



Customs Study of People of Ravi River Basin in Himachal Pradesh

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Abstract: In Ravi River basin certain age-old customs are practiced by most of the Hindu population regarding the birth of children and during the period of pregnancy a woman led a normal life and not permitted to go to the cremation ground, forest, River or in front of a dead body and also prohibited from coming out of the house during an eclipse. At the time of delivery a Dai (midwife) attended to her and soon after its birth, the child was bathed in warm water and given honey to taste and a Ghut, a mixture of herbs boiled in water, was also given to the new born child. On the day of the guntar ceremony, all the clothes of the mother were washed and the house was cleaned. A mixture of guntar (urine of cow), Gangajal and milk was sprinkled all over the house. The purohit decides about the name of the child after applying astrological permutations and combinations (Punjab States Gazetteers, 1912). After two and a half years, the hair of the child is cut for the first time and a member of the family cut the hair with scissors and a feast is arranged for relatives and neighbours (Himachal Pradesh Gazetteers, 1963). The people of Ravi River basin in Himachal Pradesh have preferred for arranged marriage system and marriages are arranged by their parents after tallied horoscopes of girl and boy. The marriage customs of the Muslim are different from the Hindus and Marriage is fixed by the Maulvi. Marriage ceremonies of Chamba Himalaya Sikhs are very simple and the ceremony is performed by taking four rounds of the Guru Granth Sahib. Divorce is permitted and can be initiated by the aggrieved party on grounds of infidelity and incompatibility of mature, with socio-judicial approval. Dowry system is spread all over the basin of River in Himachal Pradesh and all the people of this basin give and take dowry depends on their economic position. Dowry, in the strict sense of the term, does not exist among the Gaddis. Hindus cremate their dead and the cremation took place before sunset (Gazetteer of Chamba, 1904). Among the Muslims, a dying person is removed over to floor. The body is then taken to the graveyard, on a cot carried by four persons. The death customs of Sikhs have the same ritual as the Hindus.

Keywords: Customs, Birth, Ceremony, Sanskar, Marriage.

Introduction: Certain age-old customs are practiced in Ravi River basin in Himachal Pradesh by most of the Hindu population regarding the birth of children. During the period of pregnancy a woman led a normal life and she was not permitted to go to the cremation ground, forest, River or in front of a dead body and also prohibited from coming out of the house during an eclipse. At the time of delivery a Dai (midwife) attended to her and soon after its birth, the child was bathed in warm water and given honey to taste and a Ghut, a mixture of herbs boiled in water, was also given to the new born child. For the first five days a child is not to be shown to outsiders. A sickle or axe was kept under the pillow of the woman all the time to ward off any evil eye (Punjab States Gazetteers, 1904). On the day of the guntar ceremony, all the clothes of the mother were washed and the house was cleaned. A mixture of guntar (urine of cow), Gangajal and milk was sprinkled all over the house. The ceremony was performed for a period of 11 days among the Brahmins; 13 days among the Rajputs, and 22 days among other castes. After purification the child was weighed in a physical balance with grains which were then given to the priest who performed the ceremony. This ceremony was called *Tuladan*. This ceremony was held after the first, third, seventh, or ninth month of birth of the child. On any appointed day all the

