine in the house and outside as these were restrained during the days of mourning.

4 To make a list of the dates and the days for performing the fortnightlies, monthlies, six-monthly and the annual *Shra:dh* of the dead.

7. *Chalun* - Bathing and Washing

The younger people of the bereaved family take a bath and wash their clothes on an auspicious day on the fifth or the sixth day of mourning. These include younger daughters and the daughters-in-law of the family and their children as well. The elder male members of the family take a bath and change on the tenth day. The scriptures clearly indicate that the person/s who are to perform the '*Kriya: KarIm*', 'the religious rites' of the deceased including the daughters, should be neat and clean on the day of the '*Kriya*;' i.e. the tenth day. A person, who does not take a bath or change his/her dress till the tenth day, is not entitled to perform any ritual or religious rite on the proceeding day/s. The family members, other than those who perform the tenth day rites, are advised to do so on any auspicious day except on, Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday. But the old ladies of the house generally adhere to the old traditions and customs and prefer to remain away from any such rituals. On the thirteenth or fourteenth auspicious day they take a bath during the night and wash their clothes etc., before it is early morning. In case the deceased has died at a ripe age of eighty or more, a feasting is held on that day and the relatives and all neighbours are invited to take part in that feasting. The day being an auspicious one, the female members of the family step out of the house on this very

day so that they are at liberty to visit any place whenever the need arises on a future date. In this way all the rites that follow immediately after the death of a person come to an end, though the fortnightly, monthly, six-monthly and the yearly rituals continue on the specified dates, called 'Tithi' according to the lunar calendar.

8. Pachhi Wa:rI - Fortnightly Rites.

Almost the whole of the first fortnight of the mourning passes with the final ritual 'Chalun'. The first fortnightly ritual is held on completion of one month from the date of expiry on the same lunar date, 'Tithi'. While deciding the date of the ritual the 'Madhyahn' is kept in view. It is a pure Sanskrit word meaning 'meridian,' local 'noon time' or 'mid-day'. The calculations are made on the basis of the period of the sun staying for a particular day in a specific 'Nakshetra', and the half of this period is called 'Madhyahn'. If it falls past sunrise, the ritual is held on the same date and if it falls prior to that then it is held one day earlier. In each case a simple 'Shra:dh', is performed either on the date of the 'Tithi' or a day earlier, called 'Ma:swa:r'. According to the scriptures the first such fortnightly is held at the expiry of one lunar month and such fortnightly performances also known as fortnightly Shra:dhs continue from this very date for a period of three months totaling five fortnightlies in total excluding the rituals held up to the first eleventh day of mourning. On the fifth such fortnightly, it is said that the fortnightly rituals have cumulated, 'Ma:swa:rI Samni'; and, from this date onwards, the rituals are held every month on the 'Tithi' of the death. During all these occasions a rite in the form of a 'Shra:dh' is held and fast is observed by all those who take part in these rites.

9. Ma:swa:r - Monthly Rites.

After the expiry of three months these rites are performed on month-to-month basis. The rites observed, are the same as are performed in respect of 'Pachiwa:rI'. The 'Shra:dh' is performed and fast held as usual by all those who take part in the Shra:dh rites on such occasions.

10. ShaDmo<s - Six Monthly Rites.

This consists of two rites, 'ShaDmo<s', six monthly and 'Ma:swa:r'. In case the "Ma:swa:r", comes a day earlier than the scheduled 'Tithi' of the death, the Six monthly 'ShaDmo<s' too is held a day earlier. One thing is to be kept in view that the 'ShaDmo<s' is followed by the 'Ma:swa:r'. On this date the rites for six months are held including all those monthly or fortnightly rites, which could not be performed due to one reason or the other on the schedule dates. It may be pointed out that the 'ShaDmo<s' of a dead person cannot be completed in case there has been the birth of a baby in that family and whose 'Jatkarn/ Namkarn' has not yet been performed till then: Besides, the six monthly rites can not be performed by the son/s, performing the 'Kriya' of the deceased in case he/they have not been sanctified by performing his/their 'Yagnyopavita' Sanakar. The ShaDmo<s rites in such cases is performed only after performing the 'Yagnyopavita'¹. It may be recalled that though he/they or any of their representative may have completed the rites of the dead till then but this particular rite can not be performed unless the 'Yagnyopavita' is cast to the real

¹ This type of Yagnyopavita ceremony is called, 'Wath PeTh Yoni,' and is cast to complete the Shadmo<s and other rites of the departed one. It is held just to include the person/s performing the rites into the clan or Gotra and is held in a simple form without any celebrations or show.

successors. 'Shra:dh' is performed and fasting is held on both the days of *ShaDmo<s* and *Ma:swa:r* that follow one another and while performing this ritual the married daughters and their priests also take part.

II. *Ti:L* - Ritual of offering lamps.

It is thought that there is a vacuum in the upper space where neither the light of the sun nor of the moon reach.¹ In order to illuminate that portion of the path for the departed one, the rituals of offering lamps and oil is held prior to or immediately after '*ShaDmo<s*' so as to brighten and illuminate its path and to make his journey to the other worlds more smooth. There are instances of celebrating it along with the rites of the twelfth day or on one of the monthly rites provided it is an auspicious day of the week, preferably a Monday, a Wednesday or a Friday.

According to the scriptures this area of darkness is under the charge of a demon/virago called as '*Chandika*' and in order to please her she is served with bread and fried fish besides performing the usual *Shra: dh*'.² The people who are completely vegetarian prepares porridge of coarse ground flour and pancakes of wheat flour as an offering to the '*Chandika*.' Last of all a red turnip is venerated and placed on these offerings. After completing the '*Shra:dh*' of the dead, the function comes to an end. It may be pointed out that till recently porridge and pancakes were distributed among relatives and the neighbours as an oblation. But due to the fact that the

oblation is connected with the sad incident of mourning, the practice stands discarded and is no more in vogue now.

12. *WAharWA:r* - Anniversary Rituals and rites at the end of one year

After the expiry of one lunar year (twelve months of earth, which is considered as equal to one month of heavenly bodies,) the rite of '*WAharWA:r*' or '*Varshiki*', is held. As already discussed under the heading '*ShaDmo<s*', the '*Ma:swa:r*' of the diseased is held one day prior to the date of the '*WAharWA:r*'. The rituals on the date combine some of the rites performed on the 'Eleventh' and the 'Twelfth' day rites of the deceased put together. A collective '*Shra:dh*' is performed by the son/s and married daughter/s of the deceased. One who performs the rites connected with the departed one for the whole year and offers water to the dead with the small copper pot, called '*KombI GaDI/GADvI*' resolves it to the priest with suitable gratifications. All the priests including those of the daughters who perform the '*KarIm*' of the diseased and the guests etc., invited on the occasion, are treated well and thus the rituals and rites, extended over a period of one year, from the date of the death of a person, come to an end.

13. *Shra:dh* - The Death Anniversary.

The word, '*Shra:dh*' is derived from the Sanskrit word '*Shra:dh*' - whatever is offered to the manes with devotion, is called '*Shra:dh*'.¹ On the expiry of one complete lunar year and after the completion of the

¹ Bhatt, Keshav Haradoo, *Karma Kandey*, Pratap Steem Press, Srinagar, 1920, P. 98.

² Jyotshi, Pandit Keshav Bhat, Rainawari, Srinagar, *Karma Kandey*, Pt.II. 1933, P. 221.

¹ *Yagyavalkya Smriti*. By Maharshi Vyas, , p.s.Vijayashwar Panchang, Ed. by Shastri, O.N., year 5080, P.122.

'Anniversary', the '*Shra:dh*' of the dead is held on year to year basis and on the fixed lunar date of the month. In case, however, the Lunar Mansion', '*Nakshetra*', of the said date shrinks for less than the 'Mid day', called '*Deva Dev*', the ritual is held a day earlier. On this date all the members of the family assemble and keep a fast for the day and eat only after performing the '*Shra:dh*' of the deceased.

14. *TirthI Shra:dh*- Rites at the Place of Pilgrimage

On completion of the annual rituals and rites, '*WAharwA:r*', of the dead, the person performing such rites, looks for an auspicious day and feasibility of lunar mansions, so that he can perform the '*Shra:dh*' of the departed one at a place of pilgrimage meant for such rites, called '*TirthI Shra:dh*'. It may be pointed out that the annual '*Shra:dh*' after performing the 'Anniversary' of a dead is not advised to be performed in the residential house unless it is held at a place of pilgrimage. Among a number of places for performing such rites, the following pilgrimage spots invite a special mention :-

1. *Vijay Saftami*' held at *Martand Tirtha* or *Mattan*, in Anantnag district. It is a horal moment occurring on some selected Sundays falling on the seventh day of either bright or dark fortnights of the months of *Jeshtha* or *Ashada*. (second/third month of the *Vikram* era). Besides the other lunar feasibilities connected with this specific horal moment are also taken into consideration while pronouncing its occurrence.
2. *Ganga Ashtami*', eighth day of the bright fortnight of *Bhadrapada* (the fifth month of *Vikram* era), held at *Ganglbal*, *Handwara*, Kashmir.

3. *Shra:wani Ba:h*, twelfth day of the bright fortnight of the month of *Sawan*, (the fourth month of the *Vikram* era) held at *Shopian*, district *Pulwama*, Kashmir.
4. *Surya Thirtha* at '*Zyawan*', *Pampore*, District, *Pulwama*, Kashmir, held on the eve of a solar eclipse.

In fact there are as many '*Tirthas*', places of pilgrimage for holding the '*TirthI Shra:dh*' of the manes, as is the number of springs and rivulets in Kashmir, for each is dedicated to one or the other god or goddess and a few among these are dedicated to the manes. This type of the ritual is also held at *Hiridwar*, *Prayag*, (*Banaras*), and *Puruhandal*, *Jammu*.

15. *Dwa:dashi* - Performance of *Ba:h*

The scriptures contain the performance of '*Dwa:dashi*', as an act of holding of all the rites of meeting of the 'Mortals and the Manes'. The rites and ceremonies extended over a period of one year from the date of the death of a person up to his/her Anniversary are held in a single leap-year month, generally called 'the *Bhanumas*' in our scriptures that allow performing ones death rituals prior to the occurrence of the physical death during this period. Now that the twelve months of our planet, earth are considered as equal to twelve days of the Heavens, a man, who is desirous of completing all his death rites prior to his/her physical death, has to perform special rites and rituals according to the scriptures and he/she is advised to hold such rites at a '*Surya Tirtha*', preferably during the month of '*Bhanumas*', the additional solar month.

According to the *Martand Mahatmya*, *Aditi*, the wife of *Kashyap* gave birth to a life-less egg '*Mritand*' as her thirteenth child. It was due to the penance of *Kashyap* that 'Sun' was born out of this life-less egg,

'*Mritand*' and made his abode at "*Martand*".¹ According to one more theory, there are twelve '*Suryas*' for the twelve zodiac signs and out of these the eighth one is named as '*Martand*'.² It is after every three lunar years that there is an addition of one lunar month to the calendar to synchronize it with the solar calendar and this additional month is known as '*Bhanumas*' or '*Adhik Mas*'. It is due to all these facts that the '*Surya Tirtija*' at *Martand*,' Kashmir, has been a place of great pilgrimage for such rites since ancient times. It may be pointed out that there are the following four famous *Surya* temples and prominent centers of pilgrimage in the sub-continent since ancient times :-

1. Multan, 2. Modhera, 3. Konark, and 4. Martand³

The performance of these rites involve an austerity and these include all the rites from death of a person up to the last and the final rite known as the '*Varshiki*'. These extend over a period of nearly one month of '*Bhanumas*' and include the following rites that could be performed for both the manes and the living.

1. The rites of the first thirteen days (including *Chalun*),
2. Five fortnightly rites (*Pachiwa:ri*),
3. Six monthly rites (*Ma:swa:ri*),
4. Six monthly (*Shadmo:s*),
5. Offering of the oil/ lamps (*Ti:l*),
6. The Annual *Shra:dh*, and the final ritual of *Dwa:dashi*, (*Ba:h*)

The rites and rituals performed on the death of a person in a family, as discussed above, require the following items for performing such rites. These also include some items determined and donated to the

deserved and for making oblation to the holy fire: -

1. Dry fruits like coconut, almonds, dates, sugar, Apricots, lotus seeds, (dry), Sugar candy, etc.
2. Incense,
3. Cotton,
4. Saffron
5. Camphor.
6. Walnuts,
7. All Spices,
8. Cloth
9. Rice,
10. Sleepers,
11. Fire pot,
12. Stick (in case of aged),
13. A piece of matting (*Dari*)
14. An Umbrella,
15. Salt,
16. All cereals,
17. Ghee,
18. Barley,
19. Thread,
20. Needle,
21. Knife,
22. mirror,
23. comb,
24. A shaving set (in case of a male)
25. Hair pins, bangles etc. (in case of a female)
26. A Plate (*Tha:l*), Tumbler, pot and a bowl./cup
28. Sesame,
29. Fruits,
30. All vegetable,
31. Oil/lamp, or a torch,
31. Milk, curd,
32. Firewood.
33. Flour of Rice, Barley and Chest-nuts.
34. Flowers
35. *Ganga: Jal.*, and fire-wood for '*Hawan*' etc.

