



FOLKLORE OF PUNJAB

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FOLKLORE OF INDIA SERIES

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NATIONAL BOOK TRUST, INDIA
NEW DELHI

FOREWORD

NATIONAL BOOK TRUST, INDIA has planned to bring out a series of books on the folklore of different regions of the country. As the subject has perpetual relevance to human living it was deemed necessary to do the series in a manner which would be closer to the sensibility of the average educated reader. It is, however, not intended to publish scholarly and erudite works but to present in a simple language and narrative form the folklore of the various regions with rich and varied traditions. The books, it is hoped, will make a genuine attempt to underline the essential unity of the land and the people of this country.

The first book in the series, which deals with the folklore of the Punjab, depicts the variegated life of the people of this frontier region who, along the vistas of time and space, have mostly been deprived of peace and stability. This is truly and richly reflected in their folklore and folk traditions. The rites and rituals, fables, rhymes and riddles, charms and incantations, proverbs and maxims, numerous highly emotional and lyrical songs and steady steps of dances have been expressive as much of their moments of joy as of agony.

B V KESKAR

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CHAPTER I

THE REGION AND THE PEOPLE

“PUNJAB”—the land of five rivers—is proud of its ancient heritage. This is the cradle and breeding-place of the Vedic culture of the Aryans. Rishis and munis composed the earliest hymns of the oldest book in the world, the *Rig Veda*, on the banks of its rivers. Excavations of Harappa and Rupa reveal that even before the Aryans, a great civilization flourished here. Some historians believe that the Punjab was the original home of all Indo-Aryan tribes, and it was from here that they branched out into the outside world.

The Punjab has been the gateway to India for ages. Until the 18th century all foreign invaders—the Aryans, the Persians, the Greeks, the Scythians, the Parthians, the Huns, the Turks and the Mongols—came to India through the north-west, and the brave Punjab had always to bear the brunt of the foreign invasions. Consequently, a great part of the Punjabi's life was spent in fighting and gaining perfection in the art of warfare, and in building up his physique. It was, therefore, natural for the Punjabis to become a sturdy, exuberant and adventurous people, ever ready to fight and lay down their lives for their freedom. This rightly earned for this land the honour of being called ‘The Sword Arm of India’.

The boundaries of the Punjab have kept changing under political pressures. During the time of the Aryans, its boundaries stretched from the Saraswati in the east to the Indus in the west, and included the other five rivers, viz., the Sutlej, the Beas, the Ravi, the Chenab and the Jhelum. It was then called ‘Sapt Sindhu’, or the land of seven rivers. Later, during the time of the Muslims, it came to be called ‘Punjab’, the land of five rivers, because the Saraswati became extinct and the Indus only marked the region's western boundary. The word ‘Punjab’ is a compound of two Persian words ‘Panj’, that is five, and ‘Aab’,

Malwa is to the east of the Sutlej and comprises Ferozepur, Ludhiana, Patiala, Bhatinda and Sangrur. Majha lies in the doab between the rivers Ravi and Beas-cum-Sutlej and includes the districts of Amritsar and Gurdaspur. Doaba is the tract lying between the rivers Beas and Sutlej and is known as Bist Doab. It includes the districts of Jullundur, Hoshiarpur and Kapurthala.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Punjab, the cradle of one of the most ancient civilisations of the world, has played a vital role in shaping the history of India. Excavations at Harappa and Rupa have revealed that by the end of the 4th millennium B.C., when most of the countries of the world were passing through a dark age, a fairly well-developed civilisation, with skilfully planned brick-built towns, flourished in the Punjab.

The civilisation of Harappa was destroyed by the successive waves of Aryans, who were the nomadic and pastoral people of Central Asia. They first settled in the valley of the Punjab which has been rightly called as the cradle of their early civilisation. The history of the Rig-Vedic period is to a very large extent the early history of the Punjab.

The land was repeatedly subjected to foreign invasions. In the 5th century B.C. a portion of it was annexed by the Persian king Darius. In 326 B.C. Alexander invaded it but its inhabitants offered the Greek soldiers such bitter resistance that they refused to move beyond the Beas, and Alexander had to give up his long-cherished dreams of conquering India. Chandragupta Maurya availed himself of the chaotic conditions prevailing in the Punjab after the death of Alexander and set up his rule there. The Mauryan Empire, which lasted over a hundred and fifty years, had among its monarchs Ashoka (273-232 B.C.) who is recognised as one of the great figures in world history. In his times Taxila, his capital, was a famous seat of learning where scholars from all parts of Asia flocked for knowledge.

Kautilya (Chanakya), the author of the famous *Arthashastra*, was a noted scholar of this university

During the next nine centuries (2nd century B C to 7th century A D) the Punjab was invaded by successive waves of the Scythians, the Kushans (or Yue-chis), the Huns, and a few other Asian tribes. Vimakapas, who is known as Raja Sirkap in the Punjab's legendary lore, and Kanishka were notable monarchs of the Kushan dynasty, while Toramana and Mehrkul were notable monarchs of the Huns. Between the 7th and 11th centuries A D, the Punjab was divided into small principalities ruled by Rajput princes.

During the next seven centuries (11th century A D to 18th century A D) it remained subjected to the rule of the Muslims. Their incursions started in the first quarter of the 11th century. Between 1000 A D and 1027 A D Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni invaded India seventeen times, with the object of plundering and destroying the Hindu temples. Every time the Punjab had to bear the brunt of his invasions. In 1192 A D Mohammed Ghorî mounted an invasion and was successful in setting up Muslim rule in India. After the Ghorî dynasty, the Punjab, along with the rest of India, was ruled by various Muslim dynasties—the Slaves (1206-1288), the Khiljis (1288-1321), the Tughlaks (1321-1413), the Sayyads (1414-1450), and the Lodis (1450-1526). In 1526 A D Babar defeated the Lodi Sultanate of Delhi at Panîpat and established the Mughal dynasty. The Mughal Emperors took special interest in the Punjab, and, for some time, Lahore was their headquarters.

But when the Mughal empire ceased to be an effective political power, the Punjab once again had to face the incursion of Nadir Shah, followed by successive invasions of Ahmed Shah Durrani. Both plundered it and created once again a scare of insecurity in the minds of the Punjabis.

During Mughal supremacy, a new spiritual and social order emerged, which gave birth to a new religious community—the Sikhs. Guru Nanak, a great social and religious reformer, was the founder of this new movement. With the martyrdom of

Guru Arjan Dev, the 5th master, the peace-loving Sikhs became militant and his successors, Guru Har Gobind and Guru Gobind Singh, took up arms against the Mughal Emperors and shook the very foundations of their empire. Farrukhseyyar adopted strong measures to wipe out the Sikhs. The State offered awards to those who helped in their extermination. Similar edicts were issued by Mir Mannu, the then Governor of the Punjab. Only after half a century of incessant struggle were the Sikhs able to emancipate their land from the clutches of the Mughals. They established twelve powerful Sikh *Misals*, or confederacies, which set up their rule in different parts of the State, culminating finally in the supremacy of the great Sikh ruler, Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Ranjit Singh of the Sukarchakia *Misal* occupied Lahore, the traditional capital of the Punjab, in 1799, and brought peace, prosperity and national solidarity back to the land of five rivers. But his successors could not stand long before the rising imperialist power of the British East India Company, and the State was annexed by Lord Dalhousie in 1849. It remained under the British, like the rest of India, till 1947. The Punjabis fought shoulder to shoulder with their fellow Indians for the liberation of their country. At the time of Partition, the Punjab was divided between India and the newly-created State of Pakistan. Though politically it is divided into two parts, geographically and culturally it still remains one unit.

RACIAL DATA

The rich and fertile land of the Punjab was the meeting ground of different peoples and races. Its population descends from various stocks and consists of heterogeneous racial elements. From time immemorial swarms of nomads and conquering armies poured into it and made it their permanent abode. In ancient times it was mostly inhabited by a race whom the Aryans later called Dasyus. The Dasyus were small in stature, had long heads, broad noses and a black complexion. They were pushed towards the South by the Indo-Aryans who were fair-complexioned.

people, tall in stature, and with sharp features. But a small section of Dasyus remained in the Punjab. Later on, the Persians, the Greeks, the Parthians, the Scythians, the Kushans, the Huns, the Turks, the Mongols and the Afghans made successive inroads into the Punjab and some of them settled there permanently and adjusted themselves to the new social system, adopting the customs and traditions of the conquered land. They soon merged into the indigenous population and, in the process, some of their own cultural traits became part of the culture of the Punjab. The present inhabitants of the Punjab are the descendants of the various racial stocks which entered into it during the different stages of its history.

Sikh Jats, who belong to the agriculturist class, form the bulk of population of the present Punjab. They are sturdy, self-willed and industrious, and are among the finest peasants of India. "The Sikh Jat is generally tall and muscular, with well-shaped limbs, an erect carriage, and strongly marked and sharp handsome features." Nothing can be said definitely about the origin of the Jats. According to General Cunningham, the Jats belong to the Indo-Scythian stock. He identifies them with Zantho of Strabo and Jatu of Ptolemy and holds that they probably entered the Punjab from their home on the Oxus towards the end of the second century B.C. But some other authorities, like Col. Tod and most of the clans of the Sikh Jats themselves, trace their descent from the Rajputs.

The Khatri and Aroras are next in number. The Khatri, who are generally energetic and educated, are mostly fair-complexioned and have good features. Trade is their main occupation. They claim to be in the direct line of the Kshatriyas of the Aryan race. The Aroras also claim to be of Khatri origin. Sir George Campbell maintains that both these castes belong to the same ethnic stock. Next to them in numbers are the Brahmans and Vaishyas, who are split up into several sub-castes and are found almost all over the Punjab.

Among the minor agricultural tribes, Sainis and Kambohs are the most prominent ones. They are admirable cultivators,

skilful and industrious. The Sainis claim their origin from the Rajputs and some of the Kambohs from "Kamboj Desh" in Afghanistan. "The latter came into India in the *Mahabharata* period to take part in the Great War on the side of the Kauravas and then settled down in India."¹

The various vagrant tribes of the Punjab, like the Sansis, the Pakhi-waras, the Bawris, the Bazigars, etc., are aboriginal in their origin. They have retained their aboriginal customs and beliefs. Mohammed Latif maintains that these tribes are the remnants of the indigenous inhabitants of the province, namely, Dasyus.

TRIBAL SETTLEMENT

The population of the Punjab being heterogeneous consists of various tribes and classes. The pattern of settlement in Punjabi villages is mostly uniform and unique. Members of each village or *patti* claim descent from a common ancestor, and even today in every village one clan dominates.

There are various tribes and clans settled in the Punjab. Among them Jats, Khattris, Aroras, Brahmans, Vaishas, Sainis, Kambohs and Sansis are the most prominent. The Jats of the Punjab are further divided into various clans, each one of which is found concentrated in groups of villages. The most important clans of Malwa are Sindhus and Sidhu Brars. From the Sindhu clan sprang up the great Phulkian families of Patiala, Nabha and Jind, and from the Brars the ruling family of Faridkot, which ruled the native States later merged into the Punjab. The Bhullar, Her and Man clans of Jats, who claim to have sprung from the *jata* or matted hair of Mahadev, are also concentrated mostly in Malwa. The principal Jat clans of Majha are Dhillon, Randhawa, Chahil and Sindhu. The Sindhus and Gills, who claim descent from the Raghobansi branch of the Suryavanshi Rajputs, are mostly settled in the Amritsar and Jullundur districts. In the Doab districts the main Jat clans are Randhawa, Bains, Sandhu and Gill.

¹ *Farmers of India*, Vol I, p 103

Among the non-agriculturist tribes of the Punjab, the Khatri, the Aroras, and the Vaishas are the most significant ones. Most of them are engaged in trade and commerce. The Khatri are sub-divided into many groups, the most significant among them being the Dhaighares, the Charzatis, the Punjzatis, the Chhezatis, the Sarins, the Bahris and the Khakhrains. The Bedis and the Sodhis belong to the Bunjahi tribe. Bedis are mostly found around Dera Baba Nanak and Gurdaspur, while the Sodhis are settled mostly at Anandpur and Hoshiarpur. In West Punjab, before the Partition, the Khatri were mostly concentrated in the Jhelum and Rawalpindi districts, and the Aroras in Multan and Derajat Division, but now both are spread almost all over the Punjab.

Sainis and Kambohs are primarily cultivators. The Sainis are mostly found in Jullundur, Hoshiarpur, Gurdaspur and Rupar, and the Kambohs in Patiala, Jullundur, Kapurthala, Amritsar and Ferozepur. The Kambohs of Doab claim their descent from Raja Karan.

The Sansis are vagrant tribes and seldom settle for long in one place. They are found in considerable numbers in Ludhiana, Amritsar and Gurdaspur. The Nat-Bazigars also wander about with their families and never settle down at one place.

CULTURAL COMPLEXITY

Not a single village in the Punjab is homogeneous. Every community has its own social customs which are different to some extent from those of others. Religion further determines this cultural difference and mode of living. Even when a Jat and a Khatri are next-door neighbours, some of their cultural traits remain different from each other. The practice of widow remarriage, for instance, is accepted by the Jats but it is almost a taboo among the Khatri. The Jats and the Khatri are further sub-divided into many clans which have their characteristic differences in customs pertaining to birth, death, marriage, etc. Then there are the erstwhile low-castes who differ from all the other people in their habits and social customs. Besides, the

three geographical strips, Majha, Malwa and Doaba have certain local cultural traits. It is marvellous that under all these peculiarities a thread of homogeneity binds the Punjabis together as a whole. The Greeks, the Scythians, the Parthians, the Huns, the Pathans and the Mughals came here, settled down and got woven into its cultural fabric. It was natural that in the process their culture also had its synthesising impact upon the culture of the Punjab.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STRUCTURE

As the majority of its population is rural, village is the unit that determines the social and economic set-up of the Punjab. In many respects, villages are self-sufficient units, but in terms of economic, social, religious and political ties, they are closely knit and interdependent. Every village is linked in one way or another with the adjoining villages. Consequently the units, in spite of having their separate entity, are closely knit with the entire structure. Marian W. Smith's remarks about Punjabi society are very apt: "Punjabi society is not a mosaic made up of separate and self-sufficient village fragments. It is more like a carpet in which each part, although unified and identifiable in itself, is inextricably woven into the fabric."¹

Agriculture being the main occupation of the people, their economic dependence upon each other mainly pertains to their agricultural activities. All of them, carpenters, blacksmiths, oilmen, sweepers, and others invest their interests in agriculture. Carpenters and blacksmiths make and repair agricultural implements for the farmers. Labourers lend a hand at harvesting and in return get wages. Similarly, barbers, water-carriers, cobblers, potters and all others earn their living by serving the farmer in one way or another.

Many villages have grown up in the middle of large fields. Vast fields stretch out all around and sometimes the boundaries

¹ *Indian Villages*, Community Development Deptt., West Bengal, p. 144

of one village touch the outer limits of the other. A village in the Punjab generally springs up on the land of an ancestor, his offspring forming the nucleus. Many villages of Majha are divided into *pattis*, and each member of a *patti* is said to have descended from a common ancestor. The Panchayat system prevalent in the villages of the Punjab for a long time has now been recognised by law. In some villages each *patti* has its own separate Panchayat to sort out its quarrels and bring about reconciliations. But in case of inter-*patti* disputes, the Panchayat of the main village decides the issues.

Working classes like labourers, and backward classes like sweepers live in mud houses on the outskirts of the village, or in some remote corners. The artisans and craftsmen, like carpenters, blacksmiths, cobblers, etc., have their own separate locality, most of them running their small workshops in their own houses.

Although the villages of the Punjab are inhabited by different castes and creeds, the people of one village do not marry into the same, and in this respect each village is an exogamous unit. Matrimonial relations are transacted in nearby villages only. If a distant village has to be chosen, it must be of the same geographical strip. In the urban areas there is no such consideration.

TRENDS AFTER PARTITION

The partition of the Punjab left a very deep mark upon the social and economic life of its villages. The older patterns gave way to new, and the long preserved purity of village life was disturbed. Millions of uprooted Sikhs and Hindus came and settled down here and started life afresh. Not a single village or city of the Punjab remained unaffected. At present almost every fifth Punjabi is a rehabilitated refugee. It was natural for the existing pattern of life to change. "Thus the exogamous character of the villages, the inter-community relationships, the old traditions of social behaviour, and the econo-

mic inter-dependence have all changed"¹

The upheaval caused by the Partition also changed the pattern of trade and agriculture of the Punjab. Those who migrated from the Rawalpindi and Jhelum districts were mostly traders, shopkeepers and businessmen by profession. Wherever they settled down in East Punjab, they set up new trade links and re-oriented the shopping and trade centres. Even in the most remote villages new shops sprang up, giving a great impetus to the trade and industry of the Punjab.

The Sikhs and the Hindus who migrated from Lyallpur, Montgomery and Sheikhupura were experienced agriculturists. They were the people who had cultivated the *Bar* jungles and made them so rich that the entire region came to be called the granary of the Punjab. They introduced novel ideas and made them practicable in the new settlements. Co-operative farming and gardening have now been tried over one-fourth of the total cultivated area in the State. Similarly the work of consolidating fragmented holdings which was progressing very tardily has gathered momentum. Conditions of tenancy have improved and the adoption of new techniques in farming has given a fillip to production.

Partition brought about changes in occupational patterns also. Caste hierarchy, for instance, received a big blow. The so-called low caste people who upto now had been continuing in their ancestral professions suddenly decided to discard them and take to new ones. This brought about a new awakening among them and they began to make a conscious effort to raise their status.

The Five-Year Plans, particularly the Community Development Projects and the National Extension Schemes, have brought about far-reaching changes in the social and economic life of the village farmer by introducing many novel ideas in his daily life.

¹ Randhawa, M. S. and Prem Nath, *Farmers of India*, p. 50

The villages of the Punjab have been virtually metamorphosed. Roads have been constructed to link them with urban areas. Opening of new schools in pursuance of literacy campaigns has helped the demolition of blind faith and superstition. Introduction of electricity has opened up new vistas in agriculture and industry, all adding up to greater prosperity. "The growing prosperity of the villages and the larger measure of leisure which the people are coming to have are expressing themselves in an urge for more education, better houses, cleaner surroundings and other modern amenities"¹

The status of women is also undergoing a change. The *pardah* system is dying out and a new social awakening is spreading all over

¹ Randhawa, M. S. and Prem Nath, *Farmers of India*, Vol. I, p. 50



Plate 1—A RURAL SCENE



Plate 2—THE JEWELLERY A PUNJABI GIRL IS FOND OF

CHAPTER II

MYTH AND MYTHOLOGY

EACH COMMUNITY has its own body of myths which are the products of its primitive beliefs and culture. Myths being an inseparable part of the religious tradition are closely related to rituals. Most of the myths prevalent are concerned with origin and life of gods, goddesses and other supernatural beings. Some myths grew up by way of explanation of some natural and cosmological phenomena and in the process established certain rites and practices. Myths differ from other tales in that these are generally considered sacrosanct by the people to whom they belong.

Myths prevalent in the Punjab are akin to those prevailing in other parts of northern India. The *Puranas* are, of course, the primary source, but there are many which have a distinct Punjabi flavour and were presumably invented by the village-folk. With some hilly tribes of the Punjab myths are still a living and fascinating institution.

THE UNIVERSE

The popular myth about the origin of the universe is, for instance, a very simple but also interesting one. This universe, it says, was originally egg-shaped, and then it broke into two, one half became the sky and the other the earth. The thread veins in the egg became streams and rivers, the fluid took the shape of the sea, the yolk became the core of the earth, and thus came into existence the universe.

This myth of the origin of the earth from the primeval egg is current in many other parts of India also. The *Chhandogya Upanishad* relates an almost similar story about the origin of the earth.

According to another myth, this earth is balanced on one

horn of a white bull Whenever the bull gets tired, it changes over the weight to the tip of the other horn This changing-over creates tremors and earthquakes Even today, whenever there is an earthquake, the Punjabis say that the white bull has changed over to the other horn This myth too has its root in the *Puranas*

The myth about birth and death is very simple but interesting It has its origin in the popular imagination and not in the *Puranas* Once when God was in a pleasant mood, He created an image in clay This was the image of man Then, curious to see the effects, he called one soul to him and asked it to enter that image The soul was not quite sure of the consequences, so it hesitated But it could not disobey God So it pleaded with Him and said, "I'll enter this image only if you assure me that I shall not be tied down to it for ever, and that you will draw me out of it " God agreed to do so

As soon as the soul entered, life flowed through the body and man started moving about The soul began to enjoy the thrill of life After some years when God felt it was time to release the soul from the body, it was unwilling to do so But God had to fulfil his word So, in spite of the soul's unwillingness, God pulled it out Thus life and death came into being

According to another myth popular in the hilly areas of the Punjab, when God created the universe He put aside in one corner two heaps of clay Within a couple of days life began to throb in those heaps—one became man and the other woman God said to man, "Listen, Oh man "

"Yes", said man very impolitely God felt offended and thought that a creature so crude as that should not be made immortal Death thus became a necessary adjunct of life on this earth

According to yet another myth, in earlier times children used to grow on coconut trees Whosoever needed a baby plucked a coconut off the tree, broke it into two and took out the baby Consequently, people were not very much attached to their children, and whenever a child fell ill, they would throw him



Plate 3—A NIHANG SINGH IN TRADITIONAL COSTUME



Plate 4—A SISTER TYING RAKHI ON THE WRIST OF HER BROTHER

away and pluck another coconut for a fresh baby. All sorts of ailing children crying the whole day were found heaped under the coconut trees. Once there was an epidemic. People dumped all the sick children under the coconut trees and took away new ones from the tree-tops. Sick children continued to be piled up under the trees, and the earth and the sky rocked with their cries of pain. An old man happened to pass that way. He was so deeply moved by the cries of the ailing children that he prayed to God thus: "Oh God, let the children in this world grow in the wombs of women rather than on trees, so that if something happens to them, the mother's heart will feel the pain." And God granted the prayer.

THE SUN AND THE MOON

The two most amazing phenomena which have confounded man are the sun and the moon. One is hot and the other is cool, one rises in the East and sets in the West, and the other daily changes its phases, waxing today and waning tomorrow. The how and why left man absolutely dumbfounded. To this complex question the simple village-folk have sought answers in myths. In some myths, the sun and the moon are brother and sister, while in others they are two real brothers. According to one myth, the sun is doing penance by burning in eternal heat because it has been cursed by its mother, whereas the moon enjoys its mother's blessings in permanent coolness. According to the myth in which the Sun and the Moon are brothers, their mother was once going to take her bath. She said, "My sons, I am going to bathe, you two turn your backs or stand behind the tree." Both of them, in obedience to their mother, stood behind a tree, but whereas Moon kept his head low and eyes averted, Sun kept peeping at his mother through the corner of his eyes. When the mother noticed this she was furious and she cursed him saying, "May you always have only one eye." Ever since then the sun has had only one eye. Even in trying to look at it we have to close one eye and see it only with the other.