neighbours and relatives were invited and a small feast was given. The newly born child was brought before the gathering. The *purohit* decides about the name of the child after applying astrological permutations and combinations (Punjab States Gazetteers, 1912). When the child was eight or ten months old he or she was given some solid food to eat for the first time. On an auspicious day, fixed by *purohit*, *kheer* was prepared and put to the tongue of the child for the first time. After two and a half years, the hair of the child is cut for the first time. Any member of the family cut the hair with scissors. On this day, a feast is arranged and relatives were invited (Himachal Pradesh Gazetteers, 1963). The *jamini* (birthday) ceremony was held every year. On the occasion the *purohit* was invited to complete the ceremony and relatives were feasted. Most of the people have preferred for arranged marriage system and marriages are arranged by their parents. The horoscope of the girls and boy are tallied and if the horoscopes of both are found favourable the ceremony proceeds further. The marriage customs of the Muslim are performed in manner that is different from the Hindus and Marriage is fixed by the *Maulvi*. A day before the marriage, the hands of the bride and bridegrooms are smeared with *Mehndi*. Marriage ceremonies of Chamba Himalaya Sikhs are very simple and the ceremony is performed by taking four rounds of the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Divorce is permitted and can be initiated by the aggrieved party on grounds of infidelity and incompatibility of mature, with socio-judicial approval. A divorcee is compensated by way of returning the marriage expenses. Dowry system is spread all over the basin of River in Himachal Pradesh. All the peoples of this basin give and take dowry depends their position. Dowry, in the strict sense of the term, does not exist among the Gaddis. Hindus cremate their dead. The dying person was at once removed to the ground. If he happened to be on the cot while breathing his last, religious scriptures and *Geeta Path* were chanted by any member of the house. The cremation took place before sunset, and if a person died late in the evening, the cremation rites are postponed to the next day (Gazetteer of Chamba, 1904). Among the Muslims, a dying person is removed over to floor. When he expired, the body is bathed with warm water and wrapped in a coffin of bleached cloth. The body is then taken to the graveyard, on a cot carried by four persons. The death customs of Sikhs have the same ritual as the Hindus. After the fourth year, the soul of the dead person is believed to have become *Pitter*. This is celebrated in the same way, but the rituals are performed by the family priest. After this, the Brahmins are fed with good dishes every year during the period of *Shrads*.

Main Objectives of the study: The objective of the present study area is to: -

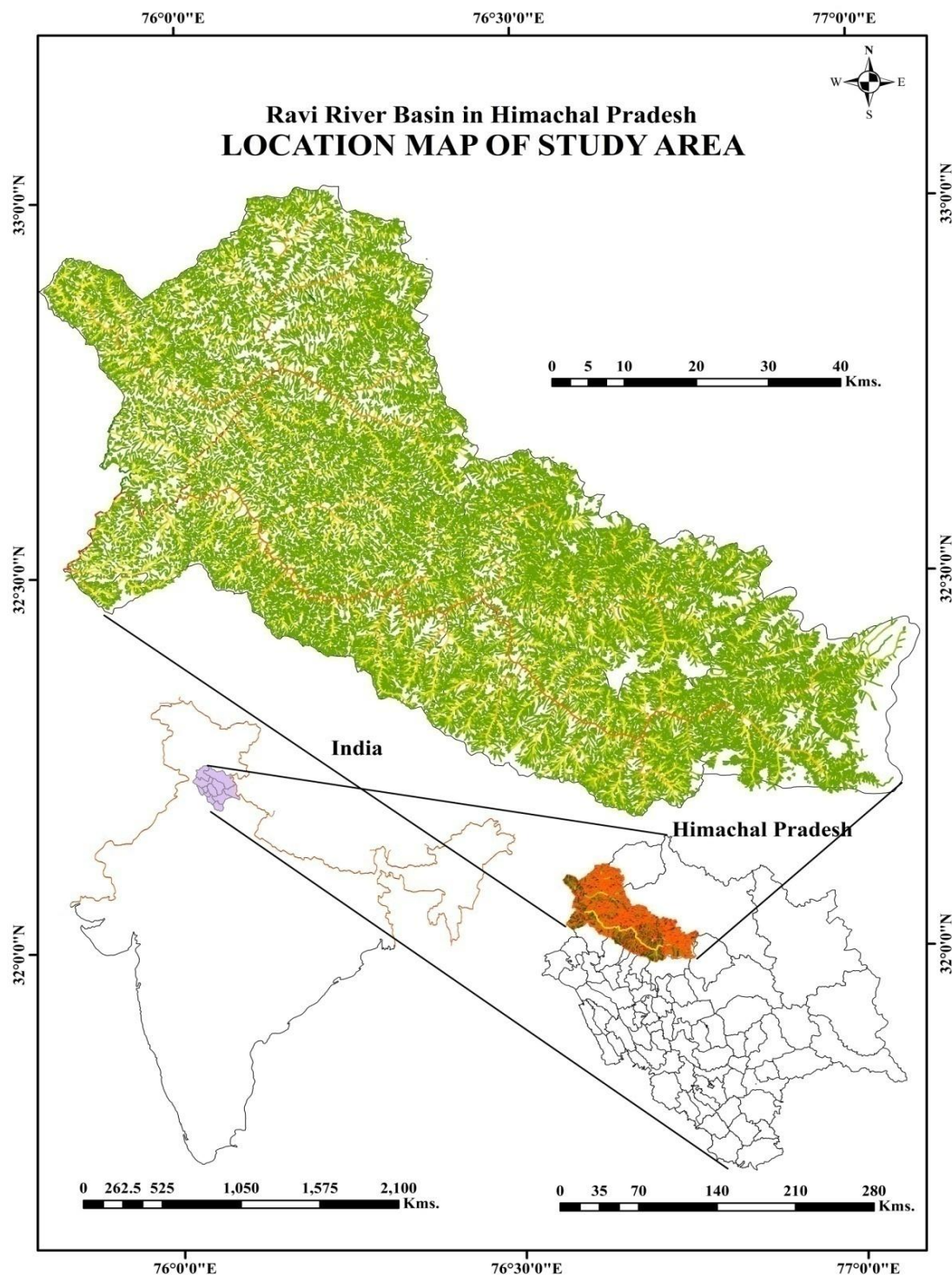
- To study main Customs of people of Ravi River Basin in Himachal Pradesh.