16. *Da:n PratihTha: -* The Items for Donation/resolving.

Our scriptures give a list of articles which are to be determined to the deserving from time to time on various occasions of the rites and rituals held on the death of a person¹. A list of such articles to be resolved on such occasions is given as under: -

1. On the. 10th, 11th, and 12th Salt, Bucket or a pitcher days *Shra:dh*. Full of water, utensils,
2. First Month's. " Food grains.
3. Third Fortnightly " Cloth.
4. Second month's " Perfumes, etc.
5. Fifth fortnightly " An Umbrella.
6. *Ma:swa:r* of 3rd month, Wheat flour and other eatables.
7. *Ma:swa:rof* fourth month, " Salt.
8. " Fifth " Gov Da.n.

¹ Kalhana, *Rajatarangini*, Trans. By M.A. Stein Vol. I year, 1979 V 92

² *Rajatarangini* of Jonaraja, Trans. By Singh Dr. Raghunath, 1972, p.533.

³ Bamzai, P.N. K., *History of Kashmir*, 1962, P. 199

¹ Jyotshi, Pandit Keshav Bhatt, *Karam Kanndi*, Vol. II, 1933, P. 294 - 301.

9. Six-monthly (*Shadmo<s*) Utensils, a metal boat made of gold or silver and an umbrella.

10. *Ma:swar* of Sixth month, Cereals.

11. " Seventh. " Sugar, Vegetables,

12. " Eighth " Kitchen utensils

13. " Ninth " A bed-sheet.

14. " Tenth " A fire-pot.

15. " Eleventh " A golden parasol.

16. " Twelfth " A fan

17. *Ti:l* -- Four, Grains, Rice, Oil, Table Lamp Woolens, etc.

18. Anniversary (*WAharWA*) ,, Utensils, cloth, grains, etc.

19 *TirthI Shra:d* ,, Curd, rice and cloth, etc.

(*Including additional lunar month, known as *Masadhik* or *Bhanuma:s*, making the total monthly rites, etc, for one year to seventeen excluding '*Ti:l*' and the Anniversary.)

Chapter Eleven

Auspicious days of the year.

The lunar calendar comprises of 360 days and various checks, additions and alterations are made in it from time to time so as to adjust it with the solar calendar or the *Vikram* era, as it is generally called. It further coincides with the English calendar with the result that the first *Baisakh* falls generally on the 13th /14th of April every year. The first five months, from *Vaishakha* to *Bhadrapada*, are counted at 31 days each and the remaining seven months from *Ashvin* to *Chaitra* are calculated at 30 days each. The twelve months of the year are named as under: -

S.No.	<u>Kashmiri</u>	<u>Sanskrit</u>	<u>Bikarmi</u>
1.	<i>Vahyakh</i>	(<i>Vaishakha</i>)	<i>Baisakh</i> .
2.	<i>Ze Th</i>	(<i>Je'shta</i>)	<i>Jayth</i>
3.	<i>Ha:r</i>	(<i>Ashada</i>)	<i>Ashad</i>
4.	<i>Shra:vun</i>	(<i>Shravana</i>)	<i>Savan</i>
5.	<i>BA:dri'pyeth</i>	(<i>Bhadra</i>)	<i>Bhadun</i>
6.	<i>A:shid</i>	(<i>Ashwayuj</i>)	<i>Asuj</i>
7.	<i>Ka:rtik</i>	(<i>Ka:rtik</i>)	<i>Kattak</i> .
8.	<i>MANjhor</i>	(<i>Margashirish</i>)	<i>Maghar</i>
9.	<i>Po>h</i>	(<i>Paush</i>)	<i>Poh</i> .
10.	<i>Ma:g</i>	(<i>Magh</i>)	<i>Magh</i> .
11.	<i>Pha:gun</i>	(<i>Phalgun</i>)	<i>Phagan</i> .
12.	<i>Tsithlr</i>	(<i>Chaitr</i>)	<i>Chait</i> .

There are two fortnights in each month. The bright fortnight is called '*Zu:nlpach*' and the dark one is called '*GaTlpach*'. The fifteen days of a fortnight are named as under: -

<u>Kashmiri</u>	<u>Sanskrit</u>
1. <i>O>kдох</i> .	<i>Pratipadya</i>
2. <i>Do>y'</i> .	<i>Deitya</i>
3. <i>Tray</i> .	<i>Tritiya</i>
4. <i>Tso<ram</i>	<i>Chaturthi</i>

5. <i>PA:ntsam.</i>	<i>Panchami</i>
6. <i>Shayam</i>	<i>Shyeshthi</i>
7. <i>Satam</i>	<i>Saftami</i>
8. <i>A:Tham</i>	<i>Ashtami</i>
9. <i>Navam.</i>	<i>Navmi</i>
10. <i>DAham.</i>	<i>Dashmi</i>
11. <i>Ka:h.</i>	<i>Ekadashi</i>
12. <i>Ba:h</i>	<i>Dwadashi</i>
13. <i>Truwa:h.</i>	<i>Trayodashi</i>
14. <i>Tso>da:h.</i>	<i>Chaturdashi</i>

15. *Punim*, (Bright Fortnight, *Purnamashi* or *Purnima* or *Ma:vas* (Dark fortnight). *Amavasya*.

In each month there are certain auspicious days either during the bright or the dark fortnight. Besides this, there is a considerable number of auspicious days which are extended over a period of complete one year. All these days are attributed to various deities and gods. For example, the following days of each of the bright /dark fortnights are considered as most auspicious and sacred: -

- 1 *A:Tham (Ashtami)*, Eighth day of a bright fortnight.
- 2 *Ka:h (Ekadashi)*, Eleventh " " "
- 3 *Punim (Purnamashi)*, Fifteenth " " "
4. *Ma:vas (Amavasya)* Fifteenth " " , dark fortnight.
5. *SA:nkra:th (Sankranti)* The first date of a solar month

The eighth day of a bright fortnight is attributed to Mother Goddess whereas the eleventh and the fifteenth days of a bright fortnight are consecrated to god *Vishnu*. The fifteenth dark fortnight is attributed to Lord *Shiva*. On all these days some of the people keep fast and go to various temples and holy places of pilgrimage. People prepare sweetmeats and puddings and offer them to the deities. They also offer it to the deserving and the needy including their friends and family members. The fifteenth day of a dark fortnight, consecrated to Lord *Shiva*, is considered to become extremely sacred if it falls on a Monday, commonly called '*Sumri: Ma:vas*'. People of Srinagar city visit *Su:my:ar* temple, situated on the banks

of the river Jehlim at Ha'bbakadal, Srinagar and after taking a dip in the river *Vitasta*, prayer is held at the temple. Some people now visit Haridwar or Purnmandal (40 km from Jammu) and take a dip in the holy *Ganga/Devaka* Rivers. *Sankranti* is consecrated to the worship of Sun god. On this day people keep a fast and eat sweetened bread and avoid taking salt. On all such occasions, people worship '*Parthishowara*' and make 'sweet pancakes', called '*Sati Di:v*'². During all these auspicious days the house is cleaned and every care is taken to remain total vegetarian. The other favourite dishes prepared on these occasions are yellow rice known as '*TAhAr*', rice-pudding, known as '*Khi:r*', coarse grain pudding, '*HALv*', etc. After oblation these are offered to the deities and to birds etc., and what remains is distributed among the close neighbours, relatives and other members of the family.

In addition to the above mentioned auspicious days celebrated every month, there are a number of days throughout the year that are attributed to a number of gods, goddesses, deities and places of pilgrimage. A short list of such auspicious days celebrated in different ways by the Kashmiri Pandits residing in different parts of the country after their mass exodus from the valley of Kashmir in general and the left over Pandits of the valley in particular who celebrate such festivities, is discussed in the coming folios of this book. However, these accounts do not include the auspicious days of national importance celebrated by the people of all races, creeds and religions of this sub-continent, collectively.

¹ A Shiva Lingam of clay specially dug from a holy place and coated with mercury, is made on such occasions. It is worshipped on such auspicious occasions and days of the year. The '*Lingam*' thus made, called, '*Parthishowara*', is immersed in the evening after venerating it.

² Sweet fried pancakes commonly known as '*Pu:ri*' are made and distributed among the neighbours and friends after oblation.

1. Navreh - New Year's Day

It is celebrated on the first of the bright fortnight of *Chaitr* (the twelfth month of the *Vikram* era). It is also known as the 'First *Navaratra*' and is celebrated throughout the Indian sub-continent in one-way or the other. Early in morning children are anxious to show the 'Tha:l' to all the members of the family and get the coin or money placed on the 'Tha:l' that among other things, contains rice, walnuts, (as many as the number of the family members), a morsel of cooked rice, curd, milk, mirror, pen, the new calendar (Almanac), called '*NechipAtIr*', a portrait of Mother goddess '*Kru:lI Pach*' some almond-blossoms or flowers, some blades of fresh grass and a coin. The process of all this assemblage, called '*Tha:l Barun*,' is completed late at previous night and the ritual to see it in the morning on the New Year's Day. '*Navreh*,' is called, '*Buth Wuchun*'. The sight of this 'Tha:l', containing all these items, is considered as an auspicious omen on this occasion because the '*Saftarshi*', calendar of Kashmir starts from the first day of the bright half of '*Chaitr*'. It may be pointed out that due to the change in times, children now do not get satisfied with a coin or two so the parents have to put convincing amount of money on it. Besides, if marriage of a son has taken place in the family during the preceding year, it is considered as the right of the new bride to show the 'Tha:l' to all the members of the family and thus receive cash money or any other gratifications from her father-in-law who gives it to the bride after she shows the 'Tha:l' to the each member in the family. Yellow salt-rice is prepared out of the rice placed in the 'Tha:l' and the walnuts are given one each to the members of the family who throw them into the stream or the pond before taking a bath there.

The continuous cold and snowfall during winter makes a period of three months' life monotonous for all the people of the valley, and they come out of their houses and arrange an outing on this day. With a change in the season all, young and old, wear new clothes. The young and the children celebrate the day by arranging an outing whereas the elders start arrangements for decorating their '*Pu:ja*'-rooms to welcome Mother Goddess '*Durga*:' on the eve of First *Navaratra*. The word meaning of '*Navaratra*' is '*Nine Nights*' Goddess *Durga* attained nine forms during these nine nights beginning from the first *Navaratra* from the first of the bright half of *Chaitr*. These are :-

1. *Shail Putri*, 2. *Brahamacharni*, 3. *Chandraghanta*,
3. *Kushmanda*, 5. *Skanda Mata*, 6. *Kantayaini*, 7. *Kala Ratra*, 8. *Maha Gauri*, and 9. *Siddhi Datri*.¹

The devotees keep fast on all the nine days and sow some barley seeds in a pot and sprinkle it with water and milk while worshipping it everyday. It starts sprouting on the third or fourth day of sowing and gives a good look on the eighth/ninth day known as '*Durga: AsTami*' and "*Rama Navmi*" respectively. In this way there is a busy schedule for all the members of the family, young and old, on *Navareh* actually extending over a period of ten days.

2. Zangl Tray - The Third Auspicious Day.

It is a day meant exclusively for the women folk and is celebrated on the third day of the bright half of the month of *Chaitr*. On this day the married ladies, all the old and the young including the brides, visit their parents' house early in the morning and stay with them for the whole day. They consider it a good omen to visit their parents on this date and spend it there in feasting. In the

¹ *Vijyashwar Panchang*, Ed. Shastri, P. N., No:317, year, 2001-02, P. 71.

after-noon they return to their home with a packet of salt, 'ATho>r' and some cash, known as 'AtI Gath'. In some families the mother-in-law or the elder sister-in-law known as 'Dirka:kani' or 'Ze'ihani:' arrange an outing for the newly married brides and in this way all the gardens and the 'Ba:da:m Wa:ri:'¹ in the vicinity of Srinagar city, are generally full of visitors on this date. It is on the whole a busy and joyful day for the ladies of all age groups.

3. Durga Ashtami - The Day consecrated to Goddess Durga.

According to the scriptures the bright eighth day of *Chaitr* it is held as the birthday of goddess *Durgha* and it is celebrated as 'Durga Ashtami' in the length and breadth of the country. People go to various temples and arrange special prayers and 'Hawans' in their homes and temples. The biggest congregations are held at *Durga Nag*, 'Po>kharibal',² Srinagar, situated to the south of the foot hills of *Shankaracharya* and to the east of the 'Parbath' hillocks, respectively. All the people keep a fast on this day and spend it in deep penance. In the evening people immerse the pots containing the barley sprouts into the water and in this way the eight-day celebrations come to an end. Some people, however, make such immersions on the ninth day.