According to the other myth in which they are brother and sister, the two were once invited to a marriage. When they were about to leave, their mother told them to save some sweets and bring them home for her. Sun was greedy, so he ate up everything, but Moon saved a lot for her mother. She was bringing it all home when Sun quietly ate that too. When the mother came to know of it, she was so angry that she cursed the son saying, "As I am now burning with rage may you always burn in agony." Then she turned to the daughter Moon, and spoke lovingly thus "My darling daughter, you have soothed my heart with your love. May you always prosper in the same soothing calmness, and radiate joy to the world."

There is yet another myth in which again the sun and the moon are brother and sister. Once their mother fell ill and she put her children to work. She asked Moon to knead the dough and Sun to light the fire. Sun was rather unwilling to perform the work assigned to him but, being afraid of his mother's anger, he slowly began to light it. When the fire was lit he picked up a couple of live coals and flung them at his mother, saying, "Here Ma, the fire is done." The burning coals fell on the mother's stringed cot, and it caught fire. Moon ran with a bucket of water and extinguished the fire. The angry mother cursed her son to eternal burning, and blessed the daughter with peace.

The phenomenon of lunar eclipse, once inexplicable to the common folk, had many myths prevalent about it. Here are two of them. According to one, Moon, once in great need, borrowed some money on interest from a 'Dum' (a low-caste menial). Somehow he could not repay this amount. Interest went on multiplying and piling up, so much so that it became impossible for Moon to pay up. Moon is still a debtor. Whenever the money-lender goes to him to ask for the money, he hides his face and does not show it so long as men and women on earth do not give plenty in charity to the 'Dum', thus lightening his financial burden.

The other myth originates from the *Puranas*. The gods and the demons once jointly churned the sea in order to obtain

nectar When nectar was obtained, the demons swiped it off The gods took panic, thinking that if the demons drank up the nectar and became immortal they would kill them all They ran to Vishnu who soon transformed himself into a pretty girl, Mohini, went to the place where the demons had assembled to drink nectar, and began to dance before them Utterly bewitched they left the cup of nectar unattended and surrounded Mohini, who, very cleverly pretending to wish to distribute the nectar among those present, took up the cup She called the gods also and made them sit in a separate group Then she started distributing nectar, first on the gods' side Nectar was finishing fast Rahu the demon saw through the game he also recognised Vishnu disguised as Mohini He quickly took the guise of a god and slipped into the rows of gods The "young damsel" serving nectar unsuspectingly gave it to Rahu who quickly gulped it down Sun and Moon sitting close by became suspicious because they saw that Rahu had a shadow, whereas gods did not have any shadow Quickly they gestured to Mohini, who, understanding the situation, took again the form of Vishnu, whisked out his wheel and chopped off Rahu's head from his body But even though the head had been cut off from the body, Rahu could not be killed because he had partaken of nectar, the drink of immortality Consequently, both the head and the body remained alive The head came to be known as Rahu and the rest of the body as Ketu Both Rahu and Ketu have ever since been pursuing Sun and Moon with vengeance because they want to take revenge Whenever they catch up with Sun or Moon, they gulp him up, and there is an eclipse People on earth give alms liberally in order to get their gods liberated from the diabolical grip

Orthodox Hindus consider an eclipse as something impure They do not eat anything when the eclipse is on, nor do they do any work at that time After the eclipse they take bath and clean up all the utensils of the kitchen in order to purify them from the effects of the eclipse

Two myths are prevalent about the black spots on the moon One is of folk origin and the other is Puranic According to the

first myth, there is an old woman sitting in the moon, plying her spinning-wheel. When she finishes one skien she flings it on the earth, thus causing day-break.

The Puranic myth is different and more interesting. Lord Indra was enamoured of Ahilya, the wife of Rishi Gautam. He wanted to seduce her. To be able to do so, he entered into a conspiracy with Moon. Moon, transforming himself into a cock, uttered the crow of dawn in the middle of the night. Gautam Rishi thinking that the day had dawned quickly got up and went to the river to have his daily bath. Indra, quickly impersonating Gautam, succeeded in his evil intention towards Ahilya. The friendly river-deity apprised Gautam of the truth. Gautam rushed back and accosted Moon who, in the guise of a cock, was standing watch at the door. In anger he flung his wet towel at him and cursed him. That left a permanent black mark which we see on the face of Moon.

There is also a myth about the waxing and waning of the moon. This also takes its origin from the *Puranas*. Moon had twenty-seven wives who were all real sisters and daughters of a Rishi. Moon was very fond of Rajni (night) and paid scant attention to the others who were, therefore, very jealous. They complained to their father. The Rishi got vexed, and he cursed Moon saying, "He who has so tortured my daughters may himself suffer from a wasting disease." Immediately Moon started decaying. Fourteen days thus went by and Rajni got worried. She realized that at that rate Moon could not last for more than a day. She wept before her sisters and brought them to see the end of their husband. When they all saw him wasting away like that, they too began to weep. At once all sisters rushed to their father and begged him to withdraw his curse. "But," said the Rishi, "words once uttered by a Rishi cannot be withdrawn. I can't revoke the curse, I can only mitigate it. This wasting disease will affect Moon for the first fifteen days of a month but will end on the fifteenth day. Thereafter he will start improving and go on getting bigger and bigger every day, till on becoming full-bodied he would wane again. This cycle would go on forever."

In the Puranic myth the name of the Rishi is Daksha, and the favourite queen of Moon is Rohini, not Rajni

THE STARS

Man has always been fascinated by the stars, and right from the primitive times the why and how of these tiny twinklers of the sky has troubled the human brain. The Punjabis have their own interesting myths to tell about the stars. The general belief has been that all great men become stars after death and occupy a high place in the sky. There are special myths about the Pole Star and the Great Bear.

The constellation of the Great Bear is called *Sapt Rishi*, that is, Seven Rishis. These seven stars are supposed to be the seven Rishis who lived in the time of Raja Dashrath and were very close to Shri Ramchandra. All the seven were saints of a very high order who had controlled their emotions after great penance. When the great saints passed out of this world they were given an honourable station in the sky and placed next to one another. The *Ramayana* deals at length with these and narrates many other stories connected with them. The names of the seven Rishis are Kashyap, Attri, Vasishtha, Vishwamitra, Gautama, Jamadagni, and Bharadwaja.

There is a popular myth about the Pole Star. Raja Uttampada had two wives, Suniti and Suruchi. Dhruv (after whom the star is named Dhruv) was the son of Suniti. Suruchi won the King over to her side and turned him against Suniti. At her instigation, the King banished both Suniti and her son. When Dhruv grew up he became curious about his father and expressed a great desire to see him. Suniti agreed to let him go and Dhruv went to the court of his father. King Uttampada was very happy to see his son, took him on his lap, and loved and caressed him. Suruchi was absolutely furious when she saw this. She quarrelled with the King and dragged Dhruv away from there and threw him out of the palace. Dhruv came home weeping and narrated the entire episode to his mother and asked her how he could over-

come such an insult. The mother advised him to worship Narayan, the master of the Universe. Dhruv went into the jungles and, despite innumerable obstructions, performed severe penance. At last Lord Vishnu appeared to him and said, "Just as you have remained firm and steadfast in your path of devotion, so will you remain in the sky—lofty, steadfast and shining like a constant star." After death, Dhruv rose to the sky and became a star.

The milky way, or the galaxy, has many names in Punjabi, among them *Akash Ganga* (Ganga of the sky), and *Gau-Dhuli* (dust of the cow's hooves). According to a very popular myth, the milky way is a counterpart of the Ganga we know on earth. According to another myth, when Lord Krishna takes his cows out to graze and brings them back, the dust blown with their hooves shines in the sky. It is also believed that after death people go to heaven along this path.

RAIN AND LIGHTNING

Rain and lightning were incomprehensible phenomena to the primitive man. He always felt that there were some divine powers at the back of them. When rains came to nourish his parched lands, he was fascinated, but the flashing lightning and thundering clouds scared him. Since scientific explanations were beyond his simple intelligence, he fabricated many myths to satisfy his curiosity.

In the Punjab there is a very interesting myth about the origin of clouds. Once upon a time a Rishi was doing penance in a forest. He had only one quilt which had multi-coloured patches on it. In severe cold he covered himself with it, and in summer he put it aside. Once the summer was extremely hot but he kept sitting in the sun in contemplation. His whole body was scorched. His quilt, which was his co-sharer in all his states of happiness and sorrow, could not bear to see him suffer so. It flew up to the sun in the shape of a cloud and obstructed its heat. It has since roamed about the sky in the shape of clouds.

Lightning is supposed to be the manifestation of Devaki's daughter. Kansa killed her by hitting her on a stone as soon as he came to know about her birth. Little did he know that Devaki's real child, Krishna, was being safely nursed by Jasodha in Gokul. The moment the little innocent girl hit the stone, she disappeared in the sky and manifested herself in the form of lightning announcing her uncle's doom. Ever since then she has been there flashing amidst the clouds. As the child was killed by her maternal uncle, it is believed that lightning is hostile to maternal uncles and nephews being together. When lightning flashes in the sky, it is not considered good for the maternal uncles and nephews to be sitting together under one roof. If they are, it is feared that lightning would strike them.

CHAPTER III

MAGIC AND RELIGION

MAGIC is supposed to be an art of influencing the course of events by mysterious, supernatural means, or working wonders by occult control of nature, or demoniac spirits. Religion, on the other hand, is a belief in a divine being or beings and it recognizes a super-human power controlling the Universe. Magic is coercive in character and the line of thinking is that nature, which is unconscious and impersonal, can be controlled by mysterious means and a desired effect can be achieved by compulsion, while religion is propitiatory and persuasive in character, and to achieve a certain end it conciliates the super-human power by worshipping. Religious prayers differ from magical incantation in the sense that the former invoke the deities and 'assume that the volitional element rests with the gods', but 'power over the unseen is believed to be inherent in the magical incantation'. All such magic is false and wicked in comparison with religion, which is pure and virtuous.

Magic and religion 'represent the successive strata in the mental development of mankind', and in this sequence magic preceded religion. According to some, both religion and magic spring from a single root, but in the opinion of others magic is an early stage in the development of religion. In the lower cultural strata magic and religion are still co-related, and it is not easy to disentangle them. Most of the rituals, which now form part of religion or social pattern, have their roots in some magical practices.

Jogi and *Siddh* gave much importance to the attainment of what was known as 'Riddhi' magic and mystic powers, acquired through penances. It is believed in the Punjab that the control of natural powers is one of the possessions of the saints, and, therefore, many such powers have been associated with almost

every saint. Stories of miraculous exhibition are associated with every *pir*, *jogi*, and saint of repute, including Sikh Gurus, though they condemned these powers and said "To work miracles is a vain and an empty show"¹

Even today in the Punjab, in the lower cultural groups, such as Sansis, Pakhiwals, and Bazigars, magic and religion are so closely related that it is not easy to tell one from the other. Even most of the rituals, which are prevalent among the more educated people and are part of their cultural life, are predominantly magical in origin.

rites and rituals

Certain rituals prevalent among the Punjabis have come down right from the Vedic times. In the process, however, some of them have completely changed but others are still what they were centuries ago. The living habits, customs and rites of the Punjabi people have also been greatly influenced by the foreign races who, from time to time, entered India through the north-west and settled down here.

Most of the rituals pertain to the important moments of man's life, like birth, death, marriage, etc. Some of these rites are magical in character. Their modes of performance often differ with different regions, castes, creeds and tribes. But in spite of this striking diversity, there is also an underlying uniformity.

First among these rituals are the fertility rites, which are performed to ensure the perpetuity of the race. In the third month of a woman's pregnancy sweets, rice and some silver rupees are sent to her by her parents. This is called *Reetan* (rituals). The expectant mother prepares *khichri* (salted rice porridge), eats it herself, and also distributes it among cognates. In some clans she wears on this occasion the clothes sent to her by her parents and pays homage to the family ancestors. In the seventh month

¹ *Riddh Siddh Awaran Sad* (Japji)

of pregnancy, a similar ceremony is performed on a larger scale. This time clothes are given to the parents, and for the unborn baby. Among some communities this ceremony is performed only once—in the seventh month. The Khatri who have migrated from the western region observe this ceremony only after the birth of the baby.

After the birth of the baby, the ceremony of *Gurhuti* (giving the first liquid food) is performed. This rite is considered to be very important, because it is supposed to determine the future formation of the child's character. Parents are very particular about the choice of the person who administers to the child its first liquid food. They select a person who, from their point of view, has an ideal character, and whom they would like their child to take after. The infant is given just a drop of honey. The Sikhs recite an invocation to God and, taking a drop of honey on the tip of a sword, touch it on the tongue of the child.

Before the mother starts feeding the baby, the ritual of washing the nipples is performed. Some rice and turmeric powder are dissolved in water in a coconut saucer. Then the baby's aunt (father's sister) with a few stalks of grass washes the breasts of the mother. The aunt is then given some money as a ceremonial present. This ritual is performed to ward malignant spirits off the breasts of the mother.

On the 11th or 13th day after the delivery, the mother takes a bath and washes her hair. After this the whole house is cleaned up and the floor is smeared with cowdung. Sweets are distributed and alms given to the *laggis*, or menials.

Forty days after the birth comes the *Namkaran*, the rite of giving the child a name. Hindus in the Punjab often perform *havan* on the occasion. The family priest takes the first one or two letters of the star under which the child is born, and thinks of a name beginning with them. The father then pronounces this name thrice in the ears of the baby. The Sikhs observe this ceremony in a different way. The parents take the baby to the nearest Gurudwara where the priest, after regular prayers, recites at random a hymn from the Holy Book. The first letter of that

hymn has to be the first initial of the baby's name, and a name is coined which, if approved, is announced. To a boy's name the word 'Singh' and to a girl's 'Kaur' is added. People of lower castes do not observe any of these formalities. They often name their child after the day, month or season in which it is born. Sometimes, parents name their children after things humble and mean to ward off the evil eye, and the mischievous spirits.

When the child is seven months old, he is given his first solid food with a ritual. Some old member of the family gives *kheer* (a sweet milk-and-rice preparation) to the baby. On this occasion some people keep food, toys, clothes and various other things in front of the baby, and if he touches food first, it is believed that he will be a glutton, if books, a scholar, and if he touches tools, an engineer.

In the third or fifth year comes the tonsure ceremony which is observed by the Hindus. The priest makes the child sit in front of him and offers homage to the nine planets. A little unhusked rice is placed in a square patch which is known as *chaunk* in front of the child. This *chaunk* is first decked with flour and various perfumes. Then marks of Om, Swastika, and the nine planets are made on it by the priest. This is known as *chaunk purna*. These marks are then worshipped to obtain favourable omens. When this is done, the barber shaves off the child's hair. The hair is then tied in red cloth, or in 'darab' grass, and is thrown into a river, preferably the Ganga.

At the boyhood stage the *Janeu*, or the sacred thread rite, is performed. This too is a Hindu ritual. By wearing the holy cord, the boy is supposed to have a spiritual birth and is henceforth believed to be a twice-born.

Among the Sikhs the child, when he grows up, receives initiation through *Amrit* (nectar of immortality). This ritual is performed by *Panj Piare* (five beloved ones of the Guru) in the presence of the Holy Book. The boy first washes his hair and then appears wearing the five symbols of Sikhism, *Kes* (long hair), *Kachha* (shorts), *Kangha* (comb), *Kara* (iron bracelet), and *Kir-*

pan (sword) Some *patasas*, or sugar cakes, are put into water in an iron vessel and the five beloved ones turn by turn recite aloud the five hymns, viz, *Jappi Jap*, *Sawayye*, *Chaupai* and six stanzas of *Anand* Whoever is reciting keeps stirring the water with a double-edged sword held in his right hand The rest keep both their hands on the vessel When the recitation is over the prayers are said After this *Amrit* is given and taken Henceforth the boy is recognised as a duly initiated Sikh, and he has to obey certain *raht*, or vows of Sikh discipline, and abstain from some taboos known as *kurahts*

Marriage in the Punjab, as elsewhere, is the ceremony *par excellence* Innumerable rites are performed at marriages Some of them are given below

Seven, nine, or eleven days before the ceremony is to take place, the rite *Sat Suhagna di chakki* (grindstones of seven married women) is performed Seven married women from amongst close relatives are invited to the bride's house They are all given one grindstone each and they sit and grind seven handfuls of grain Corn is then boiled and sweetened which is later distributed among neighbours and relatives present on the occasion This is done supposedly to ensure a long life for the husband-to-be

On the day of the reception of *Barat* (marriage party) the ritual of *Chhandalian* is performed at the house of the bride The bride is seated on *Chhandalian*, and three pitchers of water, one big and two small, are placed near her A large plate is placed over the pitchers and four earthen lamps are placed on it On one side of the plate two small heaps of jaggery and rice are kept The lamps are lighted and the bride keeps looking at them at some intervals This supposedly enhances her beauty She and her friends then pick up the rice grains, chew them and throw them away By doing so, it is believed, the bride acquires the power to keep her husband under her control In earlier times, the first meeting between the bride and the bridegroom took place here

When the bride's palanquin arrives at the bridegroom's house,

the ritual of *pani narna* (waving water) is performed. Diluted milk is put in a round metal jug. The mother-in-law and sisters-in-law turn by turn wave the water-jug over the bride, round and round, up and down, and then pretend to take a sip out of it, but before they can really do so the bridegroom quickly pulls the jug back, for it is believed that one who succeeds in sipping out of this jug will be possessed with power over the bride. This is done thrice. After this the fertility rite is performed. This is known as *til methre khedna* (playing with *til* and *methra* seeds). Some rice, oil and *methra* seeds are put in a plate, the mother-in-law takes handfuls of the substance and pours it into the cupped hands of the daughter-in-law. The process is then reversed. This is repeated five times and to the accompaniment of a song.

“This is the game of oilseeds played between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law as many seeds as the mother-in-law collects, so many sons will the daughter-in-law produce. God bless her with seven sons.”¹

To introduce the bride to the cognates, the ritual of introduction to the clan known as *got kunala* (tribal trencher), is performed. Women amongst the relatives, the bride and the bride's sister-in-law get together and pay homage to the ancestors. Thereafter they all eat together. This is social acceptance of the wife into her husband's clan.

Let us turn now to a few rites connected with death. When a person is about to die, the rite of *diva-bati* (the lamp and the wick) is performed. A lamp is made from wheat flour, some oil is poured in it and a cotton-wool wick is lit up. The dying man is made to touch it. Thereafter it is put in a broad vessel with water in it. This is supposed to light up the path of dreadful darkness which one has to traverse after death.

Certain rituals are performed after death, because it is believed that though the body perishes the spirit lives on in another

¹ *Til methre, sas nuhon de til methre,*

Jiwen uwen sas til chunesi, tiwen tiwen nuhon putar janesi—saiputri hosi

world. Looking after its comfort is supposed to be a prime duty of the dead person's close relations. Rites like *Pind Patal* (offering balls of rice), *Spindkaran* (introducing the deceased to the ancestors) and *Shradh* (re-assertion of regard and affection) are observed. The ritual of *Pind Patal* starts from the very first day after death. Rolls of rice called *Pind* are offered to the departed soul. Before the performance of the rite, water is sprinkled on the floor and the departed soul is called to bathe in a preparation of milk and water. Balls of rice then placed at this spot are eaten by crows. A lamp is lit up in order to show the deceased the way to the other world.

On the 11th day the priestly clan is fed. The rite of *Spindkaran* can be performed at any time within one year of the death. The significance of this rite is to help the spirit to meet the manes. The procedure is to fill four earthen jars with water and put some linseed and perfumes in them. Three of these jars are offered to the manes and the fourth one to the newly departed spirit. The contents of the fourth jar are then mixed with those of the other three. Finally, hymns are chanted, and every year *shradh* is performed in the memory of the manes at which Brahmans are fed.

BELIEFS AND SUPERSTITIONS

Beliefs and superstitions are deep-rooted habits and fancies. Even in the advanced regions of the world there are tribes and clans which believe in supernatural powers and feel that those powers control all human activities. Superstitions still play an important role in their life.

The majority of the population of the Punjab being rural, for centuries these people of the villages, bereft of education and contact with awakened communities, were under the spell of superstition and witchcraft. It is only recently that because of the opening of schools in villages and increase of literacy that the people have become somewhat rational.

Most of the Punjabi superstitions are based upon the move-

ments of the heavenly bodies, because it is widely believed that what happens to man and his world is determined by the movement of the celestial bodies. This belief is based upon imitative magic. *Mangal* (Mars) and *Shani* (Saturn) are supposed to be malefic. A person born under the influence of these two planets, according to this belief, suffers heavily in life. He neither leads a happy life, nor does he enjoy good health. A child born under the influence of *Mangal* is called *Mangleek*. He or she must marry a *Mangleek* and no one else. If this dictate is violated the anger of *Mangal* is aroused and the couple thus united remains ill and unhappy. Those who are born under the influence of Saturn must, on Saturdays, give away in charity copper coins to *Bhatras* (worshippers of Saturn), who carry an iron-image of Saturn in a vessel with mustard oil in it and go calling from door to door every Saturday morning. "Saturn is powerful, be rid of all suffering"¹. If a person sees his own reflection in some mustard oil, then pours a copper coin into it and gives it to the *Bhatra*, he is believed to be relieved of all trouble, illness, and misfortune. Since all suffering is caused by the anger of Saturn, a little charity in his name makes all the difference.

Som (Moon), *Budh* (Mercury), *Brihaspati* (Jupiter), and *Shukra* (Venus) are considered beneficial, 'Shukra' being the best. A child born under this star lives a successful and prosperous life, attains high status in life, and keeps good health.

Some asterisms are not considered good. Of these *Mool* is supposed to be the worst. A child born under this group bodes evil to his parents, and so long as he does not attain youth, parents should not come face to face with him. If sometimes a meeting becomes unavoidable, the parent should not see the child's face directly. They put some oil in a vessel and first see in it the reflection of the child's face. The Punjab's famous legendary hero Puran was born under the *Mool Dasha* and had to be kept away from his parents for twelve years. It was only after that that his father saw his face for the first time.

¹ *Sanichher bali, sab bala tali.*

There are many superstitions connected with the moon. When the new moon comes up, it is hailed with these words

“Welcome O Moon, bring happiness,
Bring prosperity and good to all”¹

If a newly-married woman sees the new moon regularly, she will deliver a male child as handsome as the moon. It is, however, considered inauspicious to see the new moon on the fourth lunar day. Doing so is supposed to bring a bad name.

During a solar or lunar eclipse, a pregnant woman is not supposed to move. Eating, drinking and even changing clothes must wait till the eclipse is over. Her every movement is believed adversely to affect the child in her womb. If during the eclipse she draws a line, its mark will appear on the body of her baby. All cooked food that stayed unused during the eclipse is given away in charity, because it is supposed to have become impure during the eclipse. Charity given at this time is considered to have great spiritual significance. If a person sees a shooting star and quickly makes a wish and ties a knot, the wish is generally believed to be fulfilled.

Earth is given the status of mother, and it is believed that if a chaste and devoted woman falls into trouble and her honour is at stake, the mother earth opens out its bosom and absorbs that woman in itself, thus saving her from trouble. In the famous legend *Sassi Punnu*, when Sassi was wandering in the desert in search of Punnu, one shepherd tried to seduce her. She prayed to Mother Earth to save her honour, at which the ground under her feet opened and received her in.