Data sources and Methodology:

The present study is based on secondary data as well as primary data. Data has been collected from Census data of 2001 and 2011 of Chamba and Kangra districts of Himachal Pradesh. The study area map was prepared with the help of ArcGis software. This study was guided by the different methodology like quantitative as well as qualitative. For compilation tabulation, mapping and analysis of data for cartographic techniques were pressed into service.

Study Area: The Ravi River Basin in Himachal Pradesh, Which lies in Kangra and Chamba districts of Himachal Pradesh, has been chosen for the present study. Geographically Ravi River (H.P.) Basin area is located between 32° 11' 30" to 33° 01' 5" North latitudes and 75°48' to 77°45' East Longitudes. The tract is mountainous, covered by the Dhauladhar and Pirpanjal ranges. The elevation varies from 559 meters to 5563 meters. On the other side the climate of the Ravi River Catchment area may be described as moderate summer and very cold winter. The precipitation is received in both during rainy season and winter season, but in high altitude an area in winter season receives precipitation is in the form of snow and in lower altitude area in the form of Rainfall from Monsoon winds as well as from Western Disturbance. The highest monthly temperature is experienced in June and lowest below 0°C in January. The Ravi River has a total of 5451 sq.Kms. Catchment area and its total length are about 158 Kms. in H.P. The Ravi River originates in Bara Bhangal area of the Multhan Tehsil of Kangra. This River rises at the elevation of 4300 mts on the southern side of the mid Himalayas. It flows through Bara Bhangal, Bara Bansu and Chamba District. It flows in forms of Rapids in its initial

reaches with boulders seen scattered in the bed of the River. The Ravi River in this reach flows in a gorge with a River bed slope of 1:185 feet per mile, and is mostly fed by snow. It is called Ravi after meeting two tributaries Tantgari and Badal in Bara Bhangal area of Kangra District. The main tributaries of Ravi River are Badal, Tantgari, Budhil, TundahNala, ChirchindNala, Nai, BatogNala, SahoNala, Baira and Siul etc. It left Himachal at Khairi and enters in Punjab (Fig.1).