¹ A place full of almond trees in the vicinity of 'Hari Parbath' or 'Sharika Pi:tha', was called 'Ba:da:m WA:r'. All these trees have been felled for making available land for the housing colonies. Hence only sweet memories are left.

² It is a small spring temple in the vicinity of Srinagar city to the east of 'Hari Parbath' hillock. It is considered as the abode of Mother Goddess 'Ragnya':. A big congregation is held here on the eve of *Hora Ashtami*, the eighth day of the dark fortnight of 'Phalguna' also.

4. Ra:ml Navam - The Birth Day of Lord Rama.

The ninth day of the bright fortnight of *Chaitr* also called as 'Rama Navmi', or 'Raml Navam', is celebrated as the birthday of Lord *Rama*. On this day the people of the city and its suburbs go to the temple of *Rama* situated at Sathu, Barbar Shah, Srinagar, called, 'Ra:ml tsAndrun'. This day is also celebrated at Brari Angan, in the Anantnag district. A similar congregation is also held at the temple of *Shaiva Bhagwati*: at Akingam, district, Anantnag, Kashmir. In Jammu the devotees visit *Shri Raghunath Mandir*. A large number of people go to Bahu Fort and pay their reverence to goddess *Durga* at the fort temple. A considerable number of Kashmiri Pandits visit "Uma Devi" temple situated at lower Roop Nagar, Jammu and a big *Hawan* is held here in which a good number of people participate. This day is also celebrated as *Shail Putri Jayanti* held at Baramula, Kashmir.

5. VaishA:ki: (Baisakhi) - The first Baisakh.

The first of *Baisakh*, first month of the *Vikram* era, is celebrated as *VaishA:ki*: or *Baisakhi* in Kashmir like other parts of the sub-continent. The people visit *Mughal* Gardens, like *Nishat* and *Shalimar*, which are thrown open for the public by the Government of Kashmir from this day as a special case. Most of the Hindus visit the *GuptI Ganga* spring at *IshibAr* near *Nishat* Garden and take a dip in the holy water of the spring and pay their respects to the deity at the temple of *Shiva* in the vicinity of the shrine garden. This day is generally falls on after the eleventh bright half of *Chaitra* and it also coincides with the 13th or 14th of April (of the

Christian era) approximately every year. It is the concluding day of cold and the beginning of spring in Kashmir whereas the spring season in Jammu comes to an end on this date and the summer season begins. It is an old belief that the dog is born on this date and offerings of eatable especially; 'So>tsal'¹ is prepared for the dog and offered to it along with rice or bread.

6. Hanuman Jayanti. (Hanuma:nI Sund Vo>harvod)

The fifteenth day of the bright half of the month of *Chaitr* is celebrated as the birthday of *Hanuman*. On this day the people of Srinagar go to the *Hanuman* Temple situated at Amira Kadal, Srinagar. The people in other parts of the valley also visit other temples of the state where there is an idol of *Hanuman*.

7. Vi:ta:l Shayam - Vaita:l Jayanti:

The whole valley is distributed among a number of deities known as *BhA:rav* or '*Bhairav*',² like *Bhuteshowar Ra:zI Bhairav*, *Ganganand Ra:zI Bhairav*, *Parshuram Ra:zI Bhairav*, *Rodra Ra:zI Bhairav*, *Kuver Ra:zI Bhairav*, *Jaggar Nath Ra:zI Bhairav*, *Arzan Nath Ra:zI Bhairav*, *Anandi:showar Ra:zI Bhairav*, *Nandi:showar Ra:zI Bhairav*, *Va:geshowar Ra:zI Bhairav*, *Vi:ta:l Ra:zI Bhairav* and so on. It is a belief that they have their own territories, jurisdictions and limits

¹ It is an old belief that the vegetable 'So>tsal' is impure till 'Vaishakhi:' and its use was forbade till this date.

² The whole valley was divided into three traditional divisions, known as *Ra:zI* or *Ra:ja*, namely 1. *Mara:zI* (*MaDav ra:ja*), south Kashmir, 2. *Yamra:zI*, Srinagar city, and 3. *Kamara:zI*, (*Ka:ra ra:ja*) north Kashmir each having a Principalities of different *Bhairavs*. Srinagar division was said to be under the charge of *Rodra ra:zI*, (*Ra:ja*) *Bhairv*.

through out the valley of Kashmir and they are considered to be in charge of their respective areas. The word *BhA:rav* appears a derived form from the Sanskrit word, '*Bhairava*', the name attributed to Lord *Shiva*. This shows that the valley remained under the sway of the *Shaiva* philosophy from times immemorial. The valuable information about some such *Bhairavs* has been erased at the cruel hands of time while faint descriptions about a few such deities still exists. One among them is the *Vi:ta:l* or *Vaita:l Bhairav*. On this day the birthday of the deity is celebrated at his temple at Rainawari, Srinagar where a big *Hawan* is held on the occasion. People attend the shrine of the *Bhairav* and offer yellow cooked rice along with cooked liver of a goat/lamb to the deity.

On this day the '*Shra:dh*', anniversary of *Rishi Peer* too is celebrated at his shrine at Bulbul Lankar, Zaina Kadal, Srinagar. Thousands of people both Hindus and Muslims participate in the function. The Hindus perform a *Hawan* at his shrine on this date and people of both the communities remain vegetarian for the full day. Both these celebrations are held on the sixth of dark half of the month of '*Vahyakh*' or *Baisakh* every year. In case, however, the '*Tithi*' is '*Deva*', the *Shra:dh* of *Rishi Peer* is celebrated one day earlier to the *Vaita:l Shyayam*.

8. Vijay Saftami - (Mattan) Martand Tir:tha.

In the first, second or third months of the *Vikram* era, i.e. *Baisakh*, *Je'shat* or *Ashada*, if the horal moment or the '*Tithi*' is '*Punarvasu*', falling on the dark half of the seventh and on a Sunday of any of these months, the possibility of *Vijay Saftami*, falling on such days (as a horal moment) increases. On this date a good number of Hindus visit the *Martand Tir:tha* at Mattan, commonly known as *Bhawan*. It is also called the *Surya Tir:tha* in our

scriptures and is famous for giving offerings to the manes and performing rites in their honour. The devotees after clean shaving their heads, called "*Vo>pun*" hold a *Shra:dh* of their manes on the banks of the stream flowing out from the Martand Spring, called '*tsa:ka*'.

9. GanI tso>dah or GAnshi tso>dah Birthday of Lord Ganesha.

The birthday of Lord *Ganesha* is celebrated on the fourteenth day of bright fortnight of the month of '*Vaisha:kh*.' People prepare small fried sweet pancakes known as '*Pu:ri*' and small ball like fried sweetmeats called '*LADi*' on this festival and attend the temple of Lord *Ganesha* at Ganpathya:r, Srinagar. After oblation and making offering to the Lord, the devotees distribute the remaining pancakes and '*LADi*' among all the devotees who attend the temple for prayers. A big *Hawan* is also held here on this date.

10. BhAdriKA:li jayanti, Birthday of goddess Bhadrakali.

Bhadrakali is one of the names given to the Mother Goddess whose birthday is celebrated on eleventh day of the dark fortnight of '*Je'shta*'. Her abode is believed to be at '*BhAdriKA:li*', a small village in Handwara district of Kashmir valley. Here, a small spring and a temple, is dedicated to the said goddess, a mention whereof exists in our '*Mahatmyas*'. On this date a big *Hawan* is held at the said temple and people come from far and near to take part and celebrate it here. It is said that the goddess showed her presence at the said place on ninth day of the dark fortnight of '*Ashwin*' and hence people attend this place on this date also and offer prayers.

11. Ze'Thi A:Tham – Birthday of Goddess Ragnya.

The birthday of goddess *Ragnya* is celebrated on eighth day of the bright fortnight of '*Je'shta*' at her abode considered at Tula Mula, in Ganderbal Tehsil of Srinagar district. The word '*Tull Mula*', comprises two Kashmiri words, '*Tula*', means a mulberry (tree) and '*Mula*', means the roots. It is said that at the sight of the present spring a big mulberry tree existed and the spring sprouted forth from under its roots and hence the name '*Tull Mula*'. A large gathering is held here on the said day and the Hindus of Kashmir come to pay their reverence to the Mother goddess on this date from far and near areas of the state. A big *Hawan* is held here on the occasion. This is one of the holiest of the holy places of northern India and people visit this place throughout the year, as such, there is always a scene of pilgrimage here on each day especially on the eighth day of the bright fortnight of every lunar month, the presence of the devotees is comparatively more on such occasions. A *Hawan* is performed on all such occasions. The temple of goddess *Ragnya* is built of the white marble and is situated in the middle of the spring. It is said that the colour of the spring changes occasionally indicating the coming social, economic and political upheavals/changes, good or bad, whatsoever that are expected to take place in the valley. It is also known by the name of '*Khi:r Bhawani*:' as the people worship the Mother goddess here by offering milk, called '*Kshi:r*' in Sanskrit, hence '*Khi:r Bhawani*:'.

12. *Nirjala Ekadashi (Ne'rzala: Ka:h)* The Waterless Eleventh.

The eleventh day of the bright half of the month of *Je'shta* is known as '*Nirjala Ekadashi*'. On this day Hindus observe complete fast and do not take even water. Pitchers filled with water are donated in the name of deceased ancestors on this day as a religious rite. It is said that in ancient times a *Rishi* was refused drinking water on this date so he cursed that the day should be observed as '*Waterless Ekadashi*' from thence onwards.

13. *Ro>pl Bhawa:ni: Jayanti -* *The Birthday of Ropa Bhawani.*

The birthday of the saint poetess of Kashmir *Shaiva* philosophy, the incarnation of Mother goddess '*Sharika*', '*Ro>pl Bhawa:ni:*', is celebrated on the fifteenth day of the bright half of the month of *Je'shta*. There are a number of stories attributed to her incarnation. She was born in the family of *Dhars*, and was married in the *Sapruo* family, the two famous sub-casts of Hindus in the valley. She was not treated well by her mother-in-law who was ignorant about her true identity. After *Lallesh>ri:*, she is the second most famous saint poetess of Kashmir who expressed the deep *Shaiva* philosophy in *Va:khs*¹. She was the cotemporary of famous *Su:fi*: poet of Kashmir, *Shah Qalander*. A number of miracles are attributed to her during her tours in the length and breadth of the valley. The Hindus and the Muslims of the valley, alike revered her. Her birthday is celebrated at Safakadal, Srinagar at her original place of birth. On this day a big *Hawan* is held in which thousands participate. Her death anniversary is held on the seventh day of the dark half of

the month of '*Ashwin*'. In case, however the '*Tithi*' is '*Deva*' (Extended over a period of two days), her *Shra:dh* is held a day earlier. This day is known as '*Sa:hibani Hlnz Satam*'. A number of stories of Hindu-Muslim amity are prevalent about the death of this great saint poetess of Kashmir. On the day of her annual *Shra:dh*, all her devotees keep a fast and perform a *Hawan* and take part in the celebrations. It is a common practice that when a girl from the *Dhar* family is married in a Kashmiri family having a different sub-cast, the people of that family have to celebrate the, '*Sa:hibani Hlnz Satam*' or the *Shra:dh* ceremony of this mystic poetess. This day is also celebrated at Vaskur and Lar villages of the Kashmir valley with great faith and reverence. The devotees after their exodus from the valley, have established a few centers in honour of this great poetess at a number of places in Jammu and Delhi where discussions and discourses on the *Va:khs* of the poetess are held from time to time.

14. *Ha:ri Satam -* *Laying of the ManDul* *(Drawing a Circle Decorated With Colours).*

Early in the morning, the ladies of the house wash and clean the whole house on seventh day of the bright half of '*Ashada*'. With the help of white chalk powder and colours, made from local flowers and leaves, they make circular figures on the front lawns, verandahs, corridors and in the kitchen, called '*Ha:ri ManDul*'. On one such circular figure, made in the kitchen, they keep a little rice and some water in a cup or a tumbler and in it they place a small branch of a pomegranate tree along with its blossom. A basket is kept on it so as to cover it for the day and in the evening it is thrown away under a

¹ For details p.s., *Ro>pl Bha:wani: - Akh Sa:m*, by Pandit, S.N., Published by the University of Kashmir, Srinagar, 1983.

pomegranate tree. This appears to be a sign of welcome to the two day celebrations which follow this day.

15. *Ha:ri A:Tham* -

Day attributed to the Mother Goddess.

Eighth day of the bright fortnight of the month of '*Ashada*' is consecrated to Mother Goddess and celebrations are held at a number of places in the valley. The prominent among these are, *Khi:r Bhawani*, Tulamula, *Mangla Devi*:¹ Wachii, Anantnag, *Di:vi: Bal* - Anantnag, *Bargl Sha:kha: Bhagwati*:², Deva Sar, Anantnag., and *Po>khri Bal*, Hari Parbath, Srinagar. At all these places big *Hawans* are held and people from different places visit and pay their homage to the goddess there. Almost all the people keep a fast on this date and sweetmeats, pancakes, '*Pu:ri*' and puddings are prepared and after oblation, these are distributed among all those present on such occasions at various places of pilgrimage.