Blowing off a light is not considered good. The wick of the lamp should be turned down and then extinguished with a wave of the hand. Removing the light is not considered a good omen. That is why orthodox women mutter these words whenever they extinguish a lamp.

“Go to your house, O earthen lamp,
Your mother awaits you at the door,

¹ *Bhagi bharia, sukh da charin,
Kher da charin, sarbat da bhala karin*

Come in the morning, bring all the good omens,
Go home, earthen lamp, let the night be happy for me
Bring prosperity and bring oil along with you"¹

Fire in the oven is never put out with impure water, because that rouses the anger of the god of fire

Many superstitions exist regarding the direction of the journey which one has to take. In olden times, travelling was hazardous and one had to be very careful. On particular days it was not considered proper to travel in certain directions. It was bad, for instance, to travel towards the north on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and good to travel in this direction on Mondays and Fridays. Thursday was regarded as bad for travelling southwards, and Wednesday good. Tuesdays and Wednesdays were not considered good for journey towards the hills. There is a saying

'Don't go to the hills on Tuesdays and Wednesdays,
If you do you'll lose the game even if you be on the brink
of victory'"²

Work started on a Wednesday can be easily and successfully concluded

It is believed that if a new dress is worn on a Saturday, it lasts longer. Wearing a new piece of jewellery on a Sunday is good, because then it does not get lost. That is why it is said

"Wear new clothes on Wednesdays and Saturdays and jewellery on Sundays"³

Even at harvest-time and at the time of sowing seeds, the auspicious and inauspicious days are taken into account. Tuesdays are regarded good for reaping and Wednesdays for sowing. The saying "reap on a Tuesday, sow on a Wednesday"⁴ is con-

¹ *Ja diwea ghar apne, teri man udeke bar*

Aien swakhte sare sagan vichar

Ja diwea ghar apne, meri sukhan beete rat

Khushi liawin, tel liawin nsi

² *Mangal Budh na jawin pahar, matan jiti bazi awen har*

³ *Budh Sanichhar kapra, gheni Aitwar*

⁴ *Mangal wadi Budh bijai*

sidered very apt For the purchase of cattle due consideration is given to the influence of the day Wednesdays are good for the purchase of a cow, Fridays for a mare, and Saturdays for a buffalo

Certain beliefs and superstitions are associated with animals, birds and insects An owl symbolises desolation, a vulture settling on a house-top brings bad luck If one sees a snake, one should not utter the word 'snake' but euphemistically call it a *kira* (insect) If that is done, according to belief, the snake goes blind and cannot move When a snake is killed it is not advisable to throw it out through the door It is thrown either out through the window or a few bricks are removed from the wall and it is pushed out through the hole thus improvised If that is not done its spirit gets into the house and gives a lot of trouble When a cobra completes its hundred years of life, it develops a metamorphic power It is then called an *Ichhadharı* (capable of assuming any form) or a *Chhaleda* (phantom) The gem in the head of a snake is considered a very precious thing It is supposed to bring riches and prosperity to the family that possesses it

When a new utensil is bought, a horse is first made to smell it Eating pork or wearing the teeth of a pig round the neck protects a person from the evil eye and witchcraft Augury of ants carrying grain of food into a house is a promise of prosperity, but if the ants are seen going out they are a symptom of a heavy loss in the near future Whooping cough is said to be cured by riding a bear The hair of a bear round the necks can keep evil eyes off a child

Particular months of the year are considered inauspicious for particular animals to litter *Chet* is not good for a bitch, *Vaisakh* for a she-camel, *Jeth* for a cat, *Sawan* for a mare or a she-ass, *Bhadon* for a cow, *Maghar* for a buffalo, and *Poh* for a goat If they litter in the months considered inauspicious for them they, according to belief, bring calamities upon the family that keeps them Such animals are quickly sold off

A human baby born in *Kartik* is considered inauspicious,

but a baby born early in the morning is always lucky. A child of the other sex born after three consecutive children of one sex is considered unlucky. Thus a boy born after three girls or a girl after three boys is unlucky. The girl is unlucky for the father and the boy for the mother. Such a child is called *Trikhal*. There are certain rituals which ward off the evils associated with the birth of this type of baby. As soon as such child is born, it is made to pass through a hole in a sieve which is specially torn for this purpose. Alternatively, earth is dug up from under the threshold and the baby is made to pass under it. If the evil is thus removed, such a child proves immensely lucky. It is said

“*Trikhal* is deceptive,

It makes the house either empty or overflowing”¹

If the shadow of a pregnant woman falls on a snake, it is said that its pace is slowed. At the time of childbirth thorny bushes are placed on the roof of the room of the mother so that a dog or a cat who augurs ill may not cross over the roof. Care is taken to see that no broom remains lying anywhere in that room because it will sweep off all the luck of the new-born baby. To make childbirth easy the knots of the jute cot are loosened. Some people go to the extent of removing all locks in the house because that way, it is said, all obstructions are removed. This superstition is also based on imitative magic. An iron knife is kept in the room in order to protect the mother and her new-born baby from evil spirits. To protect a child from the evil eye, a black mark is invariably put on its forehead, a piece of coal put in its milk, or a black thread is tied to the golden bangles worn on the arm. A black object is hung on the terrace of a newly-constructed house. Some people paint a gargoyle on a black pot, break it from underneath, and hang a red strip below it in order to make it look like a demon. All this is done to protect a house against the evil eye. Some women make their children

¹ *Trikhal Chhall, jan ghar sakhana jan val chhal*

wear round their neck *nazarbattus* (protectors from the evil eye), for this purpose, or sometimes for the same purpose hang pig's teeth round their neck

There is a treatment for a child affected by the evil eye. A couple of dried red chillies are first waved over the head of the child and then thrown into the fire. If the smoke does not hurt the eyes, it is a sure sign that the evil look had affected the child.

LOCAL DEITIES

Besides gods and goddesses commonly worshipped all over India, there are some who are local and are propitiated in small shrines raised on or near the boundary line of a village, or in open fields. The villagers, in order to propitiate them, present them with offerings. Whenever a villager passes by these shrines, he makes an involuntary obeisance. These local deities are of different types—those that protect the village from malignant spirits, and those that grant abundance in harvest and general prosperity to the village. But there are the spiteful ones also who, if offended, bring calamity sometimes upon the offender and sometimes upon the whole village.

The prosperity of a Punjabi's life depends by and large upon his agricultural output. That is why most of the local deities that are propitiated in villages are humanised forms of those natural phenomena which prove beneficial or harmful in agriculture. The people's maximum interest is in the soil, because it gives them their livelihood. That is why everywhere in the villages of the Punjab, earth is worshipped as Mother Earth. She is the bearer of all animate and vegetable life which rests on her surface. But no shrine or image is erected to Mother Earth, because she is believed to be present everywhere in the form of ground. Here and there in the villages one can see a heap of stones, pottery and pebbles collected under a sacred tree. This is a place where Mother Earth is believed to dwell. People go there and place before it offerings—milk, fruits and grains. When a cow or buffalo is milched, the first

five or seven streams of her milk are offered to Earth. Similarly at harvest time some plants are left in the field as an offering to Mother Earth, and a prayer is made to her to send plenty of rain the following year, so that there is a bumper crop. At the construction of a new house when the first stone is laid after the digging of the foundation, a coconut, a few silver coins, a coral and a pearl are tied in *mauli* (a multi-coloured thread), and offered to Mother Earth.

The Punjabis believe that every month Mother Earth sleeps for seven days. During these days no activity such as digging, ploughing or sowing, is ever performed, and the earth is left in quiet repose. In this connection it is said that

“On the days of *Sankranti*, on the fifth, seventh, ninth,
Tenth, twenty-first, and twenty-fourth,
On these seven days, the Earth sleeps”

There is a belief that a person who dies on the lap of Mother Earth attains peace. That is why when a person is about to die, he or she is removed from the cot and laid on the earth. All mourners who come to condole with a bereaved relative, sleep on the ground for eleven days after the death. The Bhandari Khatri make a woman sleep on the ground after childbirth. They take seven flowers from a sacred tree and put them under her pillow, in order to protect her against evil spirits.

Villages which exist in the vicinity of rivers and streams stand in danger of floods. Their inhabitants worship and give offerings to the Darya Pir (river god) or Khizar Pir (water god). Khwaja Khizar is the commonly accepted river god and both Hindus and Muslims propitiate him. They collect some stones and bricks near a river and raise a small shrine to him. In the months of *Sawan* and *Bhadon* when there is fear of inundation to cattle and crops, incantations are sent up to the river god. Before launching a boat, sailors invoke Khwaja Pir to grant it a safe journey.

Sometimes when a flood is feared, offerings in the form of an animal sacrifice are made to the river god. When a river

is in flood, a coconut, some dried grass and a golden ring are tied together and offered to it, along with a buffalo which is pushed into the flood. If the buffalo is drowned, it means that the god has accepted the offering and there is no fear of the flood. If it swims across to the other bank, even that is an auspicious sign, but if it turns and comes back to the side from where it was pushed in, a flood is supposed to be imminent. It is said that till as late as Independence, whenever in the rainy season there was a flood in the Ghaggar stream, the Maharaja of Patiala used to perform the customary ceremony of offering a golden ring, a coconut and grass to the river deity, and it is claimed that the flood water always receded.

In the Punjab when a new well is dug up a clod of earth is kept aside undug to propitiate Khwaja Khizar. When water level is reached this left-over clod is also dug up. This particular piece of earth is treated as Khwaja Khizar's shrine for the time that the digging goes on.

Before laying the foundation of a well, a coconut smeared in *sandhur* (vermilion) and tied in *mauli* (multi-coloured thread) is offered to the water god.

In summer when there are cyclonic whirlwinds, Bhai Pheru is propitiated. Bhai Pheru, according to legend, was a Brahmin, a disciple of Sakhi Sarwar. His main shrine is in Miyanki, in Lahore district. No separate shrine is made for him elsewhere. When a Punjabi sees a whirlwind approaching he calls "*Bhai Pheru teri Kar*" (Brother Pheru, protect us by means of your charmed circle).

A popular deity of the Punjab is Khetarpal, the field spirit and the guardian of farms. His image can be seen in many villages in the Punjab. Farmers fix a cross bamboo in the middle of the field and put an inverted earthen pot over it, marked with white and black stripes and propitiate it with the offering of the first ears of corn, so that it may protect the crop from ants, rats and evil spirits.

Another godling closely allied to Khetarpal is Bhoomia

He protects the land over which the village is located. Whenever a new village is raised, a shrine is made for Bhoomia. According to a belief among the Jats, when the first man of the newly set up village dies, and is cremated or buried, he is deified. A shrine for Bhoomia is erected at that place and propitiations for the protection of the village are sent up to him. If a son is born in a family, or if there is a wedding, Bhoomia is the deity to be invoked with offerings and in his name Brahmans of the village are fed. At harvest time again, Bhoomia is propitiated and the first milk of a cow or buffalo is offered to him. Every Sunday women pay obeisance to him. The fourth day of the lunar fortnight is considered a special day for his invocation. By nature this godling is benefic, but reacts violently if offended or dishonoured. It is said that if someone brushes his teeth near his shrine, he is gripped by illness, if he happens to sleep near his shrine, he feels a heavy weight on his chest.

Another deity similar to Bhoomia is Jathera (the elder). Whenever a founder of a village dies, a monument resembling a shrine is raised to him on the outskirts of the village and a *Jandi* tree is planted there. There may be many such shrines in a village. On a certain day all the descendants of the 'elder' go to a pond and dig earth and put it on the mound of their Jathera and offer ghee and flowers to him.

The village-folk generally believe that illness, epidemic, and other calamities are actually punishment which a malignant spirit inflicts, if and when it is offended. It is consequently felt that an illness or a disease can be cured only by propitiating such spirits. That is why there are some deities connected with diseases. The most dreaded among these is Masan who is the personification of the cremation-ground. Villagers are scared of him, because he causes wasting diseases and makes his victim die a slow and painful death. Women who perform witchcraft propitiate and invoke him for fulfilment of their desires.

Seetla Mata is believed to be the goddess of smallpox. She is also known as Mata and Jagrani. Whenever anyone in the village suffers from smallpox, his family members propitiate

Seetla Mata During an attack of smallpox it is believed that the patient is possessed by the Mata and no such activity is allowed in the house as might offend her. The use of soap, oil and tooth brush is given up. Consumption of garlic, onions, eggs and meat is also forbidden. The Mata is supposed to reside on a *keekar* tree, so the members of the infected person's family water this tree. Propitiatory offerings dedicated to the Mata are given to the ass, especially the *gulgula*.

MAGIC AND MEDICINE

Many diseases are treated with spells, incantations, conjurations and amulets. In the Punjab, one still comes across *Ojhas*, *Chellas*, or *Sianas* who treat all kinds of illnesses with spells, etc. Primitive tribes commonly believed that death and disease were caused by mysterious acts of malignant spirits. As a corollary it was essential to get rid of the evil spirit in order to cure a patient. These evil spirits could be made to quit the body of the victim only through superhuman means. This belief still prevails among the Sansees, Pakhiwals, Bawris, sweepers and some others.

There are different rites to be gone through for different diseases. If a person has a crook in the back, he should sit near the threshold of one who was born feet first. That person is to be asked to give a kick to the sufferer. If he agrees to do and actually does what is requested the trouble will go. The person who kicks has to stand at the inner side of the threshold. If there is pain in one side of the head, the patient should look at the rays of the setting sun and rub the affected portion with a few blades of grass, at the same time muttering the following incantation:

“As the sun goes down
My pain goes off”¹

This is to be repeated thrice and off goes the pain. A sty or inflammation of the eye is cured if the sufferer knocks at night at a neighbouring house where there are two adults and a child

¹ *Jiwen jiwen suraj dhale, meri dukh bala tale*

When someone from inside asks about the caller's identity, these words have to be uttered in reply

"I am a sty

I come to you, from him I fly"¹

In the process the sty is transferred from the caller to the person called. The best way to cure a prolonged attack of hiccups is to put some blame on the person concerned, though no indication of the motive behind the false blame may be given out. The psychology behind this belief is that the person's attention is diverted and because of the shock of the allegation his hiccups suddenly stop.

If anyone suffers from intermittent fever, he should take a thread and go round a *peepal* tree seven times reciting an incantation. That way the fever will be passed on to the tree.

There is another treatment for this fever. The patient is required to hear from the priest of a Gurudwara the story of how Guru Amar Das once entrapped this fever in the form of a child and released it only on the promise that wherever this *Sakhi* (legend) was told in future, it would run away from there.

For treating piles the patient ties around his toe a thread of five colours, white, red, green, yellow and black, keeps it on for fifteen days so as to open it on a Tuesday, and carries offerings thereafter to the temple of Hanuman. Sometimes a conjured ring is also given to the patient. It is claimed that if the patient wears this ring for a certain period, the malady goes.

A fit of epilepsy can be cured by making the patient smell an old shoe.

SORCERY

This is a form of magic in which spells and incantations are used to invoke a *Pir* or saint to get the desired effect. According to popular belief, incantation is a powerful instrument even for fighting pain and diseases of many forms. Even now one comes across a *Siana* (wise man) in a village who can cure with

¹ *Main han akh triki, aunu chhor ke tanu nikli*

incantation minor ailments like toothache, headache, etc. There is a separate spell for every ailment. The wise person first mutters the particular spell, then blows thrice at the affected part of the body, and the pain goes. This is called the *Jhara*—conjugation. The conjugation uttered for toothache is given below.

“Black insect like collyrium
 Can eat all the thirty two-teeth,
 But by the grace of Sheikh Farid
 It dies in between
 Credit to the Pīr”¹

After this the conjuror blows seven times at the aching tooth. The idea is to invoke Sheikh Farid to destroy the evil in the teeth.

Snakebites and scorpion bites are also treated by spells. The men who do this are called *mandaris* (conjurors). It is claimed that many snakebites have been cured by spells and incantations. An able conjuror can, by means of incantation, call up the snake who bit the patient, and make it suck back its own poison from the patient. Similarly a scorpion bite is cured by spells. Guga Pīr is invoked for the treatment of poisonous insect bites.

Some yogis utter a spell on a pinch of ash which is then either swallowed or smeared over the affected part. This way even incurable diseases are believed to be cured. Punjabi folk-tales are full of references to spells and incantations, or amulets which are tied round the neck of a person and he is transformed either into an animal or bird, and later, if someone else discovers and cuts that thread, its effect wears out and the converted person returns to his real form. Similarly there are tales of someone transforming a prince or a princess into a fly and entrapping it in a box. Such tales are found in abundance in the Punjabi folk literature.

¹ *Kala kira kajla batī dand chare*

Barkat Sheikh Farid kala kira vich mare

Ahuda Pīr Ustad da

WITCHCRAFT

Of the many types of magic there is one which is performed for the general welfare of the community. It is harmless and benevolent. It helps in curing diseases, raising crops and warding off evil spirits. It is known as sympathetic magic. But there is the other type of magic—black magic—which is employed for anti-social purposes. It is performed with the evil intention of taking vengeance, causing harm to someone, promoting a split in the victim's house, or ruining someone completely. For this purpose the witch or wizard invokes dark, supernatural powers and achieves full mastery over evil spirits. In the Punjab, a woman expert in witchcraft is called a *dain*. The witch develops certain occult faculties through incantation and possesses power over an evil spirit which obeys her commands. It is believed that her evil look is very effective and can do immense harm to its victims. That is why mothers hide their children from the gaze of such women.

The magicians who practise witchcraft are called *Ojhas*. They propitiate Goddess Shakti, go into the cremation-ground for a forty-day penance and are believed to possess power over evil spirits. Muslims who practise spells do penance at tombs and acquire control over Satan. Ignorant villagers are scared of these persons and dare not offend them. Those who believe in occult powers come to these *Ojhas*, often take back a pinch of ash, and so some other charmed substance, to harm their enemies. They try to smear the victim with the ash, or make him eat the charmed object. The victim after he has succumbed starts vomiting blood or dies of a wasting disease. There are amulets like *ganda* or *rakh* which are supposed to be so efficacious that they make the victim a life-long slave, ever ready to obey. Many women in villages get these charms to bring their husbands or other members of the family under their control. There are charms of many kinds, each having a different effect. That is why everyone desirous of getting them has to specify his trouble and get the particular remedial charm. If the charm is obtained

to harm an enemy, it is buried in front of the door of his courtyard. Whosoever first steps over it is affected by it. The charms which Muslim Pirs give have some digits or verses of the Holy Qoran written over them. These are known in the Punjab as *taweets*.

In the Punjab there are people who still believe in the cure of a person supposed to be possessed by an evil spirit, by exorcism or conjuration. Among the erstwhile low castes of the Punjab, if anyone has a disease which cannot be diagnosed or cured in spite of treatment, or if he is a mental case, the villagers straightaway begin to believe that he has been to some haunted place and has been possessed by some evil spirit. The *Chellas* (disciples) remove the spirit from the patient's body by exorcism. Sometimes they even threaten the evil spirit by torturing the patient. They beat him or apply red hot iron bars to his body. The belief is that the victim is only a medium and no harm comes to him, it is the evil spirit who suffers. The spirit gets frightened in this way and deserts the body. When the evil spirit escapes, it either knocks at the door or breaks some object in the house.

Women who have no children adopt many magical remedies to cure themselves of barrenness. One of the methods is that a barren woman heats water at night over the burning pyre of a young bachelor, washes her hair with it, then cooks rice on that fire and eats it. All this time she keeps reciting a charm. It is believed that in this way the soul of the dead man enters the womb of that woman. Many barren women have been caught performing this charm over pyres. This spell can be made ineffective, if the burning body is moved with a stick and some part of the body is broken. If some ashes from the pyre are given to someone to eat after uttering a charm, it is believed that he would become an invalid and die of a wasting disease. These ashes are known as *kacha masan*.

Those women, who cannot perform the above spell, wait for some auspicious day, go to a road crossing, bathe there at midnight under the light of the stars, sacrifice a goat and recite

some charm Those who happen to be at road crossings in villages in the morning can even today see sometimes multi-coloured threads, earthen lamps, mutton, etc , lying all over. If a person steps over these things, he exposes himself to much harm Charms performed on road crossings are supposed to be very efficacious

Sometimes the witches collect foodgrains from seven houses or water from seven wells to cast a spell Spells are also easily effective on locks of hair, nail pairings, castaway clothes, or the dust of feet That is why villagers do not throw these things out in the streets, but they bury them in ditches When a child's tonsure ceremony is performed, the hair is wrapped in dung and buried deep in a ditch until it can be disposed of in sacred waters

Many superhuman powers are attributed to witches and wizards. Some of them make an image of a victim and subject it to suffering and torture, believing that the suffering ultimately reaches the victim whom it represents According to H A Rose, "The Chopra warlock in the Punjab makes a figure of a man and tortures it by inserting a needle in it, the pain being supposed to reach the individual who is personated "

Some witches in the Punjab are said to possess power to extract the liver of a person by just one glance Such a witch is known as *kaleje khami* (liver-eater) Describing her, William Crooke wrote "In the Punjab when a witch succeeds in taking out a man's liver, she will not eat it for two and a half days, and if after eating it she is put under the influence of an exorcist she can be forced to take the liver of some animal and with it replace the one extracted from the victim "

In the folk-tales of the Punjab there is frequent mention of witches who pull out a man's or animal's liver and eat it They are ultimately caught and punished for their acts They are also supposed to possess power to open or patch up the sky, turn stones into wax, set fire to water, and turn human beings into any shape they choose

OMENS

Omens are generally understood to mean the phenomena and objects which forecast coming events. A large number of Punjabis even today have a staunch belief in omens. For them the success or failure of a journey or enterprise depends upon the very first object that one encounters while setting out. If one comes across a woman carrying a pitcher of water, a child, a gardener's wife carrying a bunch of flowers, or a sweeper, it is supposed to be a good omen. If a man riding a horse or a young man playing on a flute comes across, even then the success of the venture is supposed to be guaranteed. Out of birds and animals a partridge, chirping and flying on the right and a donkey braying on the left are supposed to bring good luck. On the other hand, a woman carrying an empty pitcher, a gardener's wife with an empty basket, a Brahmin, a Maulavi, or a bald man bring bad luck. A lame, a one-eyed man, or an otherwise disabled person is not good. To see a smouldering object is supposed to be a very bad omen. If a cat cuts across the path, there is absolutely no possibility of success in the undertaking. Meeting a snake is also bad, but if the snake is killed then the bad effect is warded off. If someone sneezes at the start of a venture, it is inauspicious, but two consecutive sneezes are good.

If a dog whines at night it portends death because a dog is supposed to be the attendant of Yama, and the moment it sees Yama it starts whining. If a dog lies on its back with its legs upwards, it portends a calamity. A cock crowing during the day is bad. Similarly, seeing an owl during daytime is unlucky. Bats are supposed to bring bad luck.

Some omens are associated with days and heavenly bodies. If the festivals of Holi, Lohri and Baisakhi fall on a Tuesday, it is feared that a serious catastrophe will befall the world.