Analysis of Study:

Some of the important social customs like marriage system, birth and death rites of the people in this basin are taken up for a study here:

Birth Customs

Certain age-old customs were practiced by most of the Hindu population regarding the birth of children. During the period of pregnancy a woman led a normal life. There were however, some things that she had to observe. She was not permitted to go to the cremation ground, forest, and River or in front of a dead body. She was also prohibited from coming out of the house during an eclipse. At the time of deliver a *Dai* (midwife) attended to her. Soon after its birth, the child was bathed in warm water and given honey to taste. *Ghut*, a mixture of herbs boiled in water, was also given to the child. For the first five days a child is not to be shown to outsiders. A sickle or axe was kept under the pillow of the woman all the time to ward off any evil eye (Punjab States Gazetteers, 1904).

Guntar

On the day of the *guntar* ceremony, all the clothes of the mother were washed and the house was cleaned. A mixture of *guntar* (urine of cow), *Gangajal* and milk was sprinkled all over the house. The ceremony was performed for a period of 11 days among the Brahmins; 13 days among the Rajputs, and 22 days among other castes. After purification the child was weighed in a physical balance with grains which were then given to the priest who performed the ceremony. This ceremony was called *Tuladan*.

Nam Sanskar or Kaharan

This ceremony was held after the first, third, seventh, or ninth month of birth of the child. On any appointed day all the neighbours and relatives were invited and a small feast was given. The newly born child was brought before the gathering. The *purohit* decides about the name of the child after applying astrological permutations and combinations (Punjab States Gazetteers, 1912).

Khirpu Custom

When the child was eight or ten months old he or she was given some solid food to eat for the first time. On an auspicious day, fixed by *purohit*, *kheer* was prepared and put to the tongue of the child for the first time.

Mundan Ceremony

After two and a half years, the hair of the child is cut for the first time. Any member of the family cut the hair with scissors. On this day, a feast is arranged and relatives were invited (Himachal Pradesh Gazetteers, 1963).

Birthday (*Jamini*) Custom

The *jamini* (birthday) ceremony was held every year. On the occasion the *purohit* was invited to complete the ceremony and relatives were feasted.

In Bharmour and Holi, birth of a child is considered an important social event by a married woman soon after the marriage. Among all the communities and castes there is no restriction on the movement of a pregnant woman. She would continue to work in the fields, tend the cattle and attend to household chores. In all respects she leads a normal life and takes the usual diet. It is believed that child is the gift of the *Lord Shiva*. The birth of a male child is also considered necessary due to a variety of reasons. They consider girls as the property of some other that go to their husband's house after marriage. Son is also considered essential for performing all the rituals after death of his parents. Male child is also preferred and desired as he can help his parents in agricultural operations and can look-after them in old age. Various death rites are performed by son only and this necessities, the birth of a male child. Then the birth of a male child is considered good as he continues the generations of a man, and keeps the names of his forefathers alive.

Old and experienced women among relatives or in the neighbourhood helped in the delivery at home but some of them are hospitalized. In case of the birth of a son, a man was send with drubh (a grass) to mother's parents who would receive the harbinger of the good news with the present of gur and Re.1 and special meals are prepared, sweets are distributed among friends and relatives, and cloth and cereal are given in charity to the priests. The *guntr* rite is performed on the fifth day after the birth of male

child. All the mother's clothes are washed, the house cleaned and a mixture gau mutar (cow urine), milk and Ganga's water thrown over all the clothes in the house and drunk by all, both young and old, who belonged to it. Then the parents of the child go to the purohit to ask him about the child's future and pay him some money. The child is named within six months when he/she is able to use his hands and feet. The parents usually choose the name, but sometimes it is left to the purohit. In others part of basin the birth rite are more or less similar.

Some Muslim birth customs in Chamba Himalaya resemble those of the Hindus. The Muslim women are not permitted to go near a graveyard and other prohibited areas during the period of pregnancy. After the birth the child, the *Maulvi* whispered *Alla-hu-Akbar* into the child's ears. The time of birth of a child, among the Muslims is not noted as in the case of *Hindus*.

Among the Sikhs an *Akhand Path* is arranged on the 10th day of the birth of the child. After that the *Chaunka Pavitra* rites were performed by offering holy water to both mother and child that is known as *Amrit Paan*. The first alphabet from the *GuruGranth Sahib* after the *Urdas* is the base for the child's name. When the child becomes young, a person from his maternal side presented him the turban (*Pagri*) which was called the *Dastarbandi* ceremony. *Akhand Path* is organized on this occasion.