16. *Ha:ri Navam*-

The Birthday of goddess *Sharika*

The birthday of goddess *Sharika*³ is celebrated on the ninth day of the bright fortnight of '*Ashada*', whose abode is believed on the western top of the hillock popularly known as '*Hari Parbath*'. There are a number of stories about the formation of this hillock as contained in the *Nilamata Purana*., '*Kashmir Mahatmyas*' and the '*Katha Sarita Sagara*' and the common belief is that Mother Goddess in the form of '*Sharika*' known as,

¹ A name attributed to Mother Goddess whose abode is considered near Watchi village in District Anantnag.

² It is a name given to the Mother Goddess.

³ It is a name given to the Mother Goddess.

'*HA:r*' in the common Kashmiri language, carried the hillock in its beak and thus closed forever the gate of the hell created by the demon '*Jalodbhava*'. The demon, *Jalodbhava*, meaning 'born from the water' had created a hell in the vicinity of the '*Sati Sara*' or the Lake of goddess *Parwati* who closed the mouth of the lake with the hillock and thus the demon was got killed. Hence this hillock is known as *Hari Parbat*. A large temple is constructed where the goddess is worshipped in the form of '*Shri Yantra*', a mystical figure, according to the '*Tantra Loka*'. Thousands of Kashmiri Pandits visit this place on the said day and a big '*Hawan*' is held here. The celebrations are extended all over the five km. road existing around the small hillock known as the '*Parikrama*'. The devotees circumbulate round it over this path on all festival days. The day is also known as the '*Sharika Jayanti*' all over the Jammu and Kashmir state. In Jammu the devotees go to *Durga* Temple situated at the *Bahu Fort* and worship goddess *Durga*. *Hawans* are also held at a number of places and oblations are distributed among the devotees who visit these places.

17. *Ha:ri Tso>da:h*-

The Birthday of *Jwala Ji* '*Za:la: Di:vi:*'

The fourteenth day of the bright half of the month of *Ha:r*, '*Ashada*' is consecrated to *Jwala Devi*¹ situated at Khrew, Kashmir on the hillock, known as '*Za:ll mo>kh*'. At the foot of the said hill is a spring where the devotees take a bath and then proceed towards the up-hill temple. In the temple is an image of goddess *Jwala* in the form of a mystical *Yantra*. The people take the yellow rice called '*TAhAr*' and cooked meat preferably liver and un-cooked lungs including the heart, known as

¹ One of the names attributed to the Mother Goddess.

Shu:shno<r' of a lamb or a goat as an offering to the goddess. The '*Shu:shno<r*' is offered along with a '*Tahari tso>t*' to the kites and crows, present in large numbers in the vicinity of the hillock and the temple on this day. The remaining *TAHAr* is distributed among the devotees present there on the occasion as an oblation. While returning people slide down the long flat rocks at the southern end of the hillock known as '*KhIrI Pa:tlj*'. It is believed that by doing so the sins of a person are mitigated after they slide down on these flat rocks.

18. *Ha:rI Punim - HArI Sho>r Pilgrimage.*

The fifteenth day of the bright half of *Ashada* is the pilgrimage day to the famous cave shrine of '*HArI Sho>r*' situated on a hill of the same name near the famous village of '*Kho>nI muh*', Pampore. The cave is situated on a steep hillock nearly eight km. away from the main village. The idols of *Shiva*, *Parwati*, *Ganesha* and *Kumara* exist in the cave and the image of the snake '*Shesh Naga*' is engraved on its roof. The devotees take a dip in the spring situated at the foot of the hill in the village and start the climb early in the morning. On reaching the cave shrine one finds the whole valley of Kashmir looking like a big flower garden. A detailed description of this pilgrimage is contained in a folk song which starts with the couplet, '*Andar atsu gofi Harshi:showar*', which gives a complete description of this hilly abode of Lord *Shiva*. A reference to this secret hilly abode of *Shiva*, venerated by all the Hindus of the valley and abroad, is contained in the '*Tirtha Ssangraha*'¹ This day is also venerated as the "*Guru Pu:rnima*" and *Hawans* and '*Guru Pooja*' is held on this day.

¹ *Rajtarangini*, by Kalhane, Trans. By Stein, M.A., 1979 Vol. I, I- 220 (fn.) and Vol. II, P. 458-59.

19. *Kamla: Ka:h - Venerating Goddess Kamla:.*

This day is celebrated on the eleventh day of the dark half of the month of '*Shravana*'. The day is consecrated to *Kamla*¹. It is a small spring situated in the dense forests of '*Bugl Mo>r*', the name of a small hillock to the south of the famous township of Tral Kashmir. The spring is covered with *Devdar* trees on all sides and the roots of these trees have encircled the sides of the spring. The well-like spring thus formed is reported to be very deep. A small stream flows out of the spring and the devotees take a bath here. The ancient ruins at the sight are a testimony to its old grandeur. Only a few devotees residing in the nearby villages visit this place now.

20. *Shra:vanI Ba:h - Liberation of the 'young' manes*

Shopian, district Pulwama, Kashmir is the place for the salvation of the manes who have died at a young age or prior to the holding of their *Yagnyopavita* ceremony. The '*Shra:dh*' of such of the manes is held here on the twelfth day of the bright half of the month of '*Shravana*' at *Na:gl Bal*, Bhattapora, Shopian. There are two springs at the foot of the hill to the south of the Shopian town close to the *Pirpanchal* Range across the *RAMbia:rI*, a well known rivulet of south Kashmir. It is surrounded by a small habitation known as *Dega:m*. In the upper spring is a '*Lingham of Shiva*' with cellular body, '*Ka:pa:tika*'. The legend says that *Shiva* was cleared off from the sins of severing the head of a *Brahmin*, '*Kapa:la*' after he took a bath in this spring, commonly

¹ One of the names given to goddess *Lakshmi*.

known as '*Kapa:ll Mu:tsan*' ('*Kapala Mochana*'). Pilgrims from far and near places of the valley and even from the northern states of the sub-continent, come to this place for performing the *Shra:dh* of their manes. The sight on the date of the pilgrimage, otherwise a highly calm and beautiful spot, is very heart rending on the specific date due to the wailing and weeping of the mothers whose children have died very young.

21. Sha:ravanI Punim, The Amar Nath Pilgrimage

The fifteenth bright half of the month of *Shravana* or *Savan* known as '*Shra:vnI Punim*', is one among the most sacred days of the year. On this day the devotees have the first glimpse of *Swami Amarnath ji* after the continuous and hazardous journey to the cave for a number of days. People from all the states and even from abroad come to Kashmir ahead of the scheduled date so as to take part in this pilgrimage. This day is exclusively meant for making prayers at the Amarnath cave of Lord *Shiva* where an ice *Shiva Lingham* is formed in the said cave. People observe total austerity for all the days of journey and every body young and old, keeps a fast on this day. The other places of pilgrimage visited on this day are, '*Thajiwara*,' known as '*ThAjwo>r*' near Bijbihara: town. Those who are unable to go to *Amarnath*, visit this place for holding special prayers. While the pilgrims pay their obeisance to the '*Ice Lingam*' at the cave of *Amarnath ji*, the devotees worship the Lingam of *Shiva* at *Thajiwara* temple. A number of people visit the *Shankarachayra* temple, near Srinagar Kashmir. People make sweetmeats on this day and illuminate the local *Shiva* temples.

This day is also celebrated as '*Raksha Bandhan*'. Sisters make preparations for the celebration of this

festival a few days earlier. They purchase '*Rakhis*' of their choice ahead of the festival. On this day they get up early in the morning and after their return from temples they meet their brothers and tie the '*Rakhis*', also known as '*Rakhri*', on their wrists. It is a colourful raw threa with a piece of decoration in the middle of it. In this way they get a good gratification from their brothers after they mark their foreheads with red vermilion. The ladies, who don't have any brothers, tie '*Rakhis*' to some one from among their close relatives and thus make him their brothers.

22. Navdal Tso<ram - Rites after Amarnath Pilgrimage.

Navdal is a small village enroute Tral township just at a distance of 5 km from Awantipora, a small town on the main Jammu-Srinagar Highway. Here is a cluster of nine springs known as *Navdal*. This place was used as one of the camping sites for the night-stay when the pilgrimage to *Amarnath Ji* was made on foot from Srinagar. While returning from the pilgrimage, the pilgrims would perform the *Shra:dh* of their manes on the fourth day of the dark half of the month of *Bhadu:n* at this place. Here also, as at some of the other places of pilgrimages attributed to the manes, balls of barley flour are offered to the manes. The Hindus of the valley believe that a person who performs the pilgrimage to *Amarnath ji* but does not perform the *Shra:dh* of his manes at '*Navdal*', is considered to carry a load of a dog on his back till he performs such a *Shra:dh* here.

23. *Tsandan ShyashTi*: - Purification of Ones Own Self

The sixth day of the dark half of the month of *Bhadu:n* is celebrated as '*Tsandan ShyashTi*.' It is also known as '*TsAndri ShyaTh*', among common Kashmiri women folk. It is a day specifically meant for the women folk only. The meaning of the two words is 'sixty moons', if we take '*ShyaTh*' as 'sixty' and not as a deteriorated form of '*ShyashTi*', meaning 'six/sixth'. In this way it has some resemblance with the '*Karwa Chowth*' which is held on the fourth dark half of the month of *Kartila*.¹ This festival of the Indian sub-continent is not celebrated in the valley so vigorously even to this date as it is in vogue in other parts of the country. This festival too is celebrated by the women folk in which women break the fast at night after looking at the moon and the face of their husband simultaneously through the holes of a sieve. Even with this resemblance, the two festivals are celebrated on two different dates. According to the Indian ethos, a woman is worshipped in the form of '*Shakti*' whereas a man is considered '*Shiva*'. The body is '*Shiva*' whereas his spouse is the soul in the form of '*Shakti*'. *Shakti* is the propeller and man propels. '*Shakti*' is the source of all actions - good as well as bad. In order to wash off the sins committed by a woman during her day-to-day chores, knowingly or unknowingly, the scriptures have advised her to observe this day of, '*Chandan ShyashTi*' according to the praxis as laid down in the scriptures.² The women folk observe a complete fast on this day. In addition to this they also pray for the long life of their husbands through whom they

¹ In case the '*Tithi*' is '*Deva*' on both the festivals, the celebrations are held a day earlier

² Bhatt, Pandit Jyotshi Keshav, *Brihat Stotra Ratnakar, Chandan ShyashTi Vrita Udhyaana*, 1940. P. 31-37.

extend and expand all their power. The scriptures have advised her to take a bath two times on the said day, one in the morning and the other in the after noon. It is a practice that while bathing they apply pastes of red sandal-wood, commonly known as '*Rakhi Tsandun*' and white sandal-wood, known as '*Safeyd Tsandun*' to their whole body. It is a day of complete fasting for all the married women folk, whether old or young. All spend the whole day in prayers and bathing. They also paste their foreheads with the said sandalwood pastes before and after each bath and refrain from taking salt for the whole day. In the evening they have to look at the rising moon first at the dead of night and then prepare pancakes of wheat flour made from the fresh wheat crop of that year and eat the same with sugar or milk.

Like all other days of fasting and penance, the old and infirm women have been advised by the scriptures to give up observing the fast after a ritual, known as '*Chandri ShyaTh Muchin*'. For this purpose they have to arrange a small '*Hawan*' and perform some religious rites as prescribed in the scriptures.¹

24. *Janam Ashtami* - . *Zarmi Satam* Lord Krishna's Birthday.

The scriptures and books on astrology confirm that Lord *Krishna* was born at the dead of night i. e., at the time of moon-rise on the eighth dark half of the month of *Bhadu:n*, known also as '*BA;dri Pyath*'. The day brings joy to all young and old. Having taken a bath early in the morning, the elderly people spend the day in fasting and praying. The young people too keep a fast and a number of preparations of cookies made from chest-nut

¹ Bhatt, Pandit Jyotshi Keshav, *Brihat Stotra Ratnakar, Chandan ShyashTi Vrita Udhyaana*, 1940. P. 31-37.

flour, fruit, milk are a special treat for them of the day. Beautiful swings are decorated in each house for swinging the portraits of Lord *Krishna* depicting his exploits. '*Krishna Li:la*'; and '*Li:la*.' songs are sung /played in all the homes for the whole day. In the afternoon rallies and processions depicting tableaux of various exploits of Lord *Krishna* are taken out in all the big streets in the main towns and cities of the valley as is held in other parts of the sub-continent. Thousands of people come out to witness this procession locally called '*Vi:dl Bhagwa:n*'

25. *Darbi Ma:vas*.

The Day of Darbha, Kusha).