"If Lohri, Holi and Diwali come on Tuesdays,

The world will be in the grip of death and few will survive"¹

¹ *Holi, Lohri te Diwali Mangalwar ho,*
Charakh charegi prithvi virla jeei ko!

Similarly, if the tenth dark lunar day in *Jeth* falls on a Saturday, the world faces a drought and a consequent famine of the severest form

“If the tenth dark Lunar day in *Jeth* falls on a Saturday,
There will be no water on earth and few shall live”¹

A comet visible in the sky portends a severe catastrophe for the world

FORECAST AND DIVINATIONS

In spite of man's acknowledged inability to read his future, there are people who claim to have the skill and the perception to forecast the future on the basis of events and signs of the present. This art has been prevalent in the Punjab from the earliest times. Most of the predictions do not come true and educated people do not put much faith in them, but the lives of the ignorant village-folk are greatly influenced by them.

Some of these predictions are based upon the involuntary movements of the body—twitching of an eye or any other part of body, itching on the palm, etc. If a man's right eye twitches, some advantage is anticipated but the twitching of the left eye indicates harm. For a woman it is just the reverse—twitching of the right eye forebodes harm and of the left one good. Similarly if there is itching on a man's right palm, he can hope for some monetary gain, and a loss or an unforeseen expenditure, if it is on the left palm. Once again it is just the opposite in the case of a woman. If there is itching under the feet, a journey is expected. If someone sneezes at the start of a work, it is doomed to failure.

Like other communities the Punjabis have great faith in dreams. They believe that dreams if correctly interpreted are indications of events to come. An early morning dream is generally considered to come true. A marriage seen in a dream is supposed to bring some calamity, but a death is an indication

¹ *Jeth vidi daswin je Sanichar hoī,*
Panī hoe na dhart par virla jeeve koī

of longevity It is not good to dream of fire, but to see water in a dream is auspicious If a deceased relative gives something in a dream, the dreamer may expect a windfall or good luck in some other form, but if the deceased person takes away something it forebodes death If one dreams of taking coins from some person, it is interpreted to mean illness in the family

People do a number of things to get an insight into the future The village-folk generally draw lines at random on a piece of paper, or draw them on the earth with a finger, and then they bracket them in pairs If the lines turn out to be even in number, it means fulfilment of a wish, otherwise it means disappointment This is called *Aunsi* The following words are spoken while the lines are being drawn

“Here I draw the lines of truth
In the court of the King,
If I draw the truth, I offer *kheer*,
If falsehood, ashes ”¹

While kneading dough, if a part of the flour falls out of the plate, it means guests are coming Cawing of a crow on the wall of the house also means the same If a love-lorn bride waiting for her soldier-lover has a crow cawing on her wall or terrace, she takes it as welcome news of his arrival She then feeds the crow with *churi* (*chapati* crushed in *ghee*) and sings

“Fly away, O crow,
I’ll give you *churi*,
But tell me first, is my dear one coming or not ?”²

The happiness and prosperity of the Punjabis depend upon the abundance of rain That is why great significance is attached to the skill of forecasting weather If the cloud in the sky has the shape of a partridge’s feather, it is a sure promise of rain

“If clouds look like a partridge’s feathers,
Or a woman eats the skin of the milk,

¹ *Sach pawan sachiar pawan, raja de darbar pawan,
Sach pia tan kheer khwasan, juth pia tan kheh pasar*

² *Ud kanwan, churi kut pawan,
Das mera mahi asi ke nahin*

The former will bring rain and the latter ruin,
 Never will this saying be found wrong"¹

There are some other couplets also about the forecast of rain

"If there is a halo round the sun at noon,
 It will either rain or the king will die"²

In order to know what form of birth the deceased has taken after his death, put a heap of ashes under a basket at night at the place where he died. In the morning the figure deciphered on the heap is supposed to be the shape that that person has taken. If there is no figure at all, then the person is supposed to have attained salvation.

¹ *Titter khambi badli te ran malai kha,
 Eh vasse vh ujare, e birthe kade na ja*

² *Sikhar suraj parwaria,
 Jan tan mehn ware jan raja maria*

CHAPTER IV

CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

IN THE CUSTOMS and traditions of the Punjab kinship plays a significant role. The Punjabis have a very vast range of it. Its pattern varies considerably from group to group but the general mode of behaviour and attitude is more or less the same. Each relation has certain duties and responsibilities towards others in his group, in the day-to-day life, birth and marriage ceremonies, funerals and other social occasions. Different sets of terms are used for addressing the patrilineal and matrilineal kinsfolk. The father's brother, for example, is addressed as *chacha*, while the mother's brother is *mama*. Even the terms used for addressing the elder or younger agnatic kin are different. Thus the father's elder brother is addressed as *tava* and the younger one as *chacha*.

Generally most of the kinsmen of a person reside in the same village, or in the adjoining villages. Because of the joint family system, the real brothers, even married ones, often live in the same household. There are some other agnates who generally reside in the same locality, or *patti*, participate in all social functions, and exchange gifts. Some of the cognates reside in the adjoining villages and very often they participate in social or festive occasions, like the initiation and marriage ceremonies, as also on other occasions like funerals, etc.

Kinship plays a very vital role in the social and cultural life of the people because most of the kin have to perform certain specified and obligatory functions on social occasions. Thus, for instance, the *choora* (red ivory bangles) which a bride wears at her wedding has necessarily to come as a gift from her maternal uncle. The maternal uncle has to put the bangles on her forearms while going through certain rituals. Similarly the maternal grandparents must send their *khat* (bridal gift) to the girl on the

occasion of marriage. This gift generally comprises a set of clothes, some jewellery and other household objects for the bride. At an initiation ceremony, like the first hair cutting, or wedding, each relative gives something in cash or kind according to his social standing or nearness of relation. The exchange of gifts is a prominent custom and keeps the kin, in a way, well-knit in the social fabric. Presence of all the relatives at social functions is considered very essential and special efforts are made to patch up differences with all those with whom relations have been strained for some reason or other.

The joint family system having been in vogue for ages, the entire responsibility for the maintenance of the household and of social relations falls upon the father. No one in the family can question his authority. Even in such personal matters as contracting a marriage, the father, as the head of the family, has the ultimate say. After his death the patriarchal powers pass on to the eldest son who becomes the head of the family and its chief representative on all social occasions.

At home the head of the family inspires awe among the members. Younger members of the family dare not talk flip-pantly or joke in his presence, nor is it considered befitting for them to smoke or drink when he is around. All conversation in his presence is conducted in subdued voices. Daughters-in-law observe *purdah* when the father-in-law is present, and it is generally understood that when he comes into the house, he would either cough aloud, or indicate in some other way that he is around, so that they may cover their faces and tone down their voices. As a general rule, there is no direct conversation between the father-in-law and the daughter-in-law, but if a situation and an occasion necessitate it, it is brief to the extent of being monosyllabic, and the daughter-in-law is barely audible.

Purdah is observed before the husband's elder brother also. The same customary respect as is shown to the father-in-law is also shown to him. But the younger brother of the husband, the *devar*, enjoys a privileged position. He is free to talk, laugh and joke with the *bhabhi* (brother's wife). Among some clans, there

is a custom that when the bride is brought home, the husband's younger brother is the first person who lifts her veil and peeps at her face. The equation between *devar* and *bhabhi* is very informal. But in certain clans the eldest *bhabhi* is given a status equal to that of the mother and she is treated with great respect. In Malwa, where the *devar* generally marries the widow of the elder brother, the relationship is very free. Practical jokes and broad jests are resorted to very liberally. In the folk songs of the Punjab, there are many references to this type of relationship between *devar* and *bhabhi*.

Generally speaking, relations between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law are not very cordial in many families. A lot of friction is caused over the domestic chores and sometimes even small mistakes on the part of the daughter-in-law are made much of by the mother-in-law. The offended mother-in-law in her outburst does not spare even the parental family of the daughter-in-law. The sisters of the husband very sadistically add fuel to the fire. However, although the position of the wife varies in different societies, the mother occupies a very respectable position everywhere in the Punjab.

Relations among brothers are often very friendly and cordial. They are always out to help one another. The elder brother generally commands the same respect as is given to the father. But a great change comes in this behaviour when the brothers get married and their wives start wrangling on petty matters. Domestic quarrels often disturb the integrity and peaceful life of the family. Over the distribution of ancestral property sometimes the filial love and respect change into life-long enmity.

The relationship between a brother and a sister is the warmest and cleanest of all relations. Right from her childhood a sister idealises her brother. When she plays the folk games *kikli* and *thaal* with her friends, she sings praises of her brother. After marriage when she is in her husband's home, she always looks forward to the arrival of her brother, because whenever she goes to her parents on a customary visit, it is the brother who fetches her. She looks up to him as her sole protector and

expects help from him when she is in difficulties

The agnates who live in a separate house though in the same village are generally the brothers or first cousins of the head of the family. Relations with them are generally kept pleasant and they in their turn join in all sorts of festive as well as sad occasions. Regular dealings of exchange of cash and gifts are maintained with them on all festive occasions.

Relatives from the maternal side generally reside in the adjacent villages. Children are, as a matter of course, more attached to their maternal relatives. There is a ditty prevalent among the children regarding their maternal grandfather's house

“I shall go to my maternal grandfather's house,
Eat *laddoos* and *peras* there,
And come back home fat and plump”¹

Among many clans, eating or even drinking water in the house of a married daughter is taboo. It is believed that one who eats in the house of one's married daughter goes to hell. Among some, even elder brothers are not supposed to accept the hospitality of their married sisters, nor accept any gifts from her. However, there is no restriction on children accepting such gifts or hospitality. Some decades ago, this custom was rigidly followed but with the change of times people's views have changed and the rule has been relaxed.

Sometimes close friends and associates enter into a ritualistic relationship. They often exchange their turbans, and are known as *Pag-wat* brothers. They go to a temple or a gurudwara, exchange turbans, and eat from the same plate. It is quite an occasion and many near relatives are invited. This sort of ritualistic relationship is frequent. Sometimes even a girl ties *rakhi* on the wrist of a boy outside her own kin and makes him her *dharam bhra* (brother in faith). The approach to these ritual relationships is very serious and all obligations are as earnestly observed as in the case of real kin ties.

¹ *Nanke ghar javanga, laddoo pere khawanga, mota ho ke awanga*

Among the villagers of the Punjab, there is an unusual sense of kinship. That is why relational terms of address are used by fellow-villagers unrelated by either real or ritual ties. In all social intercourse modes of address are very respectable. An elderly woman is always addressed as *chachi* or *masi* (aunt) and an elderly man as *chacha* or *mama* (uncle). Similarly boys and girls of the same age-group generally address one another as brother or sister. A daughter is the most privileged person inasmuch as she is given a daughter's status in every household of the village.

MARRIAGE

Marriage is celebrated in the Punjab still with great gusto. Until a few decades ago a marriage celebration meant a long chain of ceremonies and rituals, but now it has become a comparatively simple affair. Nevertheless marriage still means rituals and festivity.

Generally a girl has no say in the choice of her husband. Formerly it was the *Parohat* (priest) or *Nai* (barber) of the family who negotiated with the boy's family on behalf of the girl's family, or vice versa. If what he fixed up met with the approval of the girl's parents the matters were finalised. This procedure is still followed by some orthodox families, but the more advanced ones almost always take the girl's consent before making a commitment.

Of the various considerations that influence the choice of a bride or bridegroom, caste and clan are the most important. Normally out-of-the-caste marriages are not allowed. The Khatri marry their daughters into Khatri families only, but it is very interesting that they do not mind taking a bride from another caste, like the Aroras. The Khatri are further sub-divided into various clans which do not marry out of the specified sub-castes. There is a system of social graduation in accordance with which certain Khatri tribes refuse to inter-marry save in a certain specified number of their fellow tribes, and the distinctions thus created have been formulated in a set of names such as Dhaighare,

Charzati, Khukhrain, Bahri, etc. Thus, for instance, a Dhaighara (literally, two and a half houses) Khatri marries only in one of three castes—Kapuris, Khannas, and Mehras or Malhotras. The Khukhrains, Bahris and Bawinjais marry only in the similarly specified eight, twelve and fifty-two castes, respectively.

The Jats are also very particular about their *got* (clan) and do not marry into the *gots* of the parents and grandparents on both sides. The villages of the Punjab are exogamous units and marry their children in villages which are nearabout. "Each village is said to have a traditional set of villages to which its girls regularly go in marriage and another set from which it regularly receives wives."¹

When all the initial negotiations are completed, the girl's father takes the initiative towards ceremonial commitments, through the family barber. He sends to the boy's family a coconut, *chuhare* (dry dates), sugar, and some money in the form of the first auspicious gifts. When these things are received by the boy's father, he calls all the relatives and the *Tilak* or *Shagan* ceremony is performed. Among Hindus this ceremony is performed by the *Parohat* (family priest) who draws a *chauk* on the ground, seats the boy facing it, recites some *mantras*, applies a *tilak* on his forehead and then makes him eat one of the dates sent by the girl's father. Sikhs have this ceremony performed by a *Bhaiji* (preacher) from the Gurudwara, who first reads five stanzas from the *Japji Sahib* (a hymn by Guru Nanak), makes the boy taste a date and then applies the *tilak* on his forehead out of a mixture of saffron powder and rice. A little saffron dissolved in water is then sprinkled on the clothes. After this ceremony, the boy's father sends to the affianced bride some gifts through the same barber, which include sugar, coconut, rice, dry dates, money, ornaments, clothes and henna. The girl's people receive the gifts and then on an auspicious day they call the village *Nain* (family barber's wife), and make her perform the engagement ceremony. The girl is made to

¹ *India's Villages*, p. 156

wear the things sent by her prospective in-laws and is seated facing east. The *Nain* then makes her eat the sugar and dry dates received from the boy's parents, and that completes the ceremony.

Among Khatris the first rite performed after the completion of negotiations is called *Thaka*. This is also known as the 'milk-drinking' ceremony. On a fixed day the bridegroom-to-be and his relatives go to the girl's house, where the girl's mother brings milk for the boy to drink, and thereafter gives him some money, sweets, etc., as a gift. The boy's parents also give to the girl clothes, jewellery and other gifts.

Sometime after the *Thaka* the regular engagement takes place. Generally this is done shortly before the wedding. On the fixed day the girl's people, accompanied by some relatives, take the betrothal gifts—sweets, etc.—to the boy's house. Sometimes the boy's parents accompanied by the near relatives go to the girl's house to receive these gifts. This is a very expensive ceremony for the girl's family. Besides money and large *thals* full of sweets and fruit, the boy is given a golden ring and a bangle. Towards the end of the ceremony, perfumed or coloured water is sprinkled over everyone. The *Tika* ceremony already mentioned is performed at this time.

Sometime after the betrothal a date for the marriage is fixed. Hindus are very particular about the auspiciousness of the day. They call the family priest who consults his books and the almanac and then fixes a day which is called *Saha*. Sikhs do not bother about these things. They see the convenience of both the families concerned and generally fix the solemnisation of the marriage on a holiday which is convenient to all. The months of *Kartik* and *Poh*, and the *shradh* days are considered inauspicious. *Maghar* is the most favoured month for marriages. When the *Saha* is fixed, the girl's father informs the boy's father of the same through a formal letter. Earlier this letter used to be written in saffron water and the family priest himself wrote it. Nowadays only a little saffron water is sprinkled over it and a functionary is deputed to take it to the boy's father and there to

read it out in the presence of all relatives

A few days before the marriage, *bhaji* (literally 'share'—share of sweets) is distributed among relatives and friends, and invitations to attend the wedding are given. A few days before the marriage, women from the neighbourhood and female relatives start coming every evening to participate in singing bridal songs. They sing, dance, mimic, and act. Every night the house resounds to the gay exuberance of feminine revelry and the fun goes on till midnight, sometimes even till the small hours of the following day. This continues till the day of marriage.

A very peculiar custom generally followed as part of preparations for the marriage is that of *Maijan*. It is a sort of confinement of the bride and the groom for a few days before the marriage. The boy and the girl are not allowed to go out of the house or change clothes. They are, however, allowed to have their close friends around. During these days *Kangna*¹ is tied on the right wrist of the boy and the left wrist of the girl.

A couple of days prior to the wedding, *Vatna*, a scented powder consisting of barley flour, turmeric, *kachur* and mustard oil, is applied to the boy and the girl.

In the case of the girl, she is made to sit on a square stool while four girls hold a cloth over her, forming a sort of a cover or canopy. The women of the house sing songs specially meant for this occasion and apply *Vatna* on her body. In some castes this ceremony is performed only one day before the marriage, but in Malwa it starts a few days before the marriage and continues to be repeated every day till the eve of marriage.

The wedding-eve is called *Mehndi Raat* (night of henna). Once again the women assemble and to the accompaniment of bridal songs apply henna to the hands of the bride, or the bridegroom. The henna left over is then used by the other women present on the occasion.

¹ *Kangna* is a piece of thread containing an iron ring, a cowrie, a *mauli*, a few grains of rice and some sugar. This is a sort of charm that protects the to-be weds from the evil eye and the malignant spirits.

On the morning of the day fixed for the departure of the *Baiat* (marriage procession), the ceremony of *Gharoli* is performed. The bridegroom's *bhabī* (brother's wife), dressed in her best and accompanied by some other female relatives, goes singing to a nearby pool or well and fills a *Gharoli* (small earthen pitcher) with water. This water is ceremoniously brought, mixed with more water and, after *Vatna* has been nicely applied, the person to be married is bathed in it. This is called *Khare Charna* (sitting on the basket). Under the stool on which the boy is seated one small lamp is lighted. It is made of flour and is filled with ghee. Women keep singing songs meant for this occasion. Four girls hold a cloth overhead forming a sort of canopy. After the bath the boy gets up from the stool and breaks with his feet five earthen lids which have already been kept there for the purpose. After that he goes and puts on his new clothes. The same ceremony is performed at the girl's house, the only difference being that the girl's maternal uncle helps her get up from the stool, and after she has changed takes her into one corner of the house, where she keeps sitting till it is time for the marriage ceremony. This is called sitting on *Chhandalian*. It is here that she wears *Choorā* (red ivory bangles). She also receives at this time a gift brought by the family barber from her in-laws, which is known as *Kuar Dhoti* (dhoti for the virgin). The packet actually includes clothes for the bride, a coconut and various other things. All this time the girl is supposed to be observing a fast. After this gift has been received, she is made to wear the clothes and break her fast. As for the boy when he gets ready after wearing his new clothes, his sisters tie *Sehra* (flower garland) on his head to the accompaniment of appropriate songs. The boy gets on to the back of a decked mare and is ready to proceed to the bride's place. The bridegroom's *bhabī* at this time puts collyrium in his eyes, and his sisters hold the reins of the mare. In return the bridegroom gives them money. Before proceeding to the bride's house, the ceremony of cutting the *Jandi* tree is performed. To ward off evil, the bridegroom cuts off with his sword, which hangs on his side, a branch from the *Jandi* tree.

After that he is taken to a temple to pay his homage there, and then the whole party proceeds to the bride's house

Before entering the bride's house, the *Barat* stops at the gate and the *Milni* (meeting) ceremony is performed. The chief male relatives of both the parties hug their counterparts one by one. The first person to do this is the father. After the introductory embrace, the girl's relatives give to their counterparts money according to their means. While this goes on, the female relatives of the girl sing or just recite *sithanis* which are verses replete with humour and satire. They seek to make great fun of the boy's family, but everybody takes it lightly. That over, the party goes in for dinner. The boy is escorted to the place where the girl is seated. Before he steps across the threshold, some oil is poured on the hinges of the door, and the family barber lights a lamp in a sieve and welcomes him with that. The bridegroom then steps in and is made to recite some *chhands* (verses) which he has already learnt.

Next starts the ceremony proper. Among the Hindus this ceremony is generally performed late at night and goes on till dawn. In the courtyard of the house, or out in the open, a *chhauk* of flour is drawn by the priest, and the girl and the boy are made to sit before it facing east. The family priest then chants hymns and verses from the scriptures and goes through the whole gamut of rituals, culminating in the father giving away his daughter to the boy, and the boy and the girl taking wedding vows as they go round the sacred fire.

At the conclusion of the ceremony both families exhibit to each other and the relatives the clothes and jewellery which they have presented to the bride. The gifts brought by the boy's family are called *Vari* and those given by the girl's parents are called *Daaj* (dowry). *Daaj* also includes clothes for the bridegroom, his parents, and his other near relatives.

The next ceremony after the marriage is the bride's departure, the *Doli* (palanquin). To the accompaniment of the songs of separation, the *Doli* is sent away. At the time of parting, the parents of the girl and her brothers and sisters present a touching

sight, moved at separation from one so dear

In some villages even today a maid-servant, generally the *Nain* (barber's wife) is sent with the bride. She is there to help the girl in case she is faced with any difficulties in her new environments. Moreover, when the *Nain* returns home, she supplies the parents of the girl first-hand information regarding the family into which the girl has gone to spend the rest of her life. But this system is fast fading out.

When the wedding party along with the bride reaches home, the *Pani Varna* ceremony is performed. Diluted milk, called *kachchi lassi*, is put in a small vessel and the bridegroom's mother and sisters turn by turn take it over the head of the bride, three times each. Each time they pretend to make an attempt to drink it, but the bridegroom puts his hand across and stops them. Thereafter some oil is poured over the threshold and the couple enters the house. The bride is escorted to a separate room where she is seated. All relatives and women from the neighbourhood give her gifts, mostly in the form of money. After this, another ceremony called *Mundri Chhalla* (playing with the ring) is performed. The *Nain* throws a small ring in a broad vessel in which diluted milk has already been put. As soon as she throws the ring, the bride and the bridegroom both try to fish it out, even snatching it from the other's hand. Friends and relatives stand all round, watching and cracking jokes. This is done seven times.

The next day the ceremony of *Got Kunala*, already described, is performed.

The following day the bride, accompanied by her husband, goes to her parents on her first short visit after her wedding. This is called *Phera Pana*. After this visit when the girl has to leave for her husband's home again, it is customary for her parents to give her clothes and other gifts. In earlier times when girls were married very young, they were generally kept by their parents for a long period and sent back to the husband's house for the second time after three, five, seven, nine or even eleven years of marriage. Of course, this depended upon the girl's attaining the age of

puberty This ceremony, known as *Muklawa*, is fast fading out in its old form and is nowadays performed immediately after the marriage

Among the less known types of marriages in the Punjab, mention may be made of the *Punn* (virtuous) marriage which is considered the best of all types The girl's parents do not accept any money or gifts in any form, the merit of the boy and the family are the only considerations Then there is the *Dohathi* (two-handed) marriage It is a sort of marriage by exchange between two families A daughter is married off into one family and one of that family's daughters is similarly received back in marriage Such marriages are very common at the lower social level The third type is called *Taka* marriage, in which the boy's father pays something in cash to the girl's father and, for all practical purposes, purchases her This type of marriage is not unknown among the artisan castes

DIVORCE

Sikhs and Hindus of the Punjab look upon marriage as a sacred and indissoluble bond and do not, therefore, recognise divorce According to the Sikh scriptures, husband and wife are one spirit in two bodies ¹ Both Hindus and Sikhs consider marriage as a spiritual tie which does not break even after death Therefore, divorce is seldom thought of, not even when sometimes men turn their wives out of their houses on the basis of adultery A woman generally does not seek separation from her husband even when he is idle, vicious, cruel and characterless Only at the low social levels does one come across some cases of divorce The Bagri Jats of Ferozepur, for instance, perform the following ceremony for dissolution of marriage "Some of the brotherhood assemble and the woman is made to stand in their presence, her husband tears his white loin-cloth (*dhoti*) into two and places half of it on the head, saying that he has given her up, this ceremony is called *Dhola Urna*"²

¹ *Ek jot doe murti*

² *Ferozepur Gazette*, p 64

REMARRIAGE

Widow remarriage does not exist as a custom in the Punjab. A few decades ago, when child-marriages were prevalent, one came across many widows who had not even once seen their husbands and yet who had to live in a state of widowhood. The position has now changed. Among some clans an issueless widow is allowed to remarry. Widow remarriage is mostly performed with a near relative of the deceased husband.