Marriage Rites

As far as the marriage custom is concerned there are various steps:

Arranged Marriage

Most of the people have preferred the arranged marriage system. Usually marriages are arranged by the parents. The horoscope of the girls and boy are tallied. If the horoscopes of both are found favourable the ceremony proceeds further. The marriage process consisted of the following stage:

Mangni or Engagement

On this occasion the boy's father gives a pair of clothes to the girl and distributes sweets among the neighbours. An auspicious day is fixed for the marriage by a *pundit* in the presence of both parties. The *purohit* writes down all the programmes. This is known as *liknotri* (Veena Pathania). After this ceremony, the marriage takes place. During the day of the marriage, both the bride and bridegroom are strictly prohibited from going out of the house. A day before marriage, the hands of bride and groom are smeared with *mehandi*.

Marriage or Byah

An arranged marriage is called *byah*. Almost all the people of Chamba like to do the marriage in this manner. The people of Chamba Himalaya follow this method of marriage. During this kind of marriages, the ceremonies are celebrated as under.

Bath

This ceremony is performed one day before the departure of the *Barat*.

Tel Ceremony

In this ceremony the maternal uncle of the bride and bridegroom plays an important role. The bride and bridegroom sit before their family deity in a room. Oil is sprinkled over their heads with the help of a little bunch of glass (*drubh*) by their relatives and friends.

Barat

The marriage procession is known as the *barat* and *jani*. Before the start of the procession, the groom is worshipped by a lighted lamp. A pitcher filled with water is kept outside the main gate. The bridegroom put a coin on it (Rajesh Sehgal, 2009).

Milani

When the *barat* reaches the bride's house, the *milani* ceremony is performed in which the bride's father welcomes bridegroom's father and so on.

Vedi and Lagan

At an auspicious time, the groom accompanied by marriage party is led to the *Vedi*. A ceremony is performed by the priest amidst the chanting of Vedic hymns. The ceremony is called *lagan*. Once all the ceremonies have been performed, the girl and boy are declaring married. After this the marriage party leaves for the bridegroom's house along with the bride.

Marriage has always been considered as an instrument for the propagation of society by the Gaddis tribe society. However, the customs of marriage do not reflect the tribal characters. An elaborate marriage ceremony of Gaddis reflects the shastric nature of a Hindu marriage. This also corroborates the statement that the Gaddis are not tribal in the true sense of the term but they have been declared as a tribe mainly for the purpose of development in view of their social and economic backwardness.

Marriage is a must amongst the tribals. The Gaddis are monogamous. The boy and the girl are never consulted and the marriage is arranged by their parents or guardians. Traditionally, in the Gaddi society child marriages were practiced, but now adult marriages are in vogue, at the age of eighteen and above for girls and twenty one and above for boys (Kapoor, 1993). There is no restriction on anyone marrying within the village provided Gotra exogamy is maintained and that there is no common relative from the father's or mother's side up to three generations in the family one is marrying into. Restrictions exist in marrying into the families in which a sister or a daughter has been married with the exception in cases of economically poor families, where marriage by exchange practiced. Marriage rituals are performed at the bride's residence, including kanyadaan or sanklap and pradikshna or char phere (walking around the fire four times), with the bridal knot having been tied to the bride and the groom. A feast is also arranged by the bride's parents. The nuptial ceremony is performed at the groom's residence. Monogamy is the general rule, with polygamy resorted to in exceptional cases, where the first laari (wife) is unable to give the family an heir. The usual symbol for a married woman is a nose ring and a choora, but this is not being strictly adhered to these days. Reet or lag was prevalent, which traditionally consisted of giving of at least 60 silver coins, but today it has been replaced by voluntary dowry given in kind, and depends on the economic status of the person (Gazetteer of Kangra, 1994). Residence is usually patriarchal, but there is a tendency nowadays to separate soon after marriage due to various reasons.