All the religious rituals and rites are the soul of a compact society like that of the Kashmiri Pandits. Offerings, recitations and the use of *Kusha*, (Sword grass) milk, curd, water, flowers, incense etc., are its imperative components for all the day to day rituals. Hence a day has been earmarked in the scriptures for procuring the fresh '*Kusha*'. This day falls on the fifteenth day of the dark half of '*Bhadrapada*, known as '*Darbi Ma:vas*'. It is also known as '*Pap Mochini Amavasya*' i.e., -'the fifteenth day of the dark fortnight for expiation of all sins'. On this day, after taking a bath, new '*Kusha*' is brought into the house and a bunch of seven straws of fresh '*Darbha*' with a reverse knot, called '*Upyam*' or '*Vo>pya:m*' in the common Kashmiri language, is kept over the main gate on the right side of it. This day is celebrated in honour of the manes.

26. *Vina:yak Tso<ram*-

Obeisance to Lord *Ganesha*.

It is celebrated on the fourth day of the bright half of *Bhadrapada* known as '*Vina:yak Tso<ram*'. '*Vinayak*'

is one of the names given to '*Lord Ganesha*, the propeller of all our actions according to the scriptures. The birthday of Lord *Ganesha* is celebrated on this day and hence the day is also known as, '*Vinayak Chaturthi*'. It is considered extremely auspicious in case it falls on a Sunday. Kashmiri Hindus make a special kind of sweet pancakes out of the flour made from the fresh wheat during some of the auspicious days of this fortnight. The thick sweet pancakes added with some dry fruits are fried in ghee. It is called '*RoTh*'. Most of the people adhere to the date of the fourth day of the said fortnight as it is considered as the most auspicious but in case it is not possible to adhere to this date, the preparations are made on a subsequent date and offerings are made to the deity. The ritual is known as '*Pan dyan*'. In case it is not possible for a family to make the offering during the said period due to some unavoidable circumstances, the ritual is held on the bright fifteenth day of the month of '*Kartik*'. Due to its long tradition the function has taken the shape of a deep-rooted ritual and no body dares to offend the deity by discontinuing the offerings. Besides, a raw thread of freshly harvested cotton is got spun on this date and worn by the elderly lady of the house in the ear along with a new '*ATIho>r*'. She keeps a fast on the day till the offerings of pancakes are made to the deity. The thread is to be got spun by an un-married /virgin girl called, '*Kanyak*'. She is offered a small bread called, '*Kanyakl Vo>r*', a 'small pancake' specially prepared for her. In addition to this she is given some cash as gratification for spinning the thread out of the fresh cotton. The local cotton of the valley was ready for collection in the month of '*Bhadrapada*. Hence its first offering was made to the deity. The cultivation of cotton no more exists in the valley since long due to the introduction of some other cash crops, but still the festival and the ritual is observed by the Hindus of this land as it

was held centuries ago. The practice is still in vogue even after the exodus of the people from the valley.

The pancakes thus prepared are also called '*Vir Bhadrin RoTh*', preparation of pancakes in honour of '*Vir Bhadra*, the family deity. There is a practice of narrating a happy ending folk story while performing the ritual. Every member of the family is given a handful of green grass, '*Dramun*', filled with some grains of soaked barley, rice and flowers. The things are put in the pot, called '*Kalash*', already kept at the place of performance. The elder member of the family narrates the story and all hear it attentively. After observing the ritual, the oblation is distributed among all friends, relatives and neighbours. Newly married brides have to present a good number of specially baked '*RoThs*', got prepared through a professional baker, for her in-laws on this ritual.

27. *Gangl A:Tham*; -

Oblation to the manes on the birthday of the Ganga.

The eighth bright half of the month of '*Bhadrapada*' is celebrated as '*Ganga AshTami*'. A pilgrimage, known as '*Haramukat Yyatra*', is held at '*Gangl Bal*' on this date. It is one of the far flung areas of Handwara Tehsil and the last habitat on this pilgrimage is '*SamsA:ri Na:g*'. The Hindus of the valley go there to perform the '*Ti:rthl Shra:dh*' of the manes and till recently the last remains of the dead, were immersed into the '*Ganglbal*' lake. The Rajatarangini confirms the presence of a big temple of '*Bhuteshwar*' or '*Shiva Bhutesh*'¹ here. It is also said that Ashok got the boon for a son from *Shiva Bhutesh* after a great penance². The remains of the temple and of the idol are no more to be seen here now. Besides, due to the division of the sub-

¹ A name attributed to *Shiva*.

² Bamzai, P.N.K., *A. History of Kashmir*, II Ed. 1973, P. 68.

continent, this pilgrimage is no more held in this part of the country because of its location near the Line of Control.

28. *Lal Ded Jayanti*:- Birthday of Lalleshowari,

The birth day of the first saint poetess of Kashmir, popularly known as '*Lal Ded*', '*Lalle'sho>r:i*', '*Lalla*' '*Lalli MA:j*' falls on the eighth day of the bright half of '*Bhardapada*'. She is considered as the originator of the '*Va:kh*' form of verses of poetry. Almost all her '*Va:khs*' are on the tip of the tongue of many people of Kashmir and are cherished and admired even today, for their deep meaning, excellent thoughts, beauty of language and minimum use of words. Not much is known about this great poetess of Kashmir except her thoughtful '*Va:khs*', considered as a great treasure of Kashmiri language and literature in which deep thoughts of Kashmir *Shaiva* philosophy are beautifully explained in a very simple and lucid manner. She is believed to have been born in a Brahmin family in the middle of the 14th century at '*Puranadhishtan*', modern Pandrethan, nearly 11 Km to the south of Srinagar. Her parentage is unknown. She was married at Pampore, a nearby village, at a very young age but her mother-in-law did not treat *Lalla* well. The atrocities of the in-laws became more unbearable, she finally left the house and found her '*Guru*' in '*Siddha Shrikanth*', commonly known as '*Syaal Mo<l*' a mystic living at Pampore and practiced, '*Pranayam*' in seclusion under his guidance. All respected her. The Muslims called her '*Lalla Arifa*' whereas she was '*Lallesho<r:i*' for the Hindus of the valley. During the latter part of her life she became a wandering preacher of mysticism that had its deep impact on the Indian Mysticism, '*Rahasyavada*'.¹

¹ Bamzai, P.N.K., *A History of Kashmir*, Sec. Ed., 1973, P. 543.

Having been born in a Brahmīn family, her date of birth has been taken from the diary of her family priest who maintain such records in respect of their followers.

On this day a big *Hawan* is held at 'Umanagri', Anantnag at the temple site. Due to the exodus of the Hindus from the valley, this *Hawan* is now held at *Muthi Asharam* by the 'Umanagri, Temple Committee' since last many years.

29. Vyathl Truwa:h. - Birthday of Vitasta:.

The thirteenth bright fortnight of 'Bhadu:n' is celebrated as the birthday of river 'Vitasta' also named as 'Jehlim' and 'Vyath'. It is believed that on this date 'Vitasta' appeared at 'Vyathl Vo>tur', near Verinag after her descent from the main spring. On this date a big gathering is held at this place since very ancient times. Kalhan has given its name as 'Vitastatra' and has confirmed it as one of the major places of pilgrimage. Now a day the pilgrimage is held at 'Verinag.' People also pay their reverence to the river *Vitasta* at all major places and habitations situated on its banks and offer milk and flowers to the river water. A big *Hawan* is held at the 'Gauri: Sho>ri'¹; temple at village 'Gairoo' presently called 'Noorpora'². It is after the name of 'Gauri' or 'Uma' that the village of 'Gairoo' has got its name that has changed from 'Gauri' into 'Gairoo'. Here is an old spring and a temple known as *Gauri Sho>ri: Asthapan*. The function of the birthday of the river 'Vitasta.' is also celebrated here ever year.

¹ A name attributed to goddess *Bhawani* who is also called *Gauri*

² The name of a small village on the Srinagar-Tral main road at a distance of nearly thirty km. from Srinagar.

30. Anil Tso>dah - The Celebrations at Anantnag.

From the very name, the celebration appears of a very ancient origin at least when the 'Naga', or the serpent worship, was very common among the people of Kashmir. The reminiscences of this worship are found even today in the old dress pattern of our ladies who wear a long piece of serpent shaped cloth on their headgears. On this day people wear the 'Anath' made of raw cotton woven into a serpent shape. The males wear an 'Anath', made from white thread, in their *Yagnyopavita* whereas the ladies wear a red coloured one in their ear rings. A great pilgrimage is held on the fourteenth day of the bright fortnight of *Bhadu:n* at *Na:gabal*, Anantnag where people take a bath at a number of springs and pay homage to their deities in the temples. Big congregations are also held at the local springs generally called as 'Nagabal.'

31. Ka:mbIri Pach- A Fortnight for the Manes.

One full dark fortnight of 'A:shid' or 'Asuj' is dedicated to the manes according to their 'Tithis' of death anniversaries extended over all the months of a lunar year. It can be any 'Tithi' of a fortnight of any month of the year on which the death anniversary of any of the manes is held. The *Shra:dh* of all such manes is held on that very 'Tithi' during this fortnight called 'Pitri Paksha'. One who is not able to perform the *Shra:dh* of his fore-father's on the due 'Tithi', due to obvious reasons can do so on the concluding 'Tithi' i.e. 'Amawasya', commonly known as 'Pitri Amawasya' 'the fifteenth dark fortnight dedicated to the manes'. During this period the harvesting of paddy is in full swing in whole of the valley and the rice of the fresh crop is generally thought as auspicious to be offered to the

manes first during this fortnight. The villagers are mostly busy with the work of harvesting. Besides it is the ripening season for all kind of fruit and vegetable available in plenty. during the period that are offered to the manes.

There is a restriction for holding all auspicious activities during this fortnight according to our scriptures.

32. Nava Durga:-

Eight Days Dedicated to Mother Goddess

The first eight days of the bright fortnight of the month of *Asu:j* are dedicated to Mother Goddess *Durga*. It is also called the autumn '*Navl Durga/Ratra*.' The fasting, holding of daily prayers and sowing of barley is done as already described while discussing the *Navratra* celebrations of the spring '*Navl Durga*'. The harvesting is complete. The fruit-season is over and the harvested crops have properly been stored. Hence the first offering and prayers for a week's period for the gods after paying reverence to the manes during the first fortnight of the month.

33. Maha Navam -

Return of Lord Ram From the Exile.

The scriptures say that Lord *Ram*, during his exile. '*Vanva:s*' of fourteen years, killed *Ravan* on the bright ninth day of the month of '*Asu:j*'. It is considered as one of the illustrious deeds done by Lord *Ram* during his exile. Hence, called '*Maha Navmi*.' This day is celebrated on the ninth day of the bright half of *Asu:j* as a day of victory of Virtue over Vice. People go to the *Ram* temples for paying their reverence to the Lord *Ram* for he liberated *Sita* on this date. It is also celebrated as the day of salvation of Mother Goddess '*Swarwati*' in the form of *Sita*. In the morning people prepare puddings and sweetmeats and after making offerings to Mother

Goddess they distribute these among all their relatives and neighbours.

34. Dashiha:r (Dasera)-

Celebrations in Honour of Lord Ram.

On hearing about the victory of Lord *Ram* over *Ravan*, the demon king of Lanka, the people of Ayodhya rejoiced and they burnt the effigies of *Ravan*, *Meghanath*, and *Kumbhakarn* on the tenth day of the bright half of *Ashwin*. As such, it is also called '*Vijay Dashmi*'- the tenth 'Victory day'. The practice of burning the effigies is still prevalent in the length and breadth of the country and is celebrated as '*Dashiha:r*' in the whole of the valley and other parts of the country. In Kashmir, the main function is held at Hazoori Bagh, Srinagar. In Jammu the function is held at Parade Ground. Thousands of people go to witness this sight and return with a piece of half burnt wood, paper or cloth of the effigies and keep it in their houses as a booty. It is a belief that the presence of such things in the house, keeps away all evil spirits and the effect of witchcraft.

35. Di:pl Ma:la:,(Dipawali) -

An evening of lights.

This celebration is held on the fifteenth day of the dark half of the month of '*Kartik*' or '*Kattak*'. It is said that on this date *Ram*, his spouse, *Sita* and his brother, *Lakshaman*, returned to Ayodhya: after the exile of fourteen years and that too after killing *Ravan*. People of Ayodhya greeted their beloved by illuminating their houses and streets with lamps of ghee and candles. This practice still continues and we illuminate our houses and streets on this date. Hence, known as '*Di:p Ma:la:*', 'a garland of lamps'. People keep fast and visit *Shri Ram*

temples from early morning. Sweetmeats are prepared in almost all the families. The day is of more significance for the businessmen because they start their new books/ registers of income and expenditure from this date. As such, this day is celebrated as the day dedicated to Mother Goddess *Lakshmi*. New registers/books are duly adorned with the marking of 'Swastika'. All the business establishments offer sweets, pancakes and sweetmeats to the goddess. Homes, shops, business establishments and offices are illuminated with candles, earthen lamps of ghee/oil and electric lights. It is because of all this illumination that the night is also known as 'Dipawali,' 'a row of lamps'. Some of the business establishments offer discount on their products to the customers on the eve of this festival for full one months' period.