Widow remarriage is comparatively common among the Jats of the Punjab. This marriage is called *Kareva* or *Chadar Andazi*. In the presence of near relatives, the prospective husband puts a *chadar* (white sheet) over the head of the wife-to-be and puts bangles on her wrists. The corners of the sheet are dyed yellow. Hindus sometimes call the family priest on this occasion and he chants some sacred verses. The Sikhs go to the Gurudwara and perform the ceremony there before the Holy Book.

Among the erstwhile lower and backward tribes of the Punjab such as Sansis, Pakhiwals and Bazigars, widow remarriage is not only permitted and customary but also obligatory.

BIRTH

The expectant mother is put in a separate room where no one else except the midwife and some elderly women of the family are allowed to go. When the midwife comes, some lentil and salt are taken over the head of the mother-to-be and made over to the midwife. A small pitcher of water, some grains and a small lighted lamp made of flour are kept in the room. An iron knife and an iron bangle are kept under the pillow as a protection against malignant spirits.

When the child is born, the women present at the time call out that a baby girl is born even if it is a boy. This is done on purpose because it is feared that with the happiness resulting from the birth of a son, the mother's placenta may not be released, thus spreading poison in her body. If the infant is a son, *shirin* leaves are hung outside the house, as an indication of the lucky

incident. Often the happy event is announced by the beat of a metal tray outside the main door by some female relative. Among some clans, the mother after the birth of a son has to sleep on the floor for four or five days, but among others she is made to lie on the floor even at the time of confinement. Some people make the mother count the beams of the roof after delivery in the belief that she will bear as many sons.

Shortly after its birth, the baby's navel string is cut. If it is a boy, the Hindus in Malwa cut a piece of the holy thread worn by an old person in the family and tie it round the severed part. In case it is a girl, they take a piece of home-spun thread to tie it with. When the umbilical cord dries up, it is thrown over a *peepal* tree along with the thread with which it was tied.

The placenta and the severed cord are both buried in a corner of the house, for if someone unwittingly steps over it, some calamity is expected to befall either the mother or the child. A child's life is supposed to be greatly influenced by the placenta. This belief is based on contiguous magic. If the child falls ill during the early days of the mother's confinement, a flour lamp is lit at the place where the placenta is buried. Light is the symbol of life in Punjabi folklore. Otherwise also light is kept on day and night in the room of the mother and the baby for five, seven, eleven, or thirteen days after the birth. The lamp is generally kept on an unused pitcher containing some foodgrains, *gur*, and money which are later made over to the midwife.

Shortly after its birth, the baby is made to taste its first liquid food (*gurhuti*) which is generally administered by some elderly member of the family. This rite has already been mentioned. After that the "breast washing" rite is performed. One of the father's unmarried sisters or some other related girl soaks a few petals of grass in milk-and-water and washes the mother's breasts with it. In return for this performance, the girl is given some money as a gift. After this rite, the baby is put to the mother's breast.

Making a baby wear its first set of clothes is also done ceremoniously, though the ritual varies from clan to clan. If a child is

born after many daughters, or long after marriage, the members of the family go about from house to house virtually begging. Out of the money thus collected, they buy clothes for the new-born. The Vij sub-caste of Khatri has a different custom. For their new-born, no clothes from the family or even those gifted by relatives or friends of the same sub-caste are used. Generally all that the baby wears has to come from the parents of the mother, or from friends belonging to different sub-castes.

Some years ago, at the birth of a baby village-folk tied a string to a beam in the roof and every year thereafter added a knot to that string. That helped them to determine his age. This method is still in practice in some of the remote villages.

Five or seven days after childbirth, the mother is allowed to bathe. A few grains of rice, or a few leaves of *methi*, are added to the bathing water.

The house where a child is born is considered impure for the first ten days or more. This impurity is called *Sootak*. On the eleventh day of childbirth the Khatri make the mother bathe and also wash her hair, after which the whole house is washed and smeared with dung mixture. Sugarcandy or pieces of jaggery are distributed among all relatives and friends. This ceremony is called *Dhaman*. Women from the families of friends and relatives come to offer congratulations and give money in the form of *shagan* (gift) to the child.

Khatri and Aroras from the area now in West Punjab perform the name-giving ceremony of the child on the day of *Dhaman*, but some castes or tribes do it later. The Sikhs read the Holy Book, recite a hymn, and build up the child's name on the first letter of that hymn. The Hindus call the family priest who performs the *havan* and then gives the child its name.

When the mother steps out of the house after eleven days, a rite is performed. In Gurdaspur, before stepping out of the house, the mother throws some cotton seeds and barley to the moon and the stars. In Malwa this going out first time after confinement is considered very important. This is called

Bahar Vadhavan This is performed on the thirteenth day. On this day the mother bathes and washes her hair first in the urine of a cow and then with curds. After that she dresses up and receives relatives and neighbours who come to wish the baby luck. If her child is a son, all the functionaries and servants come to congratulate and bring toys for him. The toys are representative of their respective trades, for instance, the water-carrier brings a *sehra* (garland) made of the *mauli* thread and *shirin* leaves, the carpenter may bring a toy-cart, the sweeper a bow and arrow, the potter a little earthen pot, etc. In return, they are all given something in cash or kind according to their social status. The *Nain* makes out of dung an image of Vidmata (goddess of luck), wraps it up in silk, makes a heap of grain in the courtyard and buries the image in that heap. The midwife brings a waist-band with bells and ties it round the baby's waist. After this the mother is made to wear the shoes of the barber (not the barber's wife's) and go out. She sits with her child in her lap, facing the buried figure of the goddess Vidmata and bows to it. In the evening she carries a bowl of water outside, brings back a little grass and keeps it under her pillow.

When the child cuts his first tooth, fresh coconut is distributed. If a child cuts his upper teeth first, it is considered an ill omen for the maternal uncles. The maternal uncles, on seeing this child, perform a rite and touch his teeth with a silver cup and then offer it to the child as a gift.

DEATH

When a person is about to die, he is often removed from the cot and put onto the floor, his feet turned towards the north. Before doing so, some people besmear the floor with dung paste and spread *darab* grass over it. (There is a common belief that a person who dies on his cot becomes a ghost.) Thereafter the ceremony of *Deeva Batti* is performed. A lamp made from flour dough is lighted and put near the head or on the right palm, and then something is given in charity on his behalf. A cow

given away at this time is considered the best form of charity among the Hindus, for it is believed that on his way to the other world, the dead man has to cross a wide river. This, it is believed, he can do easily if he holds on to the tail of the *Vaitarani* that is, the cow given in charity. The cow and other articles or money given in charity are made over to the Brahmins, or the family priest. Those who cannot afford to give a cow give away some foodgrains and money.

Among the Hindus when a person is on the death-bed, someone recites verses from the *Geeta*, the Sikhs offer strength to the departing soul by reading *Sukhmani*—the Psalm of Peace.

When actual death takes place, the women of the house sit around the dead person and lament loudly. Men spread a cover in the courtyard and sit silently, while friends, neighbours and relatives come in to condole. Among some Hindus, the sons and some other close male relatives of the deceased have their heads shaven off. The widow of the deceased takes off all her jewellery and, if she happens to be young and is still wearing the wedding bangles, these are broken.

Certain rites are performed before the body of the deceased is taken for cremation. His body is rubbed with curds, washed and wrapped in a shroud. If the deceased happens to be a woman and if her husband is alive, some jewellery is put on her body and vermilion applied in the parting of her hair. Her nose-ring is also not removed. A woman who dies thus is considered lucky and is believed to go to heaven.

When an old person dies after living a full span of life, his *Baban* (*Viman*, bier) is made in the shape of a boat decorated with balloons and buntings, and strips of golden lace. His funeral procession is often accompanied by bands, conches are blown and gongs are struck. Some coins, dry fruits and other edibles are thrown over the bier. These are collected and kept by the poor and considered very prized possessions. It is believed that a person who keeps such articles as souvenirs or eats them also lives to be as old.

A close relation of the deceased grinds in a grindstone seven grains, viz, wheat, barley, gram, maize, moth, lintels and rice. Some grind only rice, sesame and barley. A Brahmin makes a *pind* out of this flour to be offered in the name of the dead.

Before the bier is lifted to be taken out of the house, the widow, children and daughters-in-law of the deceased touch his feet. Thereafter four close relatives lift it on their shoulders and walk towards the cremation ground. The body is always taken out of the house feet first. The Sikhs sing hymns on the way. Relatives of the deceased and mourners help the carriers of the bier and share the burden with them. This is called *moda dena* (offering the shoulder). This gesture has a great religious significance. If the deceased has a grandson, he follows the bier with a *chauri* (whisk), fanning the corpse. On the way to the cremation ground a halt called *adhmargin* (half way) is made. Here a pitcher full of water is broken by the eldest son near the corpse's head. The widow and other female relatives of the deceased bow down to the corpse and touch his feet again.

The pyre is prepared at the cremation ground. The corpse is placed on it and ghee is poured in the mouth, eyes and nose. The left-over dough-balls are given in offering, after which the eldest son sets fire to it, starting at the head and then going round clockwise.

Some Hindus perform *havan* before igniting the pyre. Sikhs recite hymns from the Holy Book, read *Sohila*, and offer prayers for the peace of the departed soul.

When the body is almost burnt, the ritual *Kapal Kirya* (breaking the skull) is performed. The chief mourner, generally the eldest son, breaks the skull with a hard pole, the idea behind the ritual being that the skull burns up completely.

On their way back, the mourners bathe at a pond or well, wash all their clothes, and perform another ritual in which each one sits on the ground, bends forward, takes a blade of grass in his hands and, after the priest has chanted a verse, breaks it into two and throws it back behind his head, thus severing all worldly relations.

with the dead man. Sikhs generally go to a Gurdwara before going home and there offer prayers for the benefit of the departed soul, and distribute the traditional pudding, *Karah parshad*. After this the funeral party disperses. In earlier times, the mourners invariably stayed on near the pyre till sunset.

Small children are generally buried and not cremated, but the Sikhs cremate their children also.

Till decades ago, if a person died of small-pox or of an epidemic, his body was immersed in water and not cremated. It was believed that epidemics were caused by the anger of some gods or goddesses and a person who caught any of those diseases was actually possessed of those gods and goddesses. Burning such a body would mean torturing the god or goddess along with it, which would further offend the already angered deity.

On the fourth day after the death, but not on a Wednesday, the rite of *Phul chunana* (picking the charred bones) is performed. In the evening the *Chautha* ceremony is performed, a condolence meeting at which all the relatives and friends assemble. If the *Chautha* falls on a Wednesday, it is performed a day earlier. While picking the bones, diluted milk is put in one vessel and all bones which are picked up are washed in it and then put either into a bag or an earthen vessel. The ashes are also collected and immersed in a stream, if there is one nearby. But the bones are taken to Hardwar and immersed in the Ganga. Some Sikhs take these bones to Kiratpur and immerse them in the river Beas.

Kirya, the chief ceremony after death, is performed on different days by different clans. Some perform it on the 10th or 11th day, some on the 13th, and some on the 16th day after death. In rare cases it is even performed on the 21st day. The Jats of the Punjab perform it on the 10th day and call it *Dasahi*. Brahmins perform it on the 11th day. Other Hindus perform it on the 13th day and call it *Tehravan*. On this day all relatives and friends assemble in the afternoon in condolence. Some Hindus perform *havan* on this day. Sikhs have a non-stop reading of the *Adi Granth*, *kirtan* and prayers. The eldest son of the deceased

is ceremonially installed as the head of the household in place of his father and, in token thereof, he wears the turban usually given for this occasion by his father-in-law. If the wife of the deceased is alive, the *Nain* combs and ties her hair after which all relatives according to the nearness of their relationship give her some money. This is called *Sarvanna*. This is a sort of financial aid to the widow. When a woman dies, her parents bring the turban which her husband wears on this day. If, however, he intends to remarry, he does not wear this turban.

All friends and relatives are served food on this day. If a man dies of old age, his death is celebrated and *halwa* and *puri* are served to all mourners assembled. Utensils, clothes, beddings and fruits are given in charity in the name of the deceased.

After one year the death anniversary is performed, this is known as *Varina*. Hindus feed Brahmins on this day. Sikhs have a non-stop reading of the *Adi Granth*, *kirtan*, and arrange to serve food to the Panj Piyaras.

CRIME PATTERN AND COMMUNITY LAW

According to a saying in Punjabi 'money, wife and land' are at the root of all quarrels¹. One almost invariably finds these, severally or jointly, inspiring all quarrels, thefts and murders. The Jat of the Punjab is known for being possessive. He would much sooner risk his life than let anyone touch one hair of his wife. Distribution of land is another vital factor which has often created enmity even among real brothers. At the back of all this is the fact that the Punjabis are very headstrong and sensitive. If anyone hurts their self-respect, they are ready to kill or get killed. There are vendettas inherited from ancestors. In these ancestral feuds, murders and abduction are sometimes committed out of sheer desire for revenge. One generation avenges a murder committed by the earlier one, the next generation avenges that murder, and the vicious circle tends to go on. Ancestral feuds are sometimes found between two

¹ *Jar, Joru te Jamn, tinen kala di jar*

pattis of the same village, but they are very much on the decrease now. Some decades ago these formed a normal crime pattern in the village life of the Punjab.

Another incentive to crime till recently was the fact that the *banias*, or money-lenders, virtually squeezed life out of the simple villagers. Finding the Jat in a tight corner, the *bania* loaned him a small sum of money at an exorbitant rate of interest. For the rest of his life the Jat and then his succeeding generations remained caught in his clutches, for the compound interest went on multiplying. As a consequence, the Jat and the money-lender were forever involved in litigation. The situation has now improved a little. The Jat is no longer such a simpleton and the new social order which is emerging is far more friendly to him. The cruelty of the money-lender is very well described in a folk song:

“The *bania* has caused havoc

The whole village is in debt”¹

There are some leading elders in every village who are honoured and respected by all. Such an elder is called a *Panch*. The institution of the *Panch* is very old, and for centuries it has been sorting out many big and small frictions of the village, including disputes over boundaries, right of way, etc. After independence, the Government, realising the importance of panchayats in villages, gave them constitutional recognition by passing the Panchayat Act. The elders of a village are now elected to the Panchayat and are given many rights.

In every village there is some common land called *shamlat*. No one can assert an independent claim to it. It is open to common use. There is also a village platform (*daira*) where the old as well as the young hold their meetings. Folk singers, minstrels and dancers also use these platforms to entertain the village-folk.

Punjabis being religiously inclined contribute liberally towards the upkeep of Gurdwaras and *Mandirs*. These community

¹ *Banie ne at chuk lai, sara pind karzai kita*

buildings are built out of the joint efforts of villagers

When a man in a village dies, his sons inherit his property. If they want they can divide it among themselves, or, if they prefer, they can continue to live as a joint family.

CHAPTER V

FAIRS AND FESTIVALS

THE GAY and vivacious Punjabis are very fond of fairs and festivals and almost every fortnight there is a fair or a festival in one part of the State or other. People come to participate in such functions from far-off places, trudging dusty distances. Many a fair is held in memory of a saint or a *pir*, and people from all communities living in a village participate in it. Men, women and children of all ages, classes and creeds flock in hundreds and enjoy the numerous fascinating features of the fair—races, wrestling bouts, singing, acrobatics, etc. They play on folk instruments, such as *vanjli* and *algoza*. To a lover of culture, a Punjabi fair is an aesthetic treat.

In the life of a Punjabi, a fair is always an occasion to wear new clothes. Both old and young come out in their multi-coloured and smartest best. Some enthusiasts colour and brush up even their cattle and take them along.

An average fair is enchantingly picturesque. A bustling market springs up in which articles of food and products of local handicrafts—toys, glass bangles, and an assortment of all kinds of articles for domestic use—are on display. A greater accent is, however, always on the toy shops where photographs and clay models of Rama and Sita, of Hanuman flying with the life-giving herb, of Lord Krishna and his Gopis, and of Lord Siva with his trident and snakes are well displayed. The whole mythology seems to be depicted in toys. Women can be seen excitedly haggling for trinkets. There is fun and frolic all round. The old as well as the young run to the swings and swing to their heart's content. The gay ones in small groups sing *bolian* and perform folk-dances to the strain of the *vanjli* and *algoza*. The sturdy ones test their strength in wrestling fields. It is a feast of colour and gaiety and fully reflects the joy of the community.

The fairs of the Punjab are linked with its culture and

reflect by and large the various phases of its life. Some of the distinct Punjabi traits are depicted in them. They may be divided into the following types

- (i) Seasonal fairs
- (ii) Mythical fairs
- (iii) Fairs held in honour of saints
- (iv) Fairs connected with festivals

Basant Panchami is the most famous of the seasonal fairs. It heralds the advent of spring. Fields of mustard present a unique and colourful sight all over rural Punjab which looks like a newly wedded damsel resplendent in her gorgeous golden yellow. There is a spirit of gay abandon in the air and the Punjabi is rightly infected with the spirit. His heart and soul become one with Nature and he expresses his elevated spirit in song and dance.

The Basant fair is held in many villages of the Punjab. People put on yellow costumes appropriate to the season. One huge mass of mustard blossom seems walking down to the fair. Before Partition the main fair was celebrated in Lahore at the *samadu* of Hakeekat Rai who, though a mere lad, preferred martyrdom at the hands of the Mughuls to swerving from his chosen path of duty. Kite-flying was a popular entertainment of the people on this occasion. Often on the Basant Panchami day, if there was a good breeze, one could see nothing but innumerable multi-coloured kites in the sky, swishing over in all directions.

Baisakhi is a seasonal festival with a special accent. It is celebrated all over the State on the first of *Baisakh*. This is the time when harvest is gathered in and the farmer exults in the fulfilment of his year's hard work. He joins the merry-making with full gusto and does not mind walking for miles to be able to do so. Since this fair is also an expression of prosperity, singing and dancing constitute its most enchanting features. The Punjab's famous *Bhangra* and *Giddha* are inextricably linked with this festival.

Many fairs in the Punjab are held near the tombs and shrines of *pirs*. These fairs must have originated in a spirit of devotion to those saints and sages. People of all classes and creeds join in

without any inhibition. The most famous among such fairs are the Chhapar fair, the Jarag fair, and the Roshni fair of Jagranvan.

CHHAPAR FAIR

This fair is held on *Anand Chaudas*, the 14th day of the bright half of *Bhadon* in honour of Gugga Pir. A big shrine known as 'Gugge di Marhi' has been built in his memory. The Pir was very popular in his time, and his disciples can be found all over the Punjab, both among the Muslims and the Hindus. He was a Chauhan Rajput and, according to legend, he gently descended into the bosom of Mother Earth along with his steed, and never returned. He was believed to possess special power over all kinds of snakes.

On the day this fair is held, villagers scoop the earth seven times because they believe that in this way they invoke Gugga Pir to protect them against snakes. This shrine has a reputation for curing people of snake-bite. It is strongly believed that if a person is bitten by a snake, all that has to be done is to take him to the shrine and lay him beside it, he is then sure to be cured. This shrine was built in 1890.

This fair provides occasion for folk-songs and folk-dances. Young people form themselves into groups and go about dancing and singing for hours. Some dancers don women's dress and perform *Giddha* for the sake of fun. The fair lasts three days.

JARAG FAIR

This fair is held in Jarag, a village in tehsil Pail. It is held in *Chet* (March-April) in honour of the goddess Seetla. It is also known as the Baheria fair. Sweet *gurgulas* (jaggery cakes fried in oil) are prepared one day earlier and then given in offering to the goddess and thereafter to the donkey who is her favourite. After propitiating the goddess, the family members eat the remaining savoury *gurgulas* with great relish. This festival is observed in Malwa and Powad but the fair is held only in



Plate 5—A HOLI SCENE



Plate 6—AN IMAGE OF SANJHI DEVI



Plate 7—A WANDERING MINSTREL



Plate 8—A GIDDHA DANCER

Jarag There is a pond where the devotees of Seetla gather. They scoop the earth and raise a small hillock which is accorded the status of the goddess's shrine. Potters specially bring their donkeys decked in coloured blankets. Some even put bells or conch shells and beads round their necks. In many folksongs of the Punjab, there is a reference to the fair of Jarag.

The Roshni Fair (lights) is held in Jagranvan from the 14th to the 16th of *Phagun* in honour of the Muslim Pir, Abdul Kader Jalaṅī. It is held in the vicinity of his tomb. Although it is a Muslim fair in origin, the Hindus of the area also flock to the site of this shrine. Even after Partition, this fair has been held regularly. It is called the 'fair of lights' because innumerable devotees who come to visit the place light earthen lamps at the shrine of the *pir*. The lights are visible from long distances. It is believed that whatever wish one sincerely makes at the shrine of this *pir* is granted. Young people sing *bolian* and perform dances, thus adding to the gaiety and glamour of the fair. It is sheer delight to villagers performing dances and singing songs to the sweet strains of the flute and the one-stringed instrument called *Toomba*.

Another big fair is held for four days every year in Malerkotla at the shrine of Haider Sheikh. It is largely attended. It is believed that if childless women visit the shrine of Haider Sheikh and propitiate the *pir*, their wish for progeny is granted. Another belief is that if someone overpowered by a malignant spirit or under the effect of an evil shadow comes here during these days, he will be cured if he propitiates the *pir* at the shrine and offers *rots* (large sweet cakes) specially cooked.