Formerly, various forms of marriages were permissible in the Gaddi community. The purest of them was byah or dharma-pun. It was a regular marriage arranged with mutual consent of the parents of the boy and the girl. In order of sacred importance byah or dharma-pun occupied the top place. In the form of marriage bata sata or exchange marriage, a boy got a wife in exchange, for his sister or cousin sister for his wife's brother. Gudani was another form of marriage in which widow re-married. In this a widow was married by one of the brothers of the deceased husband. Kamash or ghar-jwantri was a typical type of marriage among Gaddis. According to this type of marriage, a boy of a poorer family, in order to earn the hand of his wife, had to work in the house of his in-laws, usually for a term of seven years before the marriage. During this period they would be bridegroom stayed with the in-laws and worked whole time as an unpaid domestic servant. But if would be bridegroom worked seasonally or on part time basis, the period of service might extend a bit longer. After marriage he was not bound to serve the in-laws or to stay in their place. Mostly a family which had large number of daughters and had no son would invite a prospective bridegroom to work and live in the house.

Another form of marriage was kewat. This system permitted a woman to take on a new husband if he paid the former husband the amount incurred by him on his marriage. The consent of the former husband was essential in this marriage. In bariana which was another form of marriage, cash payment was made for the girl. The amount was fixed mutually (V, Verma, 1966). The Gaddis also practiced the form of marriage called Jhind-Phuk, solemnized by burning brushwood and circumambulating the

fire eight times hand in hand, or with the bride's sheet tied to the boy's girdle. It was admissible in cases where a girl's parents had consented to her betrothal but refused to carry out the marriage, and was sometimes done forcibly by the bridegroom, or in case in which a girl eloped with her lover. No priest or relative needed to attend it. But presently, regular marriages are practiced among all Gaddi communities, in which marriages are arranged with mutual consent of the parents of the boy and the girl.

The marriage negotiations are invariably opened from the boy side. Some relatives of bridegroom would be visit the house of the parents of the girl for negotiations and the date for the wedding is fixed. The marriage expenses incurred are usually proportionate to the economic position and means of the families involved. There are, however, one or two ways in which such households receive temporary help from their relatives or friends. The most important of these customs is tamol. This is prevalent among all the Gaddis. Some cash money is given to the bridegroom or his parents by relatives and friends who receive a present of almost same value in return on similar occasion of marriage in their families. Another custom called saj is also common where presents are given instead of cash. The presents generally are in the form of clothes, a bit of jewelry and cooking utensils, given to the bride or her parents under the same obligation as in the case of tamol. The Gaddis marriage ceremonies are not only interestingly fascinating but also are very elaborate and peculiar. Marriages are usually attended by large number of invitees which includes even distant relatives, gotries (same clan), friends and neighbors. Traditionally gotries also participate in performing the marriage ceremony rituals. Gaddis show great enthusiasm and togetherness during marriages. In others part of this Ravi basin, the marriage rites are more or less similar. The marriage dresses are different in all part of this basin in Himachal Pradesh.

The marriage customs of the Muslim are performed in manner that is different from the Hindus. Marriage is fixed by the *Maulvi*. A day before the marriage, the hands of the bride and bridegrooms are smeared with *Mehndi*. The next day, the *barat* starts from the bridegroom's house to the bride's house with friends and relatives.

Marriage ceremonies of Chamba Himalaya Sikhs are very simple. The ceremony is performed by taking four rounds of the *Guru Granth Sahib*.

Divorce

Divorce is permitted and can be initiated by the aggrieved party on grounds of infidelity and incompatibility of mature, with socio-judicial approval. A divorcee is compensated by way of returning the marriage expenses. Children are normally the liability of the father in divorce cases, but in the event a divorcee woman wants to take them, she can do so if the divorcee husband also desires the same. Khewat (divorcee re-marriage) can however take place. Widow marriage is also permitted with either the husband's elder or younger brother and so is widower re-marriage (V. Verma). Formerly, when a wife wants to leave the house of her husband with the intention to marry with another man i.e. her paramour, she can do so if her husband permits her. In such a case the husband permits his wife to marry someone else of her choice by giving her a formal document at the instance of that man if the later agrees to reimburse the husband of the marriage expenses, which he had incurred to solemnize his marriage. Acceptance by the first husband of the monetary compensation from the second husband automatically dissolves the first marriage and makes her second marriage regular. But on account of the emerging social values this practice of payment is fast dying out. In others part of this basin, the divorce rites are similar.