36. Ga:DI Battl – Offerings to the Deity Incharge of the Home

According to our belief, there is a deity in charge of each house. In order to pleased him, a number of offerings are made to it according to the family customs/ traditions. Some people make the offerings of rice and fish during the dark fortnight of "Po>h" on any of the Tuesdays or Saturdays. By studying the requirements of the celebrations on the occasion, one can easily say that the ritual appears to have been entrusted to us by the *Pishachas*, the original inhabitants of the valley, who allowed the *Aryans* to stay in the valley for the full year after observing certain rites and rituals. The preparations for the function start from early in the morning. Every body must be neat and clean on this date. Ladies take utmost care to take a bath and remain clean and chaste on this day. The whole house is swept and cleaned. The place where the offerings for the deity are placed (generally on the second or third floor) is besmeared with clay and

water. Cooked rice and fish is offered to the deity. Some people offer a raw fish as well while others don't allow even their close relatives to stay in their house on this day. In the evening offerings are placed for the deity on the besmeared and selected place. A lamp is lit and kept beside the plate containing the offerings and it is covered with a willow basket. After paying obeisance all the family members take remaining food as an oblation from the deity. In the common language the deity is called 'GarI Devta;' and a number of stories about miracles done by the deity are prevalent among different families including those who make such offerings to their 'Devata'. Next morning the contents of the plate are offered to the birds while some families take it as an oblation from the deity

37. Mahakali Jayanti - The Birthday of Maha Kali .

The eighth day of the dark fortnight of 'Paush' or 'Po>h', is celebrated as the birthday of 'Mahakali',¹ also called 'Maha:ka:li:' in Kashmiri language. In Srinagar it is celebrated at Fateh Kadal at the famous *Khanqah* of *Sayed Ali Shah Hamadani*, commonly known as 'Shah-i-Hamada:n'. The *Khanqah* is on the main road side, (Habbakadal-Zainakadal road,) whereas the temple of Maha Kali is at the back of the same complex on the river side. It is said that the original spring of the deity is inside the said *Khanqah* and its water flows along the side of the temple. The devotees visit this place on the said date from early in the morning and the celebrations continue for the full day. The devotees offer yellow rice, called 'TAhAr' and cooked liver of goat or lamb to the deity. The *Puranas* have described *Kali* as incarnations of

¹ One of the names given the Mother Goddess, in her furious form.

Durga. She is said to be of black colour, wearing a garland of skulls, with out-stretched tongue, possessing four strong arms, carrying a skull in her left hand and a sickle in the right hand. She is described to be the annihilator of all evils. A similar temple is at proper Tral, Tehsil head quarters near the Shrine of *Shah-i-Hamadan* and here the devotees of the area assemble on the birthday of the goddess for holding special prayers at the temple which is built near a small spring of the said deity. The place is locally known as '*Kru:ntshlbal*'.

38. *La:vsI Tso>da:h* – The Birthday of the Pussy Cat.

The fourteenth day of the dark half of the month of '*Paush*,' or '*Po>h*' was celebrated as the birthday of the pussy cat in the past. On this day the people used to cook the black-beans '*Mash*', known as '*MahI Da:l*' in the Kashmiri language and place the share of the cat in a lonely corner. Now this ritual is no more celebrated and has been forgotten by the people.

39. *Khytsi Ma:vas/Khytsri Ma:vas* - Oblation to the Yaksha (Kubera).

The fifteenth day of the dark half of the month of '*Paush*' is known as '*Kyhetsi/Khytsri Ma:vas*'. The ritual is performed by the Kashmiri Hindus from very ancient times. The celebration of this late night ritual leads us to the first settlement of the *Aryans* in the valley under the guidance of *Kashyap Rishi*. Prior to their arrival, the valley was inhabited by the *Pisha:chas*, the *Yakshas* and the *Na:gas*. They did not treat the newly arrived people well and a compromise was made under the directions of *Ni:la Na:ga* who advised the *Aryans* to follow some of

the rituals of the original dwellers so as to live in the valley more amicably. One such ritual appears to be the '*Khytsri Ma:vas*'¹. In this way they adopted a number of rituals of the *Pisha:chas* and *Yakshas* and thus they were allowed to continue their stay in the valley². It is a busy day for the children because they are generally very fond of hotchpotch prepared on the occasion. Cleaning of the utensils and besmearing of the kitchen and its washing is done early in the morning. Uncrushed beans '*Moong*' is kept for sprouting early in the day. In the evening the hotchpotch is prepared with utmost care and sanctity. A few people prepare non-vegetarian hotchpotch on this occasion. After its proper oblation it is put in an earthen plate and kept at a place outside the house preferably on the boundary wall of the house for the '*Yaksha*'.³ A red chilli a few pieces of radish and a little pickle is put on it according to the family customs. Some people prepare vegetarian hotchpotch while others cook rice and the black beans for the house-hold animal like cows and the cattle if there are any in that house. After offering it to the *Yaksha*, it is served to the domestic animal along with a few pieces of Radish. The left over from the hotchpotch prepared for the '*Yaksha*' is taken by the members of the family along with pieces of radish and pickle. It is a common belief that the *Yakshas* are set free from this day onwards up to the '*Ti:li A:Tham*', the eighth day of bright half of the month of '*Phalgun*.' It is believed that the *Yakshas* roam freely in lower regions and have their sway on the whole valley during the winter season from this day onwards.

¹ Bamzai, P.N.K., *A History of Kashmir*, 2nd Ed. 1973, Ps. 16-17.

² *Ibid.*, P. 73.

³ An attendant employed to guard the gardens and treasures of *Kubera*, who is believed to be in charge of the treasures of gods.

40. *Shishar SA:nkra:th* -(*Sankranti*) To Resolve a 'Ka:ngri:' for the manes.

It is the day of performing rites in the memory of our deceased ancestors and is held on the first of 'Magha' when the sun enters the Zodiac Capricorn according to the solar calendar. Early in the morning, houses are cleaned and washed. The out side area of the house is also cleaned. A line of lime powder mixed with a few grains of seamsum is drawn around the house and in its interior corridors. The month of *Magha* is considered as the middle of the long spell of winter and it is generally severe cold in the valley during this period. People purchase fire pots and other accessories required to fight the cold. Hence a similar feeling must have developed in the mind of the early man in respect of his manes and ancestors. A firepot, rice, flour, walnuts, salt, woollens, spices and cereals are offered to the priest on this day after resolving them in the name of manes. This appears to be a ritual peculiar to the climatic conditions of the valley like the '*Nirjala Ekadeshi*', which is celebrated throughout northern India during the summer month of '*Je'shta*'. It being the '*Sankranti*' of the month of '*Magha*', people make sweetmeats, and puddings and serve it to the neighbours and the family members. The devotees keep a fast and refrain from taking salt.

The fire-pot, commonly known as '*Ka:nglr*' has deeply been associated with the rites and rituals of the people of the valley. It is generally a close associate of every person, young and old, from the beginning of cold that starts from the month of November and continues beyond March when the spring season sets in. It is because of this very fact that we have some very common riddles about this period, which besides pin pointing the months of cold, explain our attachment towards '*Ka:ngiri*' that helps a common Kashmiri to fight the cold spell. It reads as under:-

MA:njho>r a:v tI Tsa:nDav log Ka:ngre',
Po>h a:v tI To>h bAriv Ka:ngre',
Mag:h a:v tI dra:g Vo>th Ka:ngre',
Pha:gum a:v tI za:gum hyo>tukh Ka:ngre'.

Meaning:

The month of *Maghar*, (Nov./Dec.) is to look for a *Ka:ngari*. Fill the fire-pot even with the rice-husk, because it is *Po>h* (December/ January),

It is the month of *Magh* (Jan./Feb.) and the *Ka:ngari* has become scarce,

Its existence becomes suspicious in the month of *Pha:lgun*, (February/March)

This festival appears to have emerged out of the mediation done by *Nila Nag* between the *Pishachas* and the *Aryan* settlers in the valley. The resident *Aryans* believed that the line of lime stone powder and the seamsum seeds, made round the house, stops the entry of the *Yakshas* and *Pishachas* into their residential houses. A similar type of a festival namely '*Lohari*' is celebrated in Jammu province. In the evening a bon fire is lit up and ground nuts and '*Re'waris*', a kind of crisp sesame-candy is offered to it. Thus the people of the plains bid goodbye to the winter season on this day. It is also known as '*Makar*' or '*Til*', '*Sankranti*' in the Indian sub-continent.

41. *Shiva Chaturdashi* - Meeting of Shiva and Shakti

It is believed that the first meeting between *Shiva* and *Parwati*, took place on the thirteenth day of the dark half of the month of *Magh* on her second birth in the house of *Himalaya* after she had immolated herself in the *Yajnya* of *Dhaksha Prajapati*. Hence, the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth day of the dark fortnight of the month of *Magh*, are celebrated as *Shiva Chaturdashi* in the whole valley as it is held in other parts of the sub-continent. These three

days are considered as of complete penance and worship and are also named as 'DAham', - the day of a single meal, 'Ka:h'-a day of no meals and 'Ba:h' - again a day of a single meal. The scriptures tell that by observing all the three days as fast-days, all the sins of an individual are washed away provided he refrains from all such sinful acts in future. Cleaning of the house, fasting and giving of alms to the needy and the deserving are the main celebrations on all the three days.

42. Rangl Do>y - The Day of Colours.

In Ancient times the people of the valley prepared images and portraits by using the local flowers and leaves of different colours and shades in place of modern synthetic colours as these were not available during those old days. The bright half of the month of *Magh* was specially dedicated for such prostrate making. All this was done for celebrating and making the portraits of Mother Goddess 'Saraswati' whose birthday is celebrated the following day. The portrait of goddess 'Saraswati' made on a sheet of paper contained a couplet written centrally in praise of the goddess. Now due to the fact that the portraits of different gods and goddesses are available in the market at much cheaper rates and also that the ready-made colours are easily available in the market, the handicraft of portrait making has come to an end including the labour involved in making such natural colours. Thus the result is that the importance of this festival has come to an end so much so that only a faint memory of the festival is alive in the minds of a few people now. In this way, the institution of Kashmir Ritual Painting and Portrait Making has come to an end.

43. Gorl Tray - The Day Consecrated to the Goddess Saraswati .

It is celebrated on the third day of the bright half of '*Magh*' and is dedicated to goddess '*Shakti*' in the form of '*Saraswati*'. It is also known as '*Gauri Tritiya*.' All the members of the family rise up early in the morning and after cleaning the house and besmearing it, the children wait eagerly for their *Kula Guru* who visits the houses of his devotees with a sheet of paper containing the images of various gods and goddesses with a couplet written in praise of goddess '*Saraswati*' at its center. Images of gods painted on it are generally those of '*Saraswati*', '*Lakshmi*' and '*Ganesh*'. In the middle of the sheet of paper it contains a couplet in praise of goddess '*Saraswati*'. The *Puranas* have given much importance to this day and it is said that people used to introduce their children to the alphabet/education on this day. Hence a day dedicated to the goddess '*Saraswati*.'

The other story connected with this day is from the *Shiva Purana*. It is said that *Daksh* *Prajapati*, the father of *Sati*¹ was not willing to marry his daughter with *Shiva*. But he had to bow before the wishes of his daughter and he had to marry his daughter with *Shiva* out of compulsion. Soon after he had to leave on an expedition to curb the '*Asuras*'. On his successful return, he performed a big *Hawan* to which he invited all the gods and goddesses except *Shiva*. This action of her father was unbearable for *Sati* who went to her parental house against the wishes of her husband to see the things for her self. Not bearing the insults for her husband from her father, she jumped into the ceremonial fire and immolated herself. On hearing the fate of *Sati* at her parental house, *Shiva* was furious and in his '*Ta:nDava*', dancing posture, he ordered his

¹ It is one of the names given to *Parvati*, the spouse of Lord *Shiva*.

'*Bairavas*'¹, to punish the wicked *Daksha* and he himself went into seclusion. In due course of time *Sati* was reborn in the house of *Himalaya* in the form of *Parwati* who did a long penance so as to please Lord *Shiva*, who was much annoyed due to the fact that *Sati* had not taken his advice and had attended the *Yajnya* of *Daksha* against his wishes. It was due to the efforts of gods and the long penance of *Parwati* that *Shiva* was pleased and graced *Parwati* with his presence on the thirteenth day of the dark half of the month of *Magha*, commonly known as *Shiva Chaturdashi*. *Himalaya* was very much pleased to accept *Shiva* as his son-in-law. *Na:rada*² shuttled as a mediator between the gods, *Shiva*: and *Himalaya*. Finally he was deputed by *Himalaya* to go to *Kailasha*³ along with '*Lagnl Chandrika*':⁴. The day for the marriage was fixed on the thirteenth day of the dark half of the month of *Phalgun*, commonly known as '*He'rath*'. This episode, as contained in the *Shiva Purana* and *Shiva Parinay*, is repeated on the '*Gauri Tiritiya*', commonly known as the '*Gorl Tray*' because on this day the *Kula Guru* visits the house of his hosts and presents to them a paper sheet containing the portraits of goddesses *Saraswati*, *Lakshmi* and Lord *Ganesha*. Children wait for the arrival of the priest very impatiently as it is a day of joy for them. They compare the

pictures on their papers with those given to the other children.