There are various other small fairs which are similarly held in memory of saints and sages. On the 14th of *Chet*, a fair is held in Dhesian Sang (Philaṅr) at the shrine and in honour of Baba Sang. Another fair is held at the tomb of Khwaja Roshan in Har on every first Thursday after the new moon. In Nakodar a Hindu-Muslim fair is held at village Kara at the shrine of Mir Shah Husain, who, according to legend, lived about five hundred years ago. At Khatkar Kalan (Navanshehar)

a fair is held on Baisakhi day in memory of Baba Jawahar Singh Another fair Shiv Chaudas, is held at Paddi Matwali (Navanshehar) on the 14th of *Chet* on the bank of the river Bein

In March, at Nathana (Ferozepur) a fair is held in honour of a Hindu saint, Kalu He is said to have dug a large pond in one scoop and deposited the dug-up earth in a closeby heap which now forms the object of popular veneration

Some fairs are held at places associated with the lives of some Sikh Gurus, such as the Masya fair in Taran Taran, and the Muktsar fair in Ferozepur Small fairs are periodically held here and there all over the Punjab In *Phagun* a fair in memory of Guru Nanak is held on the full-moon night at Dera Baba Nanak At Jindwal (Navanshehar), a fair is held near a pond on Baisakhi day, at a spot where once Shri Guru Hargobind is believed to have sat At Nanaksar in Hakeempur (Navanshehar), a fair is held at the place where the seventh Guru, Guru Harirai, stayed for some time The Muktsar fair mentioned above is one of the largest Sikh fairs held in the Punjab It will not be out of place to describe it in more detail

"The fair is held in the middle of January on the *Makar Sankranti* day It is one of the great Sikh festivals, and lasts three days On the first day the worshippers bathe in the sacred tank On the second day the people go in a procession (mohalla) to the three holy mounds which lie to the north-west of the town, namely, Rikab Sahib, Tibbi Sahib, and Mukhwanjana Sahib The Rikab Sahib, a mound formed out of the handfuls of earth taken from the tank by the faithful and thrown there, commemorates the spot where the Guru's stirrup broke The procession goes up the slope to the Tibbi Sahib which, crowned with a Gurdwara, is the mound where Guru Gobind Singh stood and aimed his arrows at the imperial forces The devotees then proceed to the Mukhwanjana Sahib where the Guru is said to have cleaned his teeth with a tooth-stick Prayers are offered here and the devotees then return This mound has been built in the same way as the

Rikab Sahib On their return trip people visit the Tambu Sahib where the Guru's tent was pitched before the fight started, the Shahid Ganj, which is the *samadhi* of the forty martyrs, and the Darbar Sahib, where the Guru held his darbar after the cremation of the slain

The festival is in commemoration of a battle fought in 1705-6 by Guru Gobind Singh against the pursuing imperial forces which overtook him here and cut his followers to pieces. The Guru himself escaped and had the bodies of his followers disposed of with the usual rites. He declared that they had all obtained *mukti* and promised the same blessing to all his followers, who should thereafter, on the anniversary of that day, bathe in the Holy Pool which had been filled by rain from heaven in answer to his prayer for water. On this spot a fine tank was afterwards dug by Maharaja, Ranjit Singh and called Muktsar (the pool of salvation)"¹

FESTIVAL CYCLE

Festivals constitute a special feature in the cultural life of the Punjabis. There is seldom a month without a festival. Small festivals are numerous. The festivals connected with the lunar days such as *Ekadashi* (eleventh lunar day), *Pooranmashi* (full moon), and *Masya* (new moon) occur every month. Similarly, *Sankranti*, when the sun enters the new Zodiac sign, is celebrated on the first of every month of the Vikrami era with great gusto. It is also an occasion to prepare and eat the nicest of foods.

On festival days people get up early in the morning and have a bath, because religious traditions attach great ceremonial importance to bathing. Water is regarded as a purifying agent, and a clean body, it is believed, harbours and nourishes a pure soul. Women don their best dresses and wear jewellery. It is also an occasion when a lot of fuss is made about sending gifts to the daughters of the family.

¹ *The Ferozepur Gazetteer*, p. 134

In the Punjab, where the Vikrami era is followed, the year begins with *Chet* (March-April). On the first of this month the arrival of the new year is celebrated by the performance of a ritual of taking the new corn, known as *ann nawan karna*. Sheafs of new corn are roasted and then the parched grain is eaten. Everyone must have a bath on the new year day, and put on new clothes. Delicacies like *kheer* and *halwa* are prepared and eaten.

The *Sankranti* of *Baisakh*, the second month of the year, is a day just as important, and is celebrated in much the same way, only with an added accent on eating, drinking, and merry-making, which are counter-balanced by charity and fasting. *Baisakhi* is one of the most popular festivals of the Punjab, with fairs held at various places.

On the eleventh day of the bright half of *Jeth* (May-June) falls *Nirjala Ekadashi*, which is better known in the Punjab as *Nimani Kasti*. Hindus, especially women, observe fast on this day and smear the body with powdered sandalwood. This fast is very hard to keep because for the whole day one has to abstain even from water. Charitably inclined people put up stalls for free distribution of sweetened and chilled water. The stalls, known as *chhabils*, are a common sight on this day.

Teeyan, a festival of the rainy season, is celebrated on the 3rd of the bright fortnight of *Sawan* (July-August). The four months from *Harh* (June-July) to the first half of *Assu* (September) are called *Chawmasa*. During this period the sky generally remains overcast and the weather shifts between sultriness and rainfall. Rains bring the longed-for relief to the heat-stricken Punjabis, and the rhythm of the little and big drops of rain instils in them the enthusiasm which must seek expression in fun and frolic. A newly-married girl looks forward to the rainy days when a brother or some other male relative from the parental home may come to escort her to her father's place. This reversal from bridehood to being just a daughter again is such a liberating and thrilling experience that it cannot be put into words. One day before the *Teeyan*, girls apply henna to their hands and feet, and

on the day of the festival they put on their best clothes and go out to the fair. The fair resounds with the songs of love and the rhythm of dance. The songs are known as *Teeyan* songs. The *Giddha* dance has become a regular and most enchanting feature of this festival. At home women make *lheer*, a dish specially associated with *Sawan*. Thus runs a saying

“If you haven't eaten *lheer* in *Sawan*,
Why, O sinner, were you born?”¹

In *Bhadon*, on the day of the full moon, the *Rakhi* festival is celebrated. On this day sisters tie the multi-coloured thread on the right wrist of their brothers. So long as a sister has not tied the *rakhi* to her brother, she is not supposed to eat anything. After she has done so she offers some sweets to her brother and he in return gives her some gift or money. *Rakhi* is meant to remind the brother of his promise to protect his sister whenever she needs this protection. The true origin of this festival is, however, lost in antiquity.

Gugga Naumi, which is a festival in honour of *Gugga Pir*, also falls in *Bhadon*. The *pir's* devotees paint his image on the wall in turmeric, as also paint a snake in black right in front of it, and then perform the ritual of worship. People also pour milk and butter milk into the holes of snakes. Sweet *sevian* is the special dish of the festival. The *Lalbagis*, who are devout followers of *Gugga Pir*, also known as *Zahir Pir*, erect a long pole covered with flags, coloured cloth, coconuts, etc., and render worship to it as to a god. The devotees carry the *pir's* standard from house to house and beg. The disciple who carries the standard is known as the *pir's* horse. The privilege of carrying the standard is much coveted. To propitiate *Gugga Pir* women sing songs in his admiration.

“Here is a bowl full of lentils—
Gugga protects me at all places,
I am devoted to *Gugga*.”

The fifteen lunar days of the dark half of the moon in *Assu* are

¹ *Sawan khar na khadia tan kiyon jameon apradiq*

the *shradh* days when the dead are propitiated. People observe this rite out of moral obligation and gratitude to the manes. Brahmins are fed on the particular day of the week on which a particular ancestor died. During these days nothing auspicious is celebrated. The *shradhs* are followed by the *Nauratas* (*Navaratri*), which are regarded auspicious for celebrations. On the first of the nine days barley is sown in the house. This is called *khetri*, or goddess Gorja's farm. This little farm is watered and nurtured regularly till the eighth or ninth day. On that day goddess Gorja, in the form of seedlings, is covered with a piece of red cloth and worshipped and propitiated. Hindu women observe a fast during the *Nauratas*, though esculent roots like potatoes, and cakes made from the water-chestnut (*sanghara*) flour are allowed despite the fast. On the Dussehra day women cut the young shoots of *khetri* and tuck them in the headwears of their male relatives, and invariably get gifts in return.

The festival of goddess Sanjhi is also celebrated during the *Nauratas*. On the first day, an image of the goddess is made from mixing mud and cowdung and is then placed along a wall on a door. Every evening during the *Nauratas* the image is worshipped, incantations are muttered and an offering of a mixture of rice and sugar (*tilcholi*) is distributed. On the day of Dussehra this image is immersed in water.

The Dussehra festival, as in most other parts of India, is celebrated in a big way. Big tall effigies of Ravana, Kumbhkarna and Meghnad are burnt at a large number of places. During the *Nauratas* Ram Lila is organised at innumerable places in the State. This song-and-drama has, from year to year, contributed largely to the continuance of the tradition of folk-drama in India.

In *Kartik*, on the fourth lunar day falls *Karva Chauth*. On this day married women observe a fast and pray for the long life of their husbands. Sometimes even unmarried girls observe this fast and pray for their husbands-to-be. In a way this is the mother-in-law's day too, because it is customary on this day for the daughter-in-law to present her offerings (*Bava*) in the form of money and eatables.

On the eleventh lunar day in this month falls the festival of *Devathan* (waking up the deities) Metal plates are beaten in order to awaken the deities who are supposed to go to sleep between the summer harvest and the first ploughing after the start of the autumnal rains

But the festival *par excellence* of *Kartik* is *Diwali* As in other parts of India, earthen lamps or candles are lighted over buildings all over the State People celebrate the festival with great gusto Houses are white-washed days ahead of it, new clothes are purchased, and sweets of all kinds are prepared People worship Goddess *Lakshmi* with an offering of sweets and silver coins Thereafter they distribute sweets among friends and relatives It is believed that on this night Goddess *Lakshmi* in the company of *Vidmata* (goddess of fate) takes a round of every house and wherever she takes a fancy she bestows immense prosperity

In the Golden Temple of Amritsar, *Diwali* is celebrated with great eclat Earthen lamps are lighted all round the holy tank and their undulating reflections in the water look extremely fascinating Sikhs started celebrating *Diwali* at Amritsar from the time of their Sixth Master, *Guru Hargobind* When he rescued fifty-two rajas from imperial detention in the fort of Gwalior and reached Amritsar, the residents there welcomed him by illuminating the whole city It was on a *Diwali* day

Lohri, which comes on the last day of *Poh* (December-January), is another extremely popular festival A few days before it arrives youngsters get together in groups and go round their localities singing folk-songs connected with *Lohri* and collecting fuel and money for the bonfire This is a special day for making offerings to fire When fire is lit up in the evening, orthodox men and women go round it, pour offerings into it, and bow before it in reverence The first *Lohri* for a new bride, or a new-born babe, is enthusiastically celebrated, and sweets are distributed

Next day after *Lohri* comes *Maghi*, also called *Makar Sankranti* (entry of the sun in the sign of Capricorn) It is

a festival very popular with the Punjabis. On this day fairs are held at many places, but the most famous one is that which is held at Muktsar, which has already been described in detail. People go out for a holy dip and give away a lot in charity. The special dish of the day is *kheer* cooked in sugarcane juice.

The most colourful and hilarious of all the festivals which are celebrated in the Punjab is Holi, celebrated on the full-moon day of *Phagun*. Holi is a festival of colours. Many days ahead of it the urchins start throwing coloured water on one another. The sight on the actual day of Holi is worth seeing. The revellers go out in groups, embrace their friends and relatives, and smear one another with liquid colours and *gulal*.

A big fair known as *Hola Mahala* is held at Anandpur on the next day after Holi. Villagers come from far-off places to join it.

Some festivals are held in the Punjab in honour of the Sikh Gurus. These are called *Gurupurabs*. They are well spread over the year, but there are three which are regarded as the most important ones. On the full moon of *Kartik* the birth anniversary of Guru Nanak is celebrated by the devotees with great ardour. Two days earlier a non-stop reading of the *Adi Granth* is started. At different places religious congregations are held, and hymns from the *Granth Sahib* are chanted. Large processions are taken out through the towns. At night buildings are illuminated. The birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh is also celebrated in a similar manner. The third important *Gurupurab* is the one associated with the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev.



Plate 9—CLOSE-UP OF A BHANGRA DANCER



Plate 10—A BHANGRA DANCE



*Plate 11—
A PIECE OF FOLK-ART*

Plate 12—A SCENE FROM A FOLK-DANCE





Plate 13—FOLK-ARTISTS AT WORK

PUNJABI LANGUAGE AND DIALECTS

A LANGUAGE is the symbolic expression of the character and culture of the community that speaks it. Punjabi, like the people of the Punjab, is a forceful language with a sturdy idiom. The culture of the Punjab is a fusion of various cultures brought by those who came from outside and settled here, and Punjabi enriched itself from various sources both indigenous and foreign. In the process it has passed through many stages of development.

Though the Punjab of today is comparatively small, Punjabi as a language is spoken over a large area including West Pakistan. The language has got many dialects since the various tracts remained isolated for a long time because of geographical barriers and lack of communications.

The Punjabi language has essentially evolved out of the language which the Aryans spoke when they penetrated into the Punjab. The Punjab was the place in India where they first came and settled and it was on the banks of the rivers of the Punjab that they composed their most ancient literature. The language of the *Rig Veda* is known as Vedic language and this, in a way, may be regarded as the oldest form of Punjabi.

Punjabi has very faithfully preserved the grammatical forms and other features of the Vedic language which have been lost in the other languages of the country in the process of evolution.

The Punjabi language as we know it emerged from a corrupt form of Sanskrit (*Apabhraṃsha*) in the 11th century A.D. From the 11th century onwards Punjabi literature in the form of folk-songs, tales, proverbs and riddles began to take shape. It attained maturity in the 12th century in the time of Baba Farid Shakarganj (1173-1266). Baba Farid's *shlokas* are available in the *Adi Granth* and his language and idiom are very much similar to the modern Punjabi language.

According to Sir George Grierson, Eastern Punjabi and Western Punjabi (or *Lehndi*) are two distinct languages, the former he traced to the *Shaurseni Apabhhransha*, from which Hindi also emerged, and the latter to the *Paishachi*. This is not correct. Principal Teja Singh rejecting Grierson's view writes "*Lehndi* and *Majhi* (standard Punjabi) are deeply connected. In many respects *Lehndi* is much closer to the standard idiom of Punjabi than even Malwai, which has been characterised by Dr Grierson as part and parcel of the Punjabi language." Considering the diction and grammatical form, *Lehndi* and Punjabi are basically one and the same language. But for a few local differences, the language of the entire Punjab from the river Ghaggar to the Indus is almost the same.

DIALECTS

The Punjabi language has many dialects for which there are obvious reasons. Political influence went a long way to determine the development of dialects. Political boundaries of the Punjab kept changing from time to time. Sometimes they spread so far as to touch Delhi in the east and Afghanistan in the west and sometimes they receded to the Ravi. This happened because at one time the Punjab came under the sway of Kabul, at another time its administrative capital used to be Delhi, or Lahore, or Peshawar. Consequently, the different tracts of the Punjab came under varied influences at different times and absorbed the consequent changes.

Geographically too the Punjab is half mountainous and half plains. Even the plains of the Punjab were separated from one another because of the five rivers and the insufficient means of communications. Each *doab* remained a sort of self-sufficient unit culturally and geographically separated from the others. Each *doab*, therefore, developed its own dialect. Similarly, in the hilly tracts a separate dialect sprang up due to lack of communications. Punjabi could not secure the position of an official language till the formation of the unilingual State in

1966. Consequently, the dialectical differences kept multiplying and no effort was ever made to integrate them into one standard language

All the same, the Punjabi language has evolved a standard idiom. The *Majhi* has been accepted as the standard form of Punjabi and a lot of Punjabi literature has been written in this idiom. Many reputed poets of the Punjab—Guru Nanak, Bhai Gurdas, Waris Shah and Hashim—adopted this idiom. Some poets like Baba Farid and Damodar, however, wrote in the *Lehndi* idiom. Keeping in view the political and geographical boundaries, we can divide Punjabi dialects into three categories

- (i) Dialects of the present Punjab
- (ii) Dialects of the former western Punjab
- (iii) Dialects of the hilly areas

The present Punjab has three geographical strips, each having its own dialect. These are known as *Majhi*, *Malwai* and *Doabi*. The *Majhi* dialect is spoken in Majha which comprises the districts of Amritsar and Gurdaspur. This dialect, as already stated, is the standard form of Punjabi and the bulk of Punjabi literature has been written in it.

Doabi is spoken in the tract between the rivers Beas and Sutlej. It includes Jullundur, Hoshiarpur and Kapurthala. The main factor that differentiates this dialect from the standard idiom of Punjabi is the use of 'b' in place of 'v'. Thus *vichh* becomes *bichh*, *vadda* becomes *badda*, and so on. There are some peculiarities in pronunciation also. *Tan*, for instance, is used in place of *toon*.

Malwai is the dialect of the Malwa tract, which includes the districts of Ferozepur, Ludhiana, Faridkot, Patiala and Malerkotla. *Malwai* resembles *Doabi* inasmuch as it transforms 'v' into 'b'. Another important characteristic of *Malwai* is that an intervocalic 'v' becomes 'm'. Thus *teevin* becomes *teemi*, and *neevin* becomes *neemi*. *Nahun* is contracted in *Malwai* as *ni*. Then again some pronouns are spoken differently, thus *tuhadi* becomes *thodi*, and *tohano* is spoken as *thonu*.

Among the dialects of that part of the former Punjab which is

now in Pakistan, *Multani* and *Pothohari* are the prominent ones. Many from that region who migrated to India at the time of partition still speak these dialects. Pothohari has preserved many characteristics of the Vedic language, especially in its tendency to make sentences by adding pronomial prefixes. In the hilly area of the Punjab, now amalgamated in Himachal Pradesh, Kangri and Chambiali are spoken, respectively, in Kangra and Chamba. Dogri spoken in the sub-mountainous tract of Jammu is also one of the dialects of the Punjabi language.

CHAPTER VII

ORAL LITERATURE

ORAL LITERATURE compared with written literature has many distinct features of its own. Whereas written literature is the outcome of the cultivated faculties of the artists, oral literature in essence is created by unsophisticated people. In fact, it is a spontaneous outburst of the innermost feelings which emerge from the depths of the unconscious mind of the community. It has its roots deep in tradition and is preserved in memory. It is ever fresh and ever on the move like a river. Whereas written literature is a garden which has been carefully tended by an expert gardener, oral literature is a forest of wild flowers which have grown untended, but which have a haunting beauty all their own.

All literature, oral or written, springs from life, but oral literature is a better projection of the innermost recesses of the social and cultural life of a society, its traditions, customs, habits, behaviour, rites, etc.

The songs that the farmer and his co-workers sing while ploughing, sowing or irrigating the fields are poetry that provides a deep insight into their minds. Similarly, the songs which women sing while plying the spinning-wheel, fetching water from the well, or picking cotton from the fields are innermost, often touching expressions of their deeply-felt emotions.

Off and on the village-folk get together to hear a minstrel, a bard, or other folk singers who may have assembled to entertain them. *Ras-dhariye* perform metrical plays the theme of which centres round immortal lovers, heroes and saints. Very popular with the people are the *baints* of Waris Shah's *Heer*, *sad* of Pilu's *Mirza Sahiban*, and *dohre* of Hashim's *Sassi Punnu*. These compositions are the workmanship of famous writers in Punjabi and form part of the written literature, but the love tales for untold generations have also been a part of folklore.

Folklore is so much a part and parcel of village life that the old and the young virtually live on it. On moonlit summer nights when people lie in the open, or during the cold nights of winter when they are wrapped up in their quilts, all enjoy listening to these folk-tales. Sometimes these go on till midnight and beyond, for the engrossed listeners time stands still. Sometimes just to break the monotony and also help keep the listeners awake, riddles are asked which set everyone seriously thinking. Asking riddles is a very popular pastime with children. At night when their cots are placed side by side, they often enjoy this very interesting pursuit until sleep overpowers them.

The daily conversation of the Punjabis is so replete with proverbs and sayings that almost every fifth sentence is a saying. When small girls play with the ball or marbles, they sing doggerels called *thal*. Similarly, while performing *kikli*, the little girls, clasping one another's crossed hands, swirl and sing their little folk-songs and fill the atmosphere with music. The folk-dances *Bhangra*, *Giddha*, *Sammi* and *Jhumar* are all accompanied by folk-songs. On all occasions of social or religious significance the villagers seek self-expression in folk music. To a Punjabi villager oral literature is a living entity that pervades his life and is part and parcel of his joys and sorrows.

The different forms of oral literature popular in the Punjab are as follows

FOLK-SONGS

If poetry is the expression of deeply-felt emotions, nothing can be purer than folk poetry. The social, religious and cultural life of a community lies embedded in its folk-songs.

Punjabi folk-songs are varied and colourful. Laughter, happiness, pain, sorrow, all form ingredients of these songs. They are simple, charming, and full of the sincerity of emotion, and the purity of feeling. The entire Punjabi culture, so to speak, is reflected in them.

SONGS ABOUT CULT RITUAL AND SACRAMENT

The Punjab is inhabited by people of different sects, religions, and cults, which have their own modes of prayer and worship. But since folk poetry belongs to a whole social group, only those songs become popular which are acceptable to the entire community. Religion reflected in the folk-songs is religion not of a sect but of the whole community.

Some remnants of nature worship can still be found in Punjabi culture. This worship has found expression in songs. When a Punjabi woman, especially an orthodox one, sees the new moon, she folds her hands and bows to it respectfully and recites

“Rise O moon, O lucky moon,
With folded hands I pray to you,
Bring happiness and welfare,
Do good to all”¹

Similarly, in the evening before lighting the lamps, old ladies still pay homage to the goddess of dusk, Sanjhakarni:

“Here comes Sanjhakarni, destroyer of all sorrows,
As the lamps are lit, a million misfortunes are turned away”²

And when the light is extinguished the goddess is given a respectful send-off. Light is associated with life and its extinction is not considered good. It is, therefore, given a send-off with a request always to return.

“Go to your house, O earthen lamp
At your threshold stands your mother waiting for you.”³

Some people in the Punjab still worship trees. The *peepal* tree is supposed to be the manifestation of Brahma and all gods are believed to be residing in it. The *peepal* is thus extolled in a folk-song

¹ *Char ve channan, bhagi bharia*
Hath banh karan jodri,
Sukh da charin, khair da charin,
Sabh lokan da bhala karin

² *At Sanjhakarni, sabhe dukh nivarni*
Diwet divera balle, sattar so bala tale

³ *Ja diwiya ghar apne teri man odeekay dwar.*

"Gobind resides in every leaf, there is a god on every branch,
Lord Krishna at the root, O blessed be Brahma"¹

Punjabis are religious to the bone. Theirs is the land of the *Vedas* enriched by the experiences of saints and sages. Folk-songs abound in eulogies of famous *gurus*, *bnagats* and *jogis*, like Guru Nanak Dev, Guru Gobind Singh, Farid, Namdev, Gopi Chand, Bharthrihari and Puran.

"Our Guru has built an ark,
Come those who want to go across"²
"Words of the Guru sound so sweet
At the time of early dawn."³

There are devotional folk-songs about Indra, Brahma, Saraswati, Vaishno Devi, Ramchandra and Seeta and many that narrate small, interesting episodes from the life of Krishna. But characteristically these songs are not sectarian. They are sung and enjoyed by all Punjabis, depending upon the suitability of the occasion.

There are some folk-songs in which Hindu gods and goddesses and Muslim *pirs* are invoked simultaneously.