Dowry

Dowry system is spread all over the basin of River in Himachal Pradesh. All the peoples of this basin give and take dowry depends their position. Dowry, in the strict sense of the term, does not exist among the Gaddis. In case the parents or the guardians want to give some articles to the girl when she departs as a bride, it depends on the boy whether to accept it or not. Because parents according to her requirements and choice specially make these articles for her, they are considered her personal

property even if she decides not to marry. Whatever is given, the bridegroom's father receives it with great respect and satisfaction. Generally ornaments, mostly of silver, necklace, gojru, toka, kangnu, kapur mala are given. Among clothes, luanchari, cholu, dora, woolen chaddars and gardus are common. Spinning wheel, with a basket containing some wool is another traditional gift in dowry. Since spinning and weaving is on decline due to modernization, but about ninety five families include these items in Bharmour and Holi. To include domestic animals such as goats, sheeps, cows etc. in dowry is a very healthy tradition. Utensils for cooking and purposes are also given to girl. Some well to do families give sewing machine, transistor, television, refrigerator, sofa sets, beds with bedding, chairs, tables, almirah and other domestic use materials are also given to bride. The bride's father puts some small items of utensils etc. in a plate, with the plate in hand he touches the four poles of the bedi and put the plate with contents in the lap of the bridegroom. Besides, bride's father some relatives also give some items in the form of dowry, called bartan and which are later returned them, by the father. Dowry is called saj, and its detail is entered in a register in the presence of purohit. At the saj ceremony the purohit receives cash, clothes etc. presents on behalf of the bride and applies red tika on the foreheads of the donors and give them gur to taste. In other parts of this basin the dowry system is prevailed.

Death Rites

Hindus cremate their dead. The dying person was at once removed to the ground. If he happened to be on the cot while breathing his last, religious scriptures and *Geeta Path* were chanted by any member of the house. The cremation took place before sunset, and if a person died late in the evening, the cremation rites are postponed to the next day (Gazetteer of Chamba, 1904).

After it the dead body is brought to the cremation place, and lifted from the rskha and placed on the pyre. An elderly man then cut off a piece of cloth from the talli which he hangs on a branch. Then all the assembled people put pieces of sandal woods etc. on the dead body and elder male member of the deceased family put the fire. After it all the people leave the cremation ground except for three or five or seven or nine peoples termed sangharu. It is their duty to collect the asthis and pack it on in the piece of cloth taken from the talli, and brought to home, and after some days it is taken to Haridwar. But infants and lepers are buried. Asthis were usually placed in a recess in a wall of the house till it was taken to Haridwar for immersion in the Holy Ganga. The mourning period continued till twelve to fourteen days. A goat is sacrificed and the mourning ceased. Some ceremonies are observed in the memory of deceased person after three month (called trimehni), six month (called chimehni), one year (called barkhi) and four years called chawarkh (H.A. Rose). In other parts of basin the death rites are more or less similar.

Among the Muslims, a dying person is removed over to floor. When he expired, the body is bathed with warm water and wrapped in a coffin of bleached cloth. The body is then taken to the graveyard, on a cot carried by four persons. A grave is dug out and within the pit a cotton cloth *chaddar* was spread, and the body was placed in it. Along with the coffin was salt, *ghee*, an earthen vessel, containing water and some grains were put. Then the *janaja* was read by the *Maulvi*. The pit is then covered by each person accompanying the funeral procession throwing a handful of mud each into the pit. A stone slab is put towards the head (Asgar Beg Mirza, Chamba).