Besides, the word '*Gorl Tray*' contains one more literal meaning of a picture; a portrait, printed cloth, an image or writing on paper containing more bright/dark colours and in abundance is given this name. A faulty white washing or besmearing profusely or defectively with different bright colours on the walls/paper with clay and water or colours too is named as '*Gorl Tray*'. The ritual of presenting the said portrait on the scheduled date of the year has since ceased with the advent of printing press and the change in our social status.

44. *Bhishml A:Tham*- The Anniversary of *Bhishma Pitamah*.

Bhishama, the famous character of the great epic *Mahabharata*, the grand uncle of the *Kauravas* and *Pandavas* is known in the scriptures as '*Pitamah*' meaning grand father, elder person, who had pledged to remain un-married all his life for the service of *Hastinapur*, the joint kingdom of the *Kauravas* and the *Pandavas*. In the great war of *Mahabharata* he sided with the *Kauravas* due to compulsion as *Dhritarashtra*, the *Kaurav* king was at that time on the throne of *Hastinapur*, also known as *Indraprastha*. *Bhishma*, as per his promise, had pledged to remain loyal to the ruler though he knew that the king was on the wrong track. *Arjuna* in the Great War killed him. As he was a bachelor throughout his life, and that there was no body to offer him water after his death, Lord *Krishna* gave him a boon for his long service and dedication to the kingdom when *Bhishma* himself laid his deathbed in the midst of the battle field because he had got a boon fro his 'wishful' death from *Brahma*. *Krishna* wished that he be given water by all the followers of His faith on the day of his

¹ These are terrible and awful companions at the service of Lord *Shiva*.

² He is considered as a messenger of gods and other heavenly bodies and has been bestowed with eternal life by the gods.

³ It is the abode of Lord *Shiva* in the *Himalayas* also known as *Kailash Parbat* or *Kailasha*, one of the peaks of the *Himalayas*.

⁴ It is commonly known as '*Lagnl Chiri*'. It comprises a portrait of a god and his spouse in the '*Jai mala*' posture and the details regarding the position of the heavenly bodies at the auspicious time '*Mahurta*', of marriage and also the names and the '*Gotras*' of the bride and the groom, if available. It also includes the timings for holding different marriage rituals and the number of guests, etc, to accompany the marriage party. The practice of presenting the '*Lagnl Chiri*' is an important function of a marriage among the Kashmiri Pandits and the priest from the bride's side visits the groom's house a few days before the actual date of wedding, along with the portrait.

death as if his own grand children. It is said that he breathed his last on the eighth day of the bright half of the month of *Magh*. So all the followers of Lord *Krishna* offer water to '*Bhishma*' on his death anniversary which falls on the eighth bright half of the month of *Magh*. His death anniversary remains unchanged and the influence of any change in '*Tithi*', commonly known, as '*Deva Dev*' does not effect the date of his anniversary as contained in our scriptures.

45. *Ka:vI Punim (Ma:gl Punim)* – A Day Dedicated to the Birds.

The bright fifteenth day of the month of *Magh* is dedicated to the birds particularly, the crow. Hence, the day is called '*Ka:v Punim*'. '*Ka:v*' is the Kashmiri name for the crow. People get up early in the morning and after cleaning the whole house and the surroundings and besmearing or washing its front corridors, they take a bath and keep a fast for the full day. The devotees take a single meal on this day. The day is also celebrated as the *Magh Purnima* like the rest of the sub-continent. It is a day of attraction for children. They serve rice and vegetables to the crow on a plate woven out of grass and small sticks with a handle called '*Ka:v Po>tul*'.¹ The elders of the house prepare it one each for their children and in the afternoon food is offered to the crow jointly by all the children at the house top and the following folk song is sung on the occasion to invite the crow: -

Ka:v baTlI ka:vo, khe'tsire' ka:vo,
Ka:v tI ka:vini' sA:ti: hyath,

¹ It is made with the help of two sticks, one short and another long. The short one is kept cross-wise on the long one at its one end and then a rough mat of grass is wound around it. The long end of the stick serves as a handle of the squire shaped mat plate thus formed on which food is served to the crow.

GangA: BaA: ¹ shra:na:h kaRith,
GuTe' me'tse' Tyoka: kaRith,
Vozllay pa:Te' yonya:h tshlnith,
Wo>llba: sa:ne' nave' lare',
KanA:dare' vare' batA: khe'ne'.

Translation:

Oh crow, dear crow, Oh hotchpotch loving crow,
(You come) along your spouse.
After taking a bath in the *Gangl Bal Lake*,
(You come) with a marking of brown² clay on
your fore-head,
(You come) wearing a Sacred Thread made out of
red cotton, '*NA:rivan*'.

You come to the edge of the roof of our new
residential house,

And take your favourite hotchpotch.

While singing the folk song, the stick and the food
on it is moved lightly to and fro and at the end of the song
the grass plate containing the food is kept gently on the
floor. The birds come in large numbers and eat it.

There appear to be some religious directions for
our love for the crow. It is because of this very fact that
we have a mention of this bird in the *Ramayana* in the
form of a conversation between "*Kak Buhsandi*" and
others.

The full month of '*Magha*' is considered to be
most auspicious of all the months. Some Hindus keep fast
for the full month and perform '*DAhAm*' '*KA:shi*', and
'*BA:shi*' for the full month. That is they take a single meal

¹ The name of the famous place of pilgrimage *Ganglbal* or the *HarI MukaTa Gango*: as already described under the heading '*Gangl A:Tham*'.

² Brown clay is of immense importance in performing religious praxis. Places meant for religious activities are besmeared by the Hindus of Kashmir with this type of clay. The scriptures have described the brown clay as the best purifier of all dirt and impurities and the Brahmins have particularly been directed to use it. It is because of all these qualities that the places meant for religious activities are besmeared with this clay only.

on the first and the third day whereas they pass the second day without taking any meals for the full day. They adopt this pattern of fasting for the whole month and earn the blessings of Almighty God. The scriptures have given much importance to this month. Our folk songs too have given a vivid description about the piety of this month in the following words: -

*Ma:gl ma:sas yus shra:n sandhya: kari,
Lukl hlnz nye'ndhya kya:h kari tas
Ta:v Ta:v wo>thi tas tl ka:v be'he's kanl dari,
suy so>ri gari gari Hari Na:ra:n.*

Translation:

One who bathes and performs his (morning) rituals in the month of *Magh*,

How can the backbiting by others affect him?

All shall welcome him loudly as if a crow sits on the edge of his housetop.

He alone will always remember 'Hari Narayana (God).

46. He'arath, VATUKH - Shiva Ratri.-

Shiva Ratri is one of the most important festivals celebrated by Kashmiri Pandits. The festivities start from the first day of the dark half of the month of '*Phalgun*' and these continue for the full fortnight. This festival has been prevalent in Kashmir and other parts of northern India especially the Himalayan belt since times immemorial¹. The first eight days are meant for cleaning the house and washing clothes, starting from the first day called '*Huri*' *O>kdo'*. The word, '*Hur*' means the cotton piece of cloth, which is used as a scrub while besmearing the house with brown clay-water mixture. All the fifteen days of the fortnight and the mode of work to be

¹ Aspects of Religion in Indian Society (Meerat), 1961. '*Hearth*', by Madan, N., Ed. By, Vidyarthi.

undertaken on these occasions are contained in the following riddle: -

*Akh tl akh Kho>da:ya: , ZI tl zin gyaDIra: ,
Trayshkal Du: na: , Tsor ku:nj a:lam.
PA:ntsh gAyi Pa:nDav , She: ' tl she' Re'shi: ,
Sath za:ll satam , A:Th Huri A:Tham,
Nav tsitlr navam , DAh dya:rl dAhAm,
Ka:h ga:DI ka:h , VagIri ba:h,
He'rItsl truva:h , Kra:ll tso>da:h,
Du:ni ma:vas , SozIni o>kдох,
Wa:h BA:li wa:h tl wa:h BA:li wa:h.*

Translation:

First is God Himself. The second is a bunch of faggots, The third is a three-part walnut. The whole world is four-cornered,

Five were the *Pandavas*. Six are the six Schools of Thought. (which one must endure).¹

The seven are the seven flames of goddess *Jwala*,²

The eighth is the day of besmearing,

Ninth is the day for meditation, (Or the ninth day of the dark fortnight of *Chaitra*, known as *Ram Navami*).

The tenth is the day for spending money,

The eleventh is the day of feasting on fish,

Twelfth is the day of receiving the messenger, '*Va:gur*'

The thirteenth is day for *Shiva Ratri*,

Fourteenth is the day for the potter and people of other occupations.³

The fifteenth is the day of the walnuts.

The first is the day of distribution of {walnuts etc.}.

Oh young lady it is an occasion of merry-making,

¹ These are the six schools of thought, known as '*ShaD Darshan*'. - 1, *Shiksha* (Education), 2. *Kalpa* (Thought) 3. *Vyakarana* (Differentiation), 4. *Nirukhta* (Expansion) 5 *Chanda* (Intension) and 6. *Jyotish* (Brilliance).

² The scriptures say that goddess *Jwala* has seven tongues. As such the fire god is called '*Safta Jyovha*'

³ The day is known as '*Sala:ni*' in the common Kashmiri language. O., this date different members of the society concerned with different professions and occupations visit the houses of the Hindus and receive gratifications.

Oh beautiful one, it is a matter of joy.

The celebrations in the houses start from the very first day. The elder ladies of the house start cleaning and washing the house and clothes after the long spell of winter and children open their small bags containing colourful cowries for a fortnight's celebrations. The same schedule of washing and cleaning continues for the full week.

47. *Huri A:Tham* - The night of meditation.

This day is considered as one of the holiest days of this fortnight dedicated to the worship of Mother Goddess '*Ragnya*': On this day thousands of people visit '*Po>khribal*', situated to the east of the Hari Parbat hillock. Here is a small spring and temple of *RA:gnya: Di:vi*.¹ People take sweetmeats and pudding etc., for oblation and the devotees spend the whole night in prayers and worship. The local temples also throng with the local populace.

The ninth day is meant for rest. In the evening or on the tenth day morning women-folk visit the houses of their parents. They generally return to their homes on the same day except in the case of the newly wed that return the next day or on the day of the main function, i.e., *Shiva Ratri*. Every lady is given a fire-pot, a pair of slippers,² salt, bread, *ATIho>r*, and *Atlgath* (pocket money) by their parents/ brothers. They return to their houses with all these presents. The newly wed have to bring a number of additional presents for their in-laws in addition to those mentioned above. Generally they bring the following articles in a steel trunk or in a suitcase: -

1. A suit of clothes for her own self and for her husband,

2. Some curd and bakery breads for distribution among the neighbours and relatives of her in-laws.
3. *Bal-Syun*. (Some rice and cash to meet the charges on account of feasting, etc.)
4. *He'rIIs KharIch* (cash gratification as a present for her husband, all the children and her youngsters at the in-law's house.

In this way the tenth day is a day of spending for the father of the bride and the day of receiving the gifts for the groom's family. It is probably due to this very reason that the day is called as '*dya:rl dAham*', or 'the tenth day of transactions'.

48. *Ga:dl Ka:h* -

The Day For of preparing the Feast.

The eleventh day is for selecting and purchasing of vegetables, fish etc., for the day of the main function. Women remain busy washing and cleaning all the vegetable etc, and for preparing dishes including fish. In the real sense the cheerfulness of the coming festival starts from this day.

49. *Va:gIri Ba:h*. -

A Ritual Prior To The Main Function

The root words appear to be, '*Vagesh Dwadashi*' which has taken the changed form of '*Va:gIri Ba:h* in the spoken Kashmiri. The literal meaning of the word '*Vagesh*' is '*Brihaspati*', the teacher (*Guru*) of the gods. It also means a person who is an eloquent speaker. In view of the fact that '*Va:gur*' is the deity who arrives a day earlier to inform about *Shiva's* marriage, hence the messenger is called '*Vagesh*' or '*Va:gur*'. Besides other shades of meaning, it also means, *Brahma*, the creator of this universe.

On the twelfth day a fresh earthen or a metal bowl is placed on a woven grass ring called, '*A:r*' at the place

¹ It is a name given the Mother Goddess.

² In the past the newly wed were given wooden slippers, known as '*Khrav*' by their parents.

hich is earmarked for decorating the 'VaTukh'¹ next day. The 'Va:gur', a messenger of the coming deity and his marriage party, is placed at a well besmeared place. The word 'Va:gur' is no more in use in the present Kashmiri language in the sense of a messenger or otherwise. There is only one proverbial use of the word like, 'Va:gli Batni Ga:v' meaning a person, preferably a lady moving freely, aimlessly and without any worry or restrictions like a stray animal. Here it is used as the nomenclature of a person having such qualities

In the evening freshly prepared rice and vegetables are offered to it as an oblation.