"I prepare offerings for Devi, and invoke Pır and Faqır also,
I offer a goat to Haider Sheikh, and go to his tomb barefooted
I offer *manni* to Hanuman, without any reservation,
O, Divine Mother, I sing your glory"⁴

Some Punjabi folk-songs deal with the transience of human life.

"How long will you exist, O water-bubble"⁵
"Graves await you as mothers their children"⁶

¹ *Patte patte Gobind betha, tahnı tahnı devta,
Muddh te Sri Krishan betha, dhan Brahma devta*

² *Sade Guran ne jehaz banaya, chalo kise par chalan*

³ *Mithi lagdi Guru ji teri bani vele amrit de*

⁴ *Devi di main karan karahi, pır, faqır manawan,
Haider Sheikh nu dewan bakra, nange pairin jawan
Hanuman di dewan manni, ratti fark na pawan,
Ni mata Bhagwatiye, main tera jas gawan*

⁵ *Kı mumadan terian panı dia bulbulia*

⁶ *Kabran udıkdian jıun puttran nun mawan.*

Songs for ceremonial occasions have a great cultural significance. They are more an expression of the deeply-felt emotions of the community as a whole and not of an individual. These songs are generally sung in groups. They are of great variety, and there are different songs for different occasions, for example, *haria*, *suhag*, *vatna*, *ghorian*, *sithanian* and *alhanian*. The life of a Punjabi is studded with songs. When a baby is born, all women of the family and the neighbourhood get together and sing *haria*. Some even sing *ghorian* on the birth of a son because according to Punjabis, sons are like bridegrooms from birth itself. The child grows in the midst of lullabies. The theme of the lullabies is invariably a mother's dreams about her son.

But wedding songs are the most interesting and popular ones. When girls come from the husbands' house to the parents' to attend the marriage of their brothers, they sing *sohile*, the subject matter of which is superlative praise for the brother and the parental home. A few days before marriage, women get together daily at night and sing to the accompaniment of the *dholaki*. The songs sung at the bridegroom's house are called *ghorian* and those at the bride's house *suhag*. What the mother, sisters and sisters-in-law look forward to at the marriage of a boy of the family is all expressed vividly in *ghorian*.

Suhag is the echo of a young Punjabi girl's feelings. It is a song which draws attention to the young girl's hopes, dreams and joys of life. In Punjabi villages a young girl has no say in the choice of her husband. It is the parents who make the selection. The girl's feelings in the matter are sung of in many of the *suhags*. One folk-song, *Devin ve babla us ghare* (Send me only to such a house, O father), is an expression of a Punjabi girl's desire to go into a family where the mother-in-law is good and virtuous, the father-in-law holds an esteemed position, where the mother-in-law has many sons and is always busy celebrating marriages, where there are many buffaloes and such abundance of milk that the girl will always be busy churning curd and making butter.

When the marriage party arrives at the bride's house, *sithanian* are sung, which are doggerels full of wit and sarcasm. Sometimes

women find them a handy medium to point out the weak points of the bridegroom's party or of any particular member of it. These songs are packed with pungent wit but are accepted in good humour

"Our girl is like a thread of gold,
Your boy is like a potter,
That makes no couple, but you shameless
Creatures feel no shame"¹

Similarly, expressive songs are sung on many other occasions connected with marriage. When the bridegroom is led into the bride's house before the wedding is solemnised, he has to recite *chhand*. This is a test of the boy's ability to speak intelligently, and also of his ready wit.

Songs are sung at the departure of the *Doli*. This is the time of separation. The girl has a heavy heart since she has to bid farewell to her parents and parental home, at the same time there is a subdued thrill at the prospect of her going to her husband's house. The *Doli* songs are very touching. It is the daughters who are supposed to be speaking in many of these songs.

"We are a flock of sparrows,
O father, we must fly away"²

When the girl goes to the house of her in-laws, the mother-in-law performs certain ceremonies. Songs are sung on this occasion too.

Vain and *alhania* are meant for mourning. They are poignant songs which help to release the pent-up emotions of the bereaved persons by stressing the transitoriness of life.

WOMEN AND FOLK-SONGS

A woman's sentiments are deftly woven into the fine fabric of the folk-songs of the Punjab. The main supposition at the back of

¹ *Kuri tan sadi tille di tar ai,
Munda tan disda koi ghumar ai,
Jori tan phabdi nahin, nislajeo laj tuhannu nahin*
² *Churian da chamba ve, babal asan ud janan*

these songs is that a woman has two lives and two minds, one for her parents and the other for her in-laws. She draws strength from both families. In her new home after marriage, she leans upon the husband, whereas in the parental home her attention is concentrated more on the brother than anyone else. In all her childhood games, she idealises her brother, and after marriage, on all occasions of family celebrations, her brother brings her home from her husband's house. A Punjabi girl almost worships her brother. She is proud of him and custom has taught her to look forward to his visits, because on all festive occasions it is the brother who brings gifts to her house.

"When I see my brother's camel
I tread the ground as a champion"¹

And though she would like to show an extravagant hospitality towards her visiting brother, the inhibitions of the joint family stand in her way. She is afraid of the taunts of her mother-in-law.

"When we live separately (from the parents-in-law)
I shall give you ghee and sugar,
But now eat this dry stuff, my brother"²

Next to the brother it is the mother who is remembered most by the Punjabi girl for she is the sharer of her daughter's sorrows. A mother having borne much the same sort of suffering in her own life can understand her daughter's predicament best. The daughter comes to her and talks freely about the injustice and cruelty which she receives at the hands of her mother-in-law and sisters-in-law.

"Tall are the ears of corn
Why are the daughters ever born, O mother?"³

In her husband's home she is afraid of the mother-in-law's conventional tyranny. If the mother-in-law is good, life becomes a heaven, but what happens more often is that the cruel mother-

¹ *Jadon vekh lia vir da bota, mall wangu pair dhardi*

² *Add howangi tan khand ghio khawasan,
Rukhi sukki hun kha lai veera.*

³ *Kankan lammian, dhan kiyon jammian ni maye*

in law makes life a hell for her. She taunts her over small things, passes scathing remarks on her parents, brothers and sisters, and irritates her so much that her heart is filled with hatred for her. This dislike for the mother-in-law is expressed in many folk-songs of the Punjab.

“The mother-in-law told me to knead *maida* in ghee,
The *maida* I put in the ghee was scant and she abused me
Abuse me not, O mother-in-law,
Who is here to console me ?
Beneath the mansion my mother stands,
And there are tears in her eyes
Weep not, mother mine, daughters have always brought
Grief to their parents”¹

SONGS OF TRINJAN

Women seldom sit idle in the Punjab. When they are free from household chores, they bring out their spinning-wheels and sit out in the open under a tree. Women of all ages and from all houses of the locality sit together and spin, and as they spin they sing. This is a common sight in the villages. Sometimes on a winter night they all assemble at someone's house and keep spinning and singing throughout the night. These spinning sessions are called *trinjan*—the day session is known as *Chiri Chirunga* (sparrows big and small) and the night session is called *Rat Katni* (spinning at night). Sometimes there are spinning competitions among young girls with a chain of songs in the background. Spinning is seldom independent of the song. Spinning goes on accompanied by spontaneous, unrestrained music.

Trinjan songs cover all aspects of life, particularly the long cherished dreams of a woman, her aspirations, fears,

¹ *Sas m'ri ne akhia gheo vichch maida go,
Gheo vichch maida thora pia, sas manu gali de
Nan de sasse galian, ethe mera kaun sune,
Mehlan keth meri man khari, akhian n'r bhare
Na ro maey meriye, dhian de dukh bure*

love longings and tuggings at the heart These songs combined with the drone of the spinning-wheel create an enchanting atmosphere

"Listen O sun, listen O moon,
Tears roll down my eyes
The world around me laughs, you see,
As I spin my strands of sorrow"¹

SONGS OF TEEYAN

The festival of *Teeyan* is an occasion for all married girls to visit their parents for a few days, and thus enjoy again the carefree days of their childhood They run to the swings on the *peepal* trees It is fascinating to see the earth all round becoming green again, the welcome drops of rain falling, and the youthful girls in colourful dresses The girls sing songs and dance *Giddha*

"I love to come to the *Giddha*
And sing the *boli*, and perform the *shagan*,
O cloud of *Sawan*
I sing your glory under the *peepal* tree"²

Songs of *Teeyan* mostly speak of love, and are highly charged with emotion

LOVE DITTIES

Love lyrics comprise the best part of Punjabi folklore The songs of this category express the ecstasy of union as also the pangs of separation

These lyrics are short and absorbing, the most popular among them being *Bolian*, *Mahya* and *Dhola* The natural exuberance

¹ *Sun ve surja, sun ve channan, main akhton nir vagawan,
Sara jag hasda, main tand dukhan di pawan*

² *Shauk nal main giddhe vichh awan,
Boli pawan shagan manawan,
Soun dia badla ve
Tera jas piplan heth gawan*

of a Punjabi does not allow him to put any limits to his appreciation of beauty. He says

“Mere sight of your beauty contents me not, O Love,
I wish to quaff you in a gulp”¹

He yearns to be one with his beloved, to absorb and be absorbed

“O friend let me dissolve like sugar
In your glass of water”²

This kind of poetic expression is called *Boli*, it has the terseness of a proverb and the sweetness of a song

As popular as *Boli* is *Mahiya*, which presents an expressive picture of the torments of separation and the thrills of reunion. *Dhola* like *Mahiya* is an appealing storehouse of the softest sentiments

Considering that for centuries the Punjabis had to bear the brunt of foreign attacks, it was natural that sometimes when young men went out to fight, the wives expressed a wish to go and brave it with them rather than stay back and suffer the torments of separation. In such a song a wife says

“If you are going on duty,
O rider on the blue horse,
Carry me in your haversack
Wherever the night falls, O rider on the blue horse,
Pull me out
And put me against your heart”³

Many other songs are in the same strain

Some folk-songs have a historical significance and reflect the attitude of the entire community towards certain events. The Punjab has been a frontier province and Punjabis have always suffered from the after-effects of foreign invasions. Every

¹ *Tenu vekh ke sabar na awe, yara tere ghut bhar lan*

² *Tere pani de glass vich matra ghul jawan khand ban ke*

³ *Je tun chaleon chakri, ve nile ghore walia*

Sanu bojhe pa

Jithe tan awe ratri, ve nile ghore walia,

Kad kaleje la,

invasion brought plunder, rape and arson in its wake There is a song which gives a heart-rending description of the cruelty of a marauder who forcibly carries away a beautiful young lady Her husband, father and brother, in spite of their earnest efforts, fail to rescue her, and the brave girl, instead of falling prey to that brute's passion, burns herself to death The entire poignant tale is contained in a ballad

The invasions of Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali created terror among the people of the Punjab There are some songs expressing their indignation towards them

When the long enslaved Indians started their fight for freedom from the British yoke, the offended masters let loose upon them a hell of spiteful cruelty Some folk-songs refer to these movements of rebellion in the Punjab There are folk-songs sung in praise of the martyr Bhagat Singh

"That night when Bhagat Singh was born,
No one else was born"¹

When the atrocities exceeded all limits and prayers to gods were of no avail, the Punjabis lost all faith in divine powers and sang

"God is dead, and the deities have fled,
It is the Ferangi's regime"²

FOLK-TALES

Story-telling is a very popular pastime with the Punjabis During months of extreme winter, groups of men, women and children sit near the fire-place, or lie akimbo in their beds under cosy quilts, or, in summer, sit out in the open under the sky and tell or hear stories and thus beguile time Stories are not told during daytime because of the belief that if that is done, poor travellers tend to lose their way The tales told are a well-preserved valuable treasure handed

¹ *Jis rat Bhagat Singh jamian, hor na kol jamian*

² *Rab moea devte mar gae, rae frangian da*

down for ages from generation to generation. Old people relate them with special relish. Every village has its own expert story-tellers. Their narration is so dramatic that even kids stay awake till a story comes to its end. Sometimes a story goes on for a whole night, and sometimes the narrative is so linked that it is kept up night after night for a long time.

The world-famous *Panchatantra* is actually an anthology of tales which were popular in the Punjab in earlier times when the Aryans were settled there. The oldest and most famous book of fairy tales, *Vad Kaha*, composed by Rishi Gunadhya was written in the Punjab in the then prevalent dialect, Paishachi. This collection is not available now but *Katha Sarit Sagar* based on it and written in Sanskrit by Somadeva is available.

The famous Arabic collection of fables, *Kalilawa Dimnah*, is based on the *Panchatantra*. Similarly, most of the tales of *Alif Laila* are said to have originated from *Katha Sarit Sagar* or *Vad Kaha*. The Punjab has thus been an ocean whence innumerable gems of folk-tales have spread all over the world.

Legends form the most interesting and inspiring part of the folk-tales of the Punjab. They are mostly about lovers, warriors, saints, devotees and *pirs*. Tales like *Heer Ranjha*, *Sassi Punnu*, *Sohni Mahiwal*, *Mirza Sahiban*, *Roda Jalali*, etc., are still listened to with great relish. It is enchanting to hear how Heer defies her parents, and her in-laws and lays down her life at the altar of love. According to the story, Ranjha becomes a tender of her buffaloes for her sake. Later, when she is married to Saida of Rangpur, Ranjha goes there disguised as a jogi and elopes with her. They are pursued and caught. Heer's maternal uncle Kaido poisons her, and Ranjha also dies from pangs of separation. Then again no one is ever tired of hearing how Sassi lays down her life for Punnu in the blistering heat of the deserts, and how Sohni attempts to swim on an unbaked pot of clay in order to meet Mahiwal and gets drowned mid-stream.

Sassi, according to legend, was the daughter of King Jam Adam of Bhambore. At her birth, astrologers predicted that she

from some merchants about Sassi's love for him came to Bhambhore and then refused to go back to his native place. Some emissaries of his father doped both Sassi and Punnu one night and whisked Punnu away to Kecham in a state of drunkenness. When Sassi awoke, she followed his footsteps and gave up her life in the blistering heat of the desert. When Punnu recovered from the effect of the drink, he turned down all entreaties and went back to where Sassi now lay in her grave. Sassi's grave, it is said, burst open and received Punnu.

The story of Sohni Mahiwal is no less poignant. Sohni was the daughter of a potter of Gujarat, Mirza Izzat Beg. A prince of Bokhara fell in love with her, abandoned his princely life, and chose to tend the buffaloes of Sohni's father. That is why he is known as 'Mahiwal' or tender of buffaloes. The lovers met at the bank of the river Jhana (Chenab) under cover of darkness. Mahiwal made it a practice to offer a roasted fish to Sohni whenever she came. One day he could not catch any fish, so he cut some flesh from his thigh and roasted it for Sohni, just to prove the intensity of his infatuation. Sohni used to meet Mahiwal by crossing the river on the back of an earthen pitcher. Once her jealous sister-in-law replaced the baked pitcher with an unbaked one. Though Sohni saw through the game, she, in her eagerness to meet Mahiwal, threw herself into the swift current taking the unbaked pitcher under her arm. The pitcher soon dissolved in the water and she was drowned. Hearing her cries, Mahiwal also made a fatal plunge into the gushing river, and both found their way to a watery grave.

Punjabi ballad-writers of the Middle Ages again and again made these episodes the subject of their poetic creation. Legends have a special appeal for the Punjabis for the struggle against social stratification which they represent. The characters are rebels against a stagnating social system and values.

Some legends are heroic in content, and they sing praises of the warriors who sacrificed their lives for the country. Raja Rasoalu is the most famous character of this heroic cycle.

He was the son of King Salvahan of Sialkot and is supposed to have lived towards the end of the first century A D In Pothohar and Sialkot, there are many places associated with Raja Rasalu The marks of the hooves of Raja Rasalu's horse and the lunge of the sword which he is supposed to have aimed at a witch are still preserved at 'Cheer Par'

There are many legends about *pirs*, *fakirs* and *jogis*, with supernatural elements playing an important role in them Prominent among the tales of *jogis* are those of Bhartrihari, Gopinath and Gorakhnath Among the followers of Gugga Pir and Sakhi Sarwar also some very interesting legends are prevalent

Some legends, local in character because they pertain to a certain village, river, rivulet, etc , remain restricted to those areas only

Sir Richard Temple collected a large number of the legends of the Punjab and recorded them in three volumes, under the title *Legends of the Punjab*, but the legends collected are only a small part of the vast ocean which has not yet been and cannot easily be reduced to writing These are still orally transmitted from one generation to another

Punjabi fairy tales are extremely fantastic The heroes and heroines of these tales pass through various difficulties but by virtue of their intelligence and physical prowess they defeat the antagonistic forces and succeed in achieving their object The stories always end in the victory of the hero Among the important fairy tales of the Punjab are *Phulan Shahzadi*, *Mirchan Shahzadi* and *Baingan Shahzadi*

Anecdotes, called *batan* in Punjabi, are an essential part of folklore and are very popular They are entertaining as well as instructive, they throw light on social injustice and inequality, make sarcastic comment on the weaknesses of human nature and are used as proverbs on appropriate occasions

PROVERBS

The superiority of proverbs to all other forms of folklore can be judged from the popularity they enjoy and the currency

they have amongst the people. They are a potent force in the development of culture, act as repositories of wit and wisdom and transcending all boundaries intermingle with contemporary expression.

Punjabi oral literature is tremendously rich in proverbial and gnomic lore. Proverbs, which play a vital role in the daily life of the people, are a perennial source of wit and humour. When a piece of advice has to be tendered and a particular type of behaviour or action has to be encouraged or discouraged, the Punjabi takes frequent recourse to proverbs.

Punjabi proverbs are a true reflection of the heart and soul of the people and grow out of their social consciousness. They are a perennial source of inspiration to the community.

Some of the Punjabi proverbs have come down to the present day through oral transmission from the remote past. Some of them can be traced back to the Vedic age. The Punjabi proverbs, 'it is the thirsty one who goes to the well'¹ and 'without fire, there is no smoke'², occur first in the *Sam Veda Samhita* and the *Atharva Veda Samhita*, respectively.

Punjabi proverbs reflect precisely the life and mode of living of the unsophisticated people. They fully portray their habits, thoughts, their sense of beauty, their wit and humour. On every subject relevant to human life, there is a proverb.

The alluvial fertile land of the Punjab is compared to the cream of milk in a saying:

"Cultivation in the Punjab and the cream of milk

There is profit in both of them"³

Referring to the constant danger of foreign invasions, a proverb says:

"Those who are born in the Punjab have to be at one front or the other every day"⁴

¹ *Piara hameshan khooh kol janda hai*

² *Aggan bin dhoon kithe*

³ *Punjab di Vahi te dudh di malai, sada lahwandi*

⁴ *Punjab de jaman nun nit mohiman*

The dominant traits of Punjabi character are precisely depicted in some proverbs

“The youth of the Punjab
And the offspring of a lion are alike”¹

People in the villages have summed up their observations pertaining to various aspects of cultivation in pithy sayings which are relevant even in these days of great agricultural advancement. Much stress is laid upon ploughing and manuring. The more a farmer ploughs the land, the better will be the harvest. ‘The more you plough, the more you thrash’² but ‘one manuring is equal to a hundred ploughings’³, advises one saying. According to still another what an army is to a king, manure is to a farm.⁴ Similarly there are proverbs on sowing, hoeing and weeding. Thus goes one saying ‘The more you hoe, the more it sprouts’⁵

Rain being one of the most significant phenomena in rural life, a saying goes ‘What money is to the trader, rain is to the farmer’⁶. ‘If it rains, the crops are robust like a lion, if not, they are mere clods of earth,’⁷ states another.

Proverbs wherein certain castes, tribes or classes of people are satirized or ridiculed constitute a separate class. Persons belonging to a certain group, caste, or class, adopting similar ways of living develop certain traits that can be easily generalised and applied to the whole class. These sayings are the product of the time when caste sentiments dominated.

“Even if a Jat be made of gold,
Behind the gold is still the brass”⁸
A Dum, a Brahmin and a goat

¹ *Punjab de jawan te sher di santan ik braber*

² *Jitni wah utni gah*

³ *Sau wah ik pah*

⁴ *Dal raja mal kheti*

⁵ *Jitni godi utni dodhi*

⁶ *Dam vipari, minh kisan*

⁷ *Vasse tan sher, nahin tan dher*

⁸ *Jat bhawan sone da hove pichha pital da honla su*

Are of no avail in time of need ' 1

A few of them are given in the appendix

Punjabi proverbs pertaining to human failings and vices are very fascinating. They are poignant, stimulating and witty, and are often presented in colourful images taken from daily life. Thus pretence is ridiculed as a blind girl, named light-house². One who assumes false airs is described as a nephew who struts because his maternal uncle wears ear-rings of gold³. One who pretends to be of a higher status than he or she really is, is ridiculed as the daughter who throws stones at others while the poor mother is asking for her wages for grinding⁴.

While vice is despised in Punjabi proverbs, virtue is praised. Many of the proverbs urge patience, humility, sweetness, hospitality, generosity, and gratitude. The repertoire of Punjabi proverbs is very rich and variegated indeed.

RIDDLES

Riddles—those ingenious questions in a metaphorical form, are a very significant branch of folklore. They are not only entertaining in character but also help cultivate wit and intellectual capability in a person.

Punjabis are very fond of riddles. Generally it is at night time that they get together and pose them. That is the time when they are free from the day's routine and can sit down and indulge in this pastime. When women assemble for *trinjan* and get tired of spinning, they take some rest in which they either sing or pose riddles to one another. Sometimes there is a regular riddle competition between the young and the old. Such competitions are mentioned in many folk-tales of the Punjab. We often hear stories of a princess who would marry only a man who would pass the intellectual aptitude

¹ *Dum Brahman bakri, aukke vele kade na pakri*

² *Anni kuri te nan Nurbhari*

³ *Mammen de kanni birballian, bhanewan akar akar challe*

⁴ *Man mange piawani dhi patthar mare*

test by answering her riddles, failure to do so meant death

Even on marriages a proper assessment of the intellectual calibre of the bridegroom is made through riddles, although this custom is now dying out. Enigmatic riddles are very skilfully composed and very obscure terms are employed in them. The riddle given below is an example

Poser "Make us a bed of sand "

Answer "I prepare fresh curds
Strain them through a fine cloth,
Season them with cloves,
And thus make a bed of sand "1

Some riddles are proverbial in nature in the sense that certain judgments are given and the other person is expected to guess the conditions under which such a decision could not be given

"Three things should be thrown into the blazing fire
A Brahmin who eats without washing his hands,
A soldier who deserts the field of battle,
A jeweller's son who makes a mistake in his accounts "2

The reply is

'The same three things should not be thrown into the blazing fire when
The Brahmin who eats without washing his hands is stricken by misfortune,
The soldier who deserts the field of battle has no arms,
The jeweller's son who makes a mistake in his accounts is drunk "3

¹ *Sawal—Ret manja bun de*

*Jawab—Kori katwi dahin jamata, nuke kapre pania
Longan di main lai lai, te retu manja bunia*

² *Tre cha daie balde chulle*

*Barhman hove an-dhotean khave,
Te surma hoke ran vichchon ave,
Javahari da puttari lekheon bhulle*

³ *Uno tre cha daie balde chulle,*

*Bipta pavve an-dhotean khaee,
Bin hattharon ran vichchon ave,
Maddh pike lekheon bhulle*

Punjabi riddles are rich in homely metaphors, vivid imagery, and a peculiar mixture of mystery and beauty. In them stars are a 'handful of rice tied in a blue cloth—lost in the day found at night'. Sleep is 'Gulabo, thinner than water and sweeter than sugar whose coming and going none can see, and smoke is the son who goes up the roof before the mother is born'. All the colourful pictures of Punjabi life are sketched in riddles. With the progress of civilization, riddles seem to be falling out of favour, so also perhaps the ability to pose or solve them.