The death customs of Sikhs have the same ritual as the Hindus. The dying person is removes from his bed to the ground. While he was breathing his last the *Gurubani* is chanted (Gurubachan Singh, Chamba).

Kirya

This is performed after 11 days. On this day, the Mah-Brahmin is sent for. He performs some ceremonies and offers rice balls for the departed soul. A feast is arranged. Some rituals are performs after one month, six months and one year afterwards, called *Mahini*, *Chhamini* and *Bar* respectively.

Chavarkhi

After the fourth year, the soul of the dead person is believed to have become *Pitter*. This is celebrated in the same way, but the rituals are performed by the family priest. After this, the Brahmins are fed with good dishes every year during the period of *Shrads*.

Like the other Hindu communities, the Gaddi cremate their dead bodies. The funeral rites can be divided into three sections. First, the funeral rites observed before the body is taken to the cremation ground. Secondly, the rites observed on the cremation ground and thirdly, the rites after cremation. As soon as close relatives feel that a person is approaching his last moment, his body is removed from the bed and placed on the ground, and a silver one rupees coin, and quantity of ghee and small piece of sandalwood, collectively known as panch rati are placed in the mouth of the dead man. Then the body is given a bath with Gangas water, mixed in ordinary water, and it is encased in a sack sewn tightly around the neck and arms. This sack is known as bugka or bugi. Above this a white cloth called talli is placed. On top of the talli is placed a silk cloth, called kafan. Then the corpse is laid on a bier of deodar wood of a special shape known as rskha or viman (Census of India, 1961).

Conclusion:

When comparing the customs and ceremonies which are held, in many cultures, in sacred places and religious shrines. Hindu Law is a law which is considered to be of divine nature as it is believed that it has been developed on the words of god, theories given by god. It is one of the most ancient laws and was written by various *rishis*. There are various sources of Hindu law. Sources of Hindu law are divided into two categories namely ancient sources and modern sources. Ancient sources of Hindu law include shruti, smriti, commentaries digests, and customs and usages. Modern sources include judgements and precedents, legislation, justice, equity and good conscience. Among the various ancient sources of Hindu law custom and usages are regarded as one of the most important sources of Hindu law. They are considered as a parent of Hindu law. Custom and usages have thus played a major role in developing Hindu law.

Nam Sanskar ceremony was held after the first, third, seventh, or ninth month of birth of the child. Among the Sikhs an *Akhand Path* is arranged on the 10th day of the birth of the child. Some Muslim birth customs in Chamba Himalaya resemble those of the Hindus. The *jamini* (birthday) ceremony was held every year. On this occasion the *purohit* was invited to complete the ceremony and relatives were feasted. Most of the people of this basin have preferred the arranged marriage system. At an fortunate time, the groom accompanies by marriage party is led to the *Vedi*. A ceremony is performed by the priest amidst the chanting of Vedic hymns. The ceremony is called *lagan*. Marriage is a must amongst the tribals and the Gaddis are monogamous. The marriage customs of the Muslim are performed in manner that is different from the Hindus and the marriage is fixed by the *Maulvi*. Marriage ceremonies of Chamba Himalaya Sikhs are very simple and the ceremony is performed by taking four rounds of the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Divorce is permitted and can be initiated by the aggrieved party on grounds of disloyalty and incompatibility of mature, with socio-judicial approval. A divorcee is compensated by way of returning the marriage expenses. Children are normally the liability of the father in divorce cases, but in the event a divorcee woman wants to take them, she can do so if the divorcee husband also desires the same. Khewat (divorcee re-marriage) can however take place. Widow marriage is also permitted with either the husband's elder or younger brother and so is widower re-marriage (V.Verma). Dowry system is spread all over the basin of River in Himachal Pradesh. All the peoples of this basin give and take dowry depends their position. Dowry, in the strict sense of the term, does not exist among the Gaddis. After the fourth year, the soul of the dead person is believed to have become *Pitter*. This is celebrated in the same way, but the rituals are performed by the family priest and the Brahmins are fed with good dishes every year during the period of *Shrads*.

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