50. Shiva Ra:tri - The Night Dedicated to Lord Shiva .

It is a very busy day for all the family members. Women start cleaning and besmearing the rooms and the place of the 'VaTukh' from early in the morning. Young people collect/purchase fresh flowers and other scented leaves like the 'Bel', leaves of the wood apple and 'Patlr', etc. and prepare garlands of these flowers and scented leaves called 'VusIri'. Small and big rings called, 'A:ri' are made of paddy grass to serve as the seats for the deities. The elderly person/lady of the house observes a fast on this day till the offerings are made to the deity in the evening. The place of the deity, called the 'VaTakh KuTh' is decorated with flowers, buntings and portraits of different deities. In the mean time the potter comes with a coop of fresh clay pots. The ritual of 'a:lath' is performed

soon as he reaches at the gate of the house¹. Here the potter is not to pay anything for his entry into the house instead he gets a handsome gratification from the head of the family at this time². He also gets the cost of the earthen pots that he brings on the next day.

Immediately on the arrival of the pots, the whole situation of the house changes. The pots are decorated with garlands, flowers and scented leaves. The big pitcher and the medium one are filled with walnuts of the best quality. The ladies of the house start their chores in the kitchen preparing all the vegetables/ meat/ fish according to their family customs and traditions. The 'VaTukh' was previously taken to the river *Vitasta* or to a local stream or spring for washing it and filling it with fresh water. Now taps are fitted in every house so the question of going to the *Vitasta* or to the local streams for the purpose, does not arise. However, in the villages people still take the 'VaTukh' to the local streams or springs for this purpose. After washing the 'VaTukh' it is decorated with vermilion and 'NA:rivan', garlands, flowers and is kept at the place fixed for it along with other pots according to the family traditions, on the seats of grass-rings. All the members of the family assemble for offering collective prayers to the deity as soon as it is dark in the evening. Video cassettes and tapes, containing the 'VaTakh Pu:za', are played till late in the night. Some of the devotees wait till the arrival of the priest who performs some of the necessary rituals on the occasion while others do it on their own and after making offerings to the deity according to their own family traditions they complete the function.

The number of utensils used as 'VaTukh' on the occasion, are generally according to ones own family traditions, rituals and customs. Common lists of such

¹ The clay or metal pots and utensils, big and small used collectively for the ritual. These include the pitchers (big and medium), and other pots of different shape and size, called the 'VaTukh' or 'VaTakh Ra:zi'. The big pitcher represents 'Shakhti/Parvati', the medium one is considered as 'Shiva' whereas the other smaller pots are adored as the 'Bhairavas' a 'Rishi:' and a point-topped, 'Shivaligam' shaped pot known as 'Sani Po>tul' all accompanying the *Barat* of 'Lord' Shiva.'

¹ Due to the change in times, people generally prefer metal pots now. Hence the visit of the potter on this occasion is no more in practice.

² He is given some rice, cash gratification and a few walnuts on this occasion.

utensils that generally comprise the 'VaTukh,¹ and are adorned and worshipped at this hour are listed as under: -

1. No>L- (One), A big pitcher made of clay or metal. It represents *Shakhti*: or Mother Goddess. It is filled with walnuts and decorated with flowers and garlands.
2. NA:r- (One), A medium sized pitcher of clay or metal. It represents *Shiva* commonly known 'Ra:mi Go>d'. This too is filled with walnuts and decorated with flowers and garlands
3. *Dul* (one) A large bowl-like pot. It represents one of the 'Bhairavas' among the *Baratis* of *Shiva*. A major portion of the offerings is put into this pot.
4. *Dulji* (one/two), small bowls. These too represent the 'Bhairavas' accompanying the *Barat*. Offerings are made to them also.
5. *Reshi Pya:li*, (one), A cup shaped bowl. It represents the *Rishi* accompanying the *Barat*. It is served milk, sugar and a piece of radish, etc., according to ones family rites and customs and it is considered to be a completely vegetarian *Barati*.
6. *Va:ri* (Four) small toy pots. Two of these are called 'Sani Va:ri'² and the remaining two represent the *Baratis*. One walnut in each of these is kept till they are served with the share of the offerings.
7. Small spout pots, called 'Nayi V:ari' (two.) They too represent members of the marriage party and are given offerings as usual.
8. A stand for burning incense, called 'Dupl Zu:r'
9. An earthen lamp kept burning for all the days of the festival. Oil is used in it for the purpose.

¹ Walter, Lawrence, R., *The Valley of Kashmir*, 1895, (University Press, London) P.266.

² The small two toy pots which are always washed and filled with fresh water every morning and served with a little food cooked for he family, These are considered as the confluence of the holy Gangā and Yamuna. Thus they are the bodyguards for the welfare and prosperity of the family. For details see chapter xvii. 'Sani Va:ri'.

10. A lamp with a stand called 'Rattan Di:ph' lighted at the time of offering prayers. Ghee is used in this lamp.
11. A big earthen saucer called, 'Tok' for kindling charcoal/ fire for making offerings and some small earthen plates called, 'Parvi' for burning Camphor, etc.
12. *Sani po>tul*. It is a pointed 'Linga:' type pot with a stand. It is the main item of worship on the occasion. It is worshipped with water, milk, curd and flowers. It has the same place in the *Shiva* worship on this day as is the importance of 'Saligra:m'¹ in the worship of Lord *Vishnu*.

The word 'Sani Po>tul' appears to be derived from the Sanskrit words, 'Samridhi Puṭa'. While the meaning of the former is wealth, happiness and prosperity, the latter means an 'image' or an 'effigy'. In view of the fact that it is prominently worshipped on this day, it appears that the original words have undergone phonetic change and are pronounced as 'Sani Po>tul' in the Kashmiri language as is the case with the 'Sani Va:ri' referred to in the earlier chapters.

Some of the Kashmiri Hindu families remain completely vegetarian for all the days of the festival from the tenth day to the fourteenth day of the fortnight. They are known as "Guriti". These families prepare non-vegetarian dishes on concluding day of the festival; which is also celebrated as 'Du:ni Ma:vas'.² Due to the change in diet by the said class of Kashmiri Pandits, it is also nick-named as 'Dambni Ma:vas', for they cook the innards of a sheep or goat on the fifteenth day of the dark fortnight of *Phalgun*.

The morning and evening prayers are held in every home on each consecutive day after the night of

¹ A small round idol of Lord Vishnu.

² In case the Shiv Ratri is held on the twelfth day of the dark half of *Phalgun*.

Shiva Ra:tri till its final *Puja* or farewell held on the evening of fourth and final evening.

51. He'rtsI Sala:m Shiva Ra:tri Good Wishes

The next day of the main festival of *Shiva Ra:tri* or the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight of *Phalgun*, is celebrated as the '*Sala:m*'. Elderly lady of the house gets up early in the morning and cleans the '*VaTakh KuTh*, known as '*Ma:rgan Dini*.' '*Ma:rgan*' is a Sanskrit word meaning 'cleaning'. There is a great rush of people at the *Shiva* temples. People go there for oblation after bathing and wearing colourful dresses and it has been a practice for centuries in the valley. '*Sala:m*' is an 'Arabic' word generally used by the Muslims when they wish non-Muslims. Friends belonging to other castes, faiths, communities and helpers in our social life, like the blacksmith, the carpenter, the potter, the post-man, the cobbler, the watchman, the lines-man etc., come and receive gratifications from the head of the family as a gesture of good will. In some families arrangements for feasting are made for all these people. The potter, besides the gratifications, gets the price money of the pottery supplied by him and also a few walnuts and some rice. That is why the fourteenth day of this fortnight has been described as the 'Potter's fourteenth' in the folk song already quoted. Children spend the day in playing with the cowries whereas the young spend it in playing various games including cards. The elderly people are busy in greeting guests and friends. All spent the day in merry-making and rejoicing. In the afternoon children gather round their parents, grand parents, uncles and aunts and extract as much money from them as they can in the form of pocket money called '*HayrIts Kharlch*'. The children of the family, where a new bride has arrived during the

year of the festival, get a handsome amount of money as '*HayrIts Kharlch*' from the parents of the bride at least for the first year which diminishes with years to come and ultimately ceases after a few years.

It may be recalled that '*Shiva Ra:tri*' as a festival is celebrated on this date throughout the sub-continent and there is a national holiday on this date.

52. Du:ni Ma:vas - The Final Send Off to Shiva Ra:tri

The fifteenth day of the dark half or the first day of the bright half of the month of *Phalgun*, as the case may be, is a day of the farewell. In the evening small cakes of rice flour, called '*tsho>chi wAri*', are baked. Flowers and garlands used on the night of *Shiva Ra:tri* and on subsequent days, the grass seats of the deities, are collected in a basket and the water contained in the pitchers is poured out into a vessel. All this is immersed into a stream/river/pond etc. This ritual is known as '*VaTukh Parmu:zun*' or bidding good bye to the deity. A few of the walnuts are broken and their kernels and the cakes made of rice flour are distributed among all as the oblation. From this day onwards walnuts and breads are sent to all the relatives and neighbours. In the present set-up a considerable change has been witnessed in the ritual, known as '*VaTukh Parmu:zun*'. The function is now held in the morning instead of holding it in the evening, perhaps due to paucity of time available with the devotees. But this is not in conformity with the *Dharama Shastra* or even according to our age-old set social traditions. We bid farewell to our daughters after marriage in the evening and not in the morning. That is why night weddings were not in practice in the valley of Kashmir till recently. No doubt, there could be some social or other barriers for not holding such weddings.

During the first year of marriage, a bride takes a large number of walnuts, breads and cash presents for her in-laws, which gradually diminishes as years pass. It is a hectic week for all during which the oblation of walnuts and breads are to be sent to the relatives and friends. The activity comes to an end on 'Ti:II A:Tham' the eighth day of the bright half of the month of *Phalgun*, the last date fixed for sending and receiving such oblations.

53. Ti:II A:Tham –

Offering Oil Lamps to the Manes.

The eighth day of the bright half of the month of *Phalgun* is celebrated as 'Ti:II A:Tham'. It is also the last date for distribution of walnuts etc., the oblation of the *Shiva Ra:tri* festival because after this date no such oblation is generally distributed.

On this day oil lumps are lit in honour of the manes. Early in the morning the corridors and the front portion of the house is duly washed and cleaned. Rice is cooked with fresh water. The potter arrives with a gift of eight un-burnt earthen lamps. These are placed at a well besmeared place on grass rings called 'A:ri'. Each lamp is provided with two cotton wicks. One is lit in the morning and the other in the evening. Sesame and oil is burnt in these lamps. In the afternoon cooked rice, sesame, and a red turnip¹ are put before the lamps in the name of our manes. In the evening the lamps are again lit and one lamp each along with the grass ring, is kept in the street, on a heap of garbage, at the river/stream bank, at the cow shed, at the temple, on the front corridor and one each in all other rooms of the house. In the evening

¹ The turnip is resolved in the name of the manes on this date. It is an old belief that its use as a vegetable is not made in a particular year beyond this date after it is resolved on the occasion. There is a riddle in Kashmiri language, namely, 'Phagnii Gogjan sa:dlyi' kyah', meaning 'the turnip is a tasteless vegetable after the month of *Phalgun* sets in.'

children tie up worn out ropes/rags to the outer wicket baskets of the broken firepots and put them on fire. These are revolved round the heads after they catch fire and the following riddle is repeated:-

'Ja TA:n TA:n' 'Ja TA:n TA:n'.

It appears a riddle having originated from the Sanskrit language, 'Jitah Antatah', meaning 'we have won in the long run' as the concluding days of winter have set in and by putting the old and worn out 'fire-pots' to flames, we bid good bye to winter and rejoice for the coming spring. It is also said that on this date the rule of the 'Pishachas' and other aboriginal people of the valley comes to end and they recede to the remote forest areas making way for the 'Aryans' to reside in the valley as per the agreement arrived at under the chairmanship of *Nilā*.

54. Sonth -

Advent of Spring

It is celebrated on the first of *Chaitr*, the twelfth month of the *Vikram* era and is commonly known as 'Sonth'. On the concluding day of *Phalgun*, a 'Tha:l' full of rice is kept in the bed room. On it is kept, a bread, some salt, walnuts, a pen, an inkpot, milk, a handful of cooked rice, a mirror, a coin, a bunch of flowers, some blades of green grass and the almanac of the year. On the next day, the first of *Chaitr*, the person, preferably among the small kids in the family who rises up first in the morning shows the 'Tha:l' to all the members of the family, called 'Buth Wuchun' and thus becomes entitled to get some more gratifications from the head of the family besides the money which had been placed on the 'Tha:l' on the previous night.¹ All the members of the family look at all the things put in the 'Tha:l' when they wake up, considering it as a good omen for the coming spring. Small children are anxious to rise first on this date in the hope of getting gratifications. Till recently people

¹ Keys to Kashmir, (Lalla Rukh Publications, Srinagar) 1953, P.80.