CHAPTER VIII

FOLK MUSIC AND DANCES

THE REAL SPIRIT of a folk-song rests not only in its text but also in its tune. A folk-song without a tune is like a body without a soul, for it is the tune which makes it throb with life. Without music it is no different from a lyric put on paper. Speaking on folk tunes, Cecil J. Sharp once said, "My own estimate is that the tunes are of utmost value, but that the words are of less account."

The popular tunes of Punjabi folk-songs ring with the heart-throbs of the simple, unsophisticated villagers. These melodies, characteristic of their deeply-felt emotions, are absolutely in tune with their mode of living.

The rhythm and beat of Punjabi folk music is simple. The rhythmic patterns are determined by the day-to-day activities of the villagers, the sound of the grinding stone, for instance, the drone of the spinning-wheel, the creaking of the Persian wheel, the beat of the horse's hooves, etc. These rhythms refined into symmetrical patterns form the basis of the entire folk music of the Punjab.

There is a widespread variation in the tunes and melodies prevalent in the different regions of the State. The folk tunes prevalent in the east of the undivided Punjab differed greatly from those popular in the west. In the west, unlike in the east, specially on the plains of the Sindh Sagar Doab, certain folk forms like *Mahiya* and *Dhola* were, and still are, very popular. After Partition, however, some sort of fusion has been effected. Some of the folk-songs earlier popular only in the western part of the Punjab have travelled towards the east. *Boli* is popular all over the Punjab, though the eastern mode of performing it is different from the western one. Even in one area the same song

¹ James Reeves, *The Idiom of the People*, p. 3.

is sung differently by different groups. This element of flexibility in Punjabi folk music adds a lot of variety to it.

Punjabi folk music is primarily vocal in character and is seldom accompanied by instruments. It comes so spontaneously to the villager that when he is ploughing or digging his fields, driving his cart, or walking homeward alone, he just bursts into song in a full-throated ecstasy. Similarly, when women get together and ply the spinning-wheel they sing, alone, in two's and three's or in chorus, they need no instruments. But for songs which are sung on special occasions, the use of instruments is essential, particularly the *dholak*.

The *dholak* is very popular with the Punjabis and is used on all occasions of social and festive significance. It enjoys a special popularity with women who just cannot resist the temptation of the rhythm of its beat. Innumerable memories are associated with its sound because all gaiety and celebrations of the family include the *dholak* as the basic and essential instrument. The birth of a baby in a family is celebrated with songs sung to the accompaniment of a *dholak*. When little girls play at house-keeping and celebrate marriages of their dolls they give a very realistic picture of the importance of the occasion by bringing in a real *dholak*. The members of a bridegroom's family sing *Ghori* songs and the bride's cognates sing *Suhag* all to the accompaniment of the *dholak*. Whenever, in fact, men or women get together and sing, *dholak* comes in very handy. Sometimes if a *dholak* is not available, people improvise one out of an earthen pitcher which they put upside down and strike with a stone to keep the beat. This improvisation is quite popular with young women who sometimes prefer it to the drum and achieve real perfection in it. This instrument has come down to us from time immemorial and has helped to preserve some of the most valuable traditional songs.

Very often in the evenings professional singers enliven village platforms. *Bhatts* and *Dhadis* entertain the audiences till very late in the night and keep men and women of all ages absolutely spell-bound with their ballads. These roving minstrels are some-

times accompanied by instrumentalists, who carry folk instruments like an *Algoza*, an *Iktara* and a *Dhad Sarangi* and by playing on them add charm to the recital

There is an abundance of heroic, devotional and romantic tales in Punjabi folklore. Very often they are in verse. Tales of *Puran Bhagat*, *Gopi Chand* and *Hakeekat Rai* belong to the devotional type, whereas *Raja Rasalu*, *Sucha Singh Surma* and *Jeuna Mor* belong to the heroic category. *Heer Ranjha Sassi Punnu*, *Mirza Sahiban*, and *Sohni Mahiwal* are particularly popular as tales of romance, and many eminent poets like Waris Shah and Hashim have narrated them in verse form. These sentimental tales are always sung in typical strains. For every tale the popular tune is different. *Mirza Sahiban* is sung in long wistful notes, the tune is known as *Sad* (call). It is a mournful tune, and the singer generally puts one hand on his ear, and makes gestures with the other while he sings.

Mirza and Sahiban fell in love with each other during their childhood. As young children they studied together at the village mosque. But when Sahiban grew up, her parents fixed her marriage with someone else. On the night of the reception of the bridal party, Mirza abducted her from her parents' house. On the way when the tired lovers were sleeping under a tree, they were overtaken by the pursuing cognates and the prospective husband and wife were cut to pieces. This sad tale has been sung in many styles. Speaking about it Shyam Parmar says: "The *Mirza Sahiban* of Punjab portrays the notes of Sarang in Kaharva Tal, and another style of singing the same evokes the melodic impressions of 'Tilang' in Ada Chautala."

The tune used for *Heer Ranjha* is different from the one used for *Puran Bhagat*. The notes of Sindhu Bhairava can be traced in *Heer Ranjha*, while *Puran Bhagat* is sung in the musical notes of Asavari and Mand. *Sohni Mahiwal* is sung in Bhairavi, as also *Yusuf Zulaikhan*, but the tunes are different.

So far no serious attempt has been made to record and scientifically preserve the famous tunes of Punjabi folk music, nor has much effort gone into the understanding of the folk musical style.

Under the existing conditions the style of even some of the most famous songs is being influenced by the tunes of popular films, with the result that some of the original tunes and melodies have been completely transformed and, in some cases, have been completely lost

Although there are various folk tunes prevalent in the Punjab, *Mahiya*, *Dhola* and *Boli* are more popular than the rest. *Mahiya*, which originally became prevalent in the area now in western Pakistan, especially Pothohar, is today sung all over the Punjab. In almost all parts of Pothohar before the Punjab was divided, one came across people singing *Mahiya* while at work, especially the farmers toiling in their fields. A triplet of *Mahiya* is called *tappa* (literally a hop) because it throbs with the heart-beat of the singers. The word *Mahiya* originates from the word *Mahi*, both meaning the lover, because of the legendary lover Ranjha who was called *Mahi* (tender of buffaloes) as he looked after the herd of cattle owned by Heer's father. The word *Mahi* has now come to be permanently associated with this amorous relationship. *Mahiya* in substance is that form of folk-verse in which the lover is addressed in the most touching expressions of love and pathos.

Mahiya comprising triplets has its own special structure. The first line contains a pen-picture, a description or an illustration, but sometimes it has no special meaning or relevance since it is there only to maintain the rhyming pattern. The real substance is contained in the second and third lines. These two lines are very expressive and overflow with the most deeply felt longings of the people. Because they are deeply-felt emotions put into words, they are very effective. Every *tappa* is an entity in itself.

Dhola, an equally popular form of folk music, is highly lyrical and sentimental in character, love and beauty being its chief contents. *Dhola* has a variety of forms, those prevalent in Pothohar being quite different from those popular with the tribes of Sandalbar.

The Pothohari *Dhola* is rather condensed in form. Each stanza consists of five lines which can be further sub-divided into two

parts of three and two lines, respectively. The first two lines of the first part rhyme with each other, while the third one is left loose. The second part which is a couplet, intensifies and polishes up the meaning of the first three lines. Although this couplet is a sustained part of the first three lines, in a way it is quite self-contained. This couplet is liberally used even independently by the singers of *Dhola*.

Dhola prevalent in Sandalbar has no fixed form, and its tune is different from that popular in Pothohar. Even the rhythm is different and it keeps changing according to the variety of emotions portrayed. Singers themselves are the folk poets of these songs and when they sing with a hand on the ear in a long liting refrain, there is such depth of feeling in the voice that it sounds like the moan of a love-sick soul or the heart-rending song of a damsel torn apart from her lover.

Boli is the most popular form of folk music of the eastern Punjab. It is generally in one line, a kind of couplet, and is, therefore, the most miniature form of folk-song in vogue. *Boli*, however, is very deep, effective and interesting in its impact. It has the brevity of a proverb, the appeal of *Mahiya* and a sweetness all its own. It expresses a variety of emotions. In form a *Boli* may, however, vary from one line to four, five or even more lines. The two famous folk-dances of the Punjab, *Bhangra* and *Giddha* are danced to the accompaniment of this form of folk-song.

Loris or lullabies, a class apart, are sung in different tunes but the tempo is invariably slow. Every tune, whatever its text, tends to create a droning, dreamy atmosphere which leads the child into the alleys of sleep. Its rhyme scheme is crisp and brief and takes the form of an address. At the end of each rhyming arrangement, plain and simple syllabic sounds like "O, O, O," or "Ee, Ee, Ee", are hummed.

In the Punjab there are set tunes even for typical dirges. *Alahni* and *Vain* belong to this category. The content, besides an assortment of rhythmic wailing cries, is a sad and philosophic commentary on the transience of life. Mourning songs are generally sung as slow, dragging chants, punctuated by shrill and wailing cries.

FOLK DANCES OF THE PUNJAB

Folk-dances of the Punjab virtually hold a mirror to the characteristic Punjabi manliness, fortitude, forthrightness and gaiety. They have retained their age-old spontaneous individuality as no sophisticated form of classical art ever could. The dances are down-to-earth and devoid of all superficiality or sophistication.

Folk-dances are not bound by any rigid rules. Since they are an expression of emotions through physical movements, the dancer is free to synchronise any emotion with a gesture that he finds appropriate. The folk dancer does not need any special dress or make-up—any dress that the young men or women wear from day to day is suitable enough, only some uniformity in colour, etc. is maintained. The dances are basically so simple that virtually no preparation is required for them. Wherever and whenever a festive or social occasion inspires the young Punjabi, he dances with gusto. The life of a Punjabi villager is so full of hard work that when he gets a break, he enjoys it to his maximum, and treats it as an occasion to dance.

The folk-dances are secular in character. They might have originated in some ritual, but as they are today, they have nothing to do with them any more. Members of different sects and creeds, irrespective of their faiths, get together and dance, fun and entertainment being the main object.

As in folk music, so in folk-dance, musical instruments are seldom used. *Bhangra* is an exception where a *dhol* (drum) is generally considered essential. But often, when the young Punjabis get into the mood, they can do well without the *dhol* even. Clapping or clicking is enough to keep the rhythm.

Although folk-dances are generally not the same for men and women, there are some which are common. Even then men and women do not dance together, they form separate groups. *Bhangra* is the men's dance and *Giddha* is the women's, but *Jhumar* and *Sammi* are common to both. *Jhumar* and *Sammi* are originally West Punjab dances, but after Partition they have been duly adapted and accepted in the eastern region also. *Bhangra* and

Giddha, however, still remain the most popular folk-dances of the Punjab, no other form of folk-dance has been able to gain that measure of popularity

BHANGRA

The popular and lively folk-dance *Bhangra*, besides being the favourite dance of the Punjabi villager, is also the best measure of his liveliness, joy, staunch masculinity, and gaiety. No other dance can come anywhere near *Bhangra* in sheer force and tempo. It is a dance of stamina, and the Punjabis take special delight in dancing it.

This ancient dance is associated with the ripening of the harvest. There is no greater joy for a farmer than to see his crop turning golden and the stalks getting heavy with grain. The origin of this dance is also associated with fertility rites.

Generally this dance is performed on Baisakhi, when harvesting is over and fairs are held all over the Punjab. But it can also be performed without any let or hindrance at any other social occasion of importance.

No particular form of dress is indicated for this dance, only as a matter of habit and routine, the Punjabis love to dress up for all festive occasions. Even so the dancers, wishing to maintain a certain uniformity, all wear shirts with loose sleeves, stiff starched long-cloth *tahmats* (loose loin cloth reaching up to the ankles), and bright black, red, green or yellow waist-coats. A bright strip over the turban is often regarded as a must. Tiny bells are sometimes tied over the ankles.

Bhangra is danced to the accompaniment of drum (*dhol*) and rhythmic clapping. The rhythm in fact is *the* thing. The drummer stands at the centre and the dancers stand in a circle around him. At the beat of the drum they proceed, first with a slow movement of the feet, then a rhythmic wriggling of the body and after the shaking of the shoulders, they start strutting in rhythm. The tempo increases as the beat of the drum becomes more and more exciting. The physical movements in twist and turn take

the drumming and dance to a fine climax, the drummer and the dancers all reaching a stage of swinging ecstasy where sound and movements merge into each other. The flow of the rhythm is interspersed with chants of "Hoy, Hoy" and "Balle, Balle" by the dancers. There are short pauses in between. At each pause when drumming ceases, one of the dancers comes forward, puts one hand on his ear, lifts the other, and sings a *Boli*. As soon as he comes to the end of it, dancing is resumed. The dancers must keep the rhythm and increase or decrease the tempo in accordance with the beat of the drum. Nothing inhibits the physical movements. Sometimes young men divide themselves competitively into pairs each pair performing in its turn, while the rest remain in a circle. The gestures are so full of vigour that they are difficult to sustain over long periods. So when a pair exhausts itself, it goes back to the ring and another pair comes forward to take its place. This may go on for hours.

With the passage of time *Bhangra* is losing its gruffness, and its movements are tending to become more and more sophisticated. The *Bhangra*, for instance, which is danced on Republic Day and in the films is quite different from the one danced in villages by the unsophisticated people.

GIDDHA

Giddha is the folk-dance *par excellence* of women. It has almost the same intensity as *Bhangra*, yet it also leaves plenty of margin for the depiction of feminine grace and elasticity. Like men, women perform this dance mainly on festive and social occasions, especially marriages. In Malwa the *Giddha* performed during marriages is called *Viyahula Giddha*. Hard worked village women sometimes get together on moonlit nights and dance in tune with nature. It is customary in the Punjab to celebrate *Teeyan* in the month of Sawan. This festival lasts from the 3rd lunar day in the month to full moon. Fairs are held at many places, swings are put up, and girls swing and dance to their heart's content. At such times *Giddha* is performed under a *peepul* or *banyan* tree. The rainy season is also called the sea-

son of *Giddha* because the drops of rain and the dark clouds inspire the girls to dance out their pent-up feelings as naught else can. *Giddha* performed during *Teeyan* is called *Teeyan Giddha*. For young girls, married or unmarried, it is an occasion to look forward to. The newly-married ones yearn to come to their parental homes during these days, because it is only there that they can satisfy their urge to sing and dance freely. The formality of the veil (*ghoongat*), and the newness of the husband's home do not allow that freedom in their conjugal home.

Like *Bhangra* again *Giddha* is danced in a circle. The girls form a ring, one of them taking up a small drum (*dholki*) and sitting in the centre. If a *dholki* is not available, an earthen pitcher is substituted. The desired rhythm is produced by striking it with a pebble. The starting procedure is also essentially the same as in *Bhangra*. One girl comes forward and sings a *boli*. As she comes to the end of it, the others pick up the refrain and join. As the dance proceeds, they sing more and more spiritedly, keeping time by clapping. The girls dance in two's, as men do in *Bhangra*. The dance is stylistically simple, the jingle of the bells, the thumping of the feet, and the beat of the drum creating an enchanting atmosphere. *Giddha* is not performed according to any cut-and-dried rule, but harmony is the essence in such movements as swinging and twisting the body, shaking the shoulders, bending to a double, and clapping. Sometimes four young girls perform *Kihli* in groups of two's. Girls performing *Giddha* indicate through gestures the various phases of the life of a Punjabi woman spinning, fetching water from the well, and grinding. Whichever phase they portray, they sing with it an appropriate *boli*. Mimicry is also very popular in *Giddha*. One girl may play an aged bridegroom and another his young bride, or one may play a quarrelsome sister-in-law and another a humble bride. All this gives women a chance to give uninhibited expression to their pent-up feelings.

SAMMI

This is a popular dance of Sandal Bar which is now in Pakis-

tan After Partition most of the Sikhs and Hindus residing in the western part of the Punjab had to migrate to the eastern region, or to other parts of the country They brought with them their culture and thus *Sammi* became popular in the eastern half of the Punjab too This is a women's dance and like the *Giddha*, it is danced in a circle The dancers stand in a ring and swing their hands, bringing them up from the sides, right in front up to the chest, and clap, they take the hands down in accordance with a rhythm and a system and clap again Repeating this gesture, they bend forward and clap again, and go round and round in a circle As the rhythm is maintained with the beat of the feet, various kinds of swinging movements are performed with the arms This is a very simple dance Most of the gestures are confined to the movements of the arms, clicking and clapping No instrument is required as an accompaniment to this dance Rhythm is kept up with the beating of feet and clapping The dance is named after the young heroine of a legend, *Sammi*, who was madly in love and used to sing and dance as best she could for the sake of her lover

KIKLI

Kikli, more of a sport than dance, is generally popular with the younger girls They form pairs and then the two girls of each pair stand opposite each other holding each other's hands cross-wise Then they lift their heels and swing round and round on their toes The movement gets faster and faster, the upper part of the body bends backward, and the arms remain fully stretched As the spinning gathers momentum, it creates an ecstasy and the girls go on and on till they reach the point of exhaustion Even though they move very fast, they are very careful to maintain rhythm, and keep singing various kinds of songs about the mother, the father, the brother, the mother-in-law, and about various incidents connected with daily life

Luddi and *Jhumar* are also famous dances, especially for auspicious occasions *Luddi* is generally danced to celebrate a

victory Dancers lift both arms, hop on one foot and move in a circle, swinging their bodies and shaking their shoulders Though no songs are sung with *Luddi*, it is a dance bursting with enthusiasm.

Jhumar, a dance of western Punjab primarily, is seldom performed now

CHAPTER IX

OTHER ARTS

LIFE in the Punjab has been perpetually so hard and insecure that the people seldom got an opportunity to concentrate on the development of art. The land always needed warriors more than artists. In spite of that, however, folk art did manage to flourish in various forms in the Punjab villages, the oldest specimens being the terra-cottas which were found during the excavations at Harappa and Ruar and which, judged by earlier standards, could be regarded as big watermarks in folk art.

Certain families in the Punjab have for ages been dedicated to the cultivation of folk art. The potters, for example, have not only been making pots but also painting floral and decorative motifs on them. Similarly, carpenters while making doors, cots, etc., have been enriching them with various designs in wood carving. Goldsmiths have been making ornaments in almost a hundred different designs. The common fountain of inspiration has always been their innate urge for artistic creativity. Taking up jewellery in particular, it has to be admitted that Punjabi women are very fond of jewellery to which there are many references in folk-songs. The designs of jewellery and the motifs carved on them have thus undergone many changes. Before the coming of the Muslims, images of the sun, the moon, and various gods and goddesses were engraved on gold and silver ornaments. The Muslims, in conformity with their iconoclastic zeal, replaced gods and goddesses with floral motifs. The folk art of the Punjab is thus essentially a synthesis of all the traditions which the various incursions and racial elements brought with them.

Phulkari work is one of the most fascinating expressions of the Punjabi folk art. Women have cultivated this art at the cost of some of their very precious moments of leisure. They have always been very fond of colour and have devoted a lot of their time to colourful embroidery and knitting. It has also been custo-

mary for parents and relatives to give hand-embroidered clothes to girls in dowry, although now this custom is gradually fading out. Punjabi women were known for embroidering with superb imagination, sometimes it took a house-wife as much as a year to complete one *phulkari*. By a strange miracle women see to it that their creative instinct is not smothered by their domestic chores—a miracle, because their daily routine is merciless. They have to cook food and take it to the fields to their husbands, attend to numerous household affairs and perform numberless other obligations. Yet when they get a little time to relax in the afternoons in summer, or in the earlier part of the long nights in winter, the “skilled hands go on stitching pattern after pattern on rough home-spun cloths and create new wonderlands of colour form and design”

The word *phulkari* (embroidered flowers) is normally used for all types of embroidery, but the real *phulkari* work is not that in which the motifs are properly spread, but rather that where the whole cloth is covered with close embroidery and almost no space is left uncovered. The piece of cloth thus embroidered is called *baag*, meaning a garden. If only the sides are covered, it is called *chope*. The ground is generally maroon or scarlet and the silken thread used is mostly golden, though other colours are also used. Colour schemes show a rich sensitiveness. Some *phulkaris* are embroidered with various motifs of birds, animals, flowers, and sometimes even scenes of village life, but the accent is on floral and geometric motifs.

From the point of view of beauty, sense of proportion, and symmetry, the *baags* of Jhelum (now in Pakistan) are considered to be the best. In Amritsar and Ferozepur also, *phulkari* work of a high quality is done, but it is rather sad that this art is slowly dying away.

There is another noteworthy form of folk art in the Punjab which originated in various rites and religious performances—drawing the image or some symbolic figure of a deity on the walls or the door of a house. Many a time what is drawn is just lines and curves in varied forms, yet these lines and curves have in them a

rhythm and vitality all their own. Some people draw images of gods on their front door to protect themselves from the influence of evil spirits. Even today when a Hindu shopkeeper opens a new ledger, he draws the figure of Ganesh on the front page.

Women are adepts in making images of gods and goddesses, often of mud or dung, when a special worship in connection with a fast or a festival is called for. When, for instance, the festival of Sanjhidevi is celebrated on the first Naurata, one of the walls of the house is smeared with dung and then the figure of Sanjhi Mai is drawn on it. She is adorned with ornaments. In the background on one side the rising moon is shown, and on the other the setting sun. Thereafter she is worshipped for nine days.

On Diwali many women white-wash their houses, draw the image of Goddess Lakshmi on a wall and worship it.

PUPPETRY

Puppetry is an ancient but now slowly disappearing form of folk-drama which is always performed in open places in villages. This form of folk entertainment is still greatly liked by the young as well as the old.

Puppet shows are held at night because the wonderland atmosphere required is more easily created in the darkness of the night. Stage setting is generally very simple. Two or three bare cots are placed sideways and curtained with some multi-coloured cloth. Puppets are dressed according to the character that they are supposed to represent, though the dresses are generally very bright and colourful. The strings tied to the puppets are not visible in the dim light of the earthen lamp. The roles that the puppets play are all manipulated by the puppeteer. He makes them dance, fight, and perform various other acts associated with normal human behaviour. He keeps in his mouth a *pipni*, an improvised bamboo gadget through which he filters his speech, for transforming his voice. His wife sits on one side of the stage and plays the drum. Whenever the situation demands, she sings an appropriate song. The scenes are well enacted. The warriors fight, the

wrestlers show their mettle in bouts, the lovers suffer from the pangs of separation and are sometimes intoxicated with the ecstasy of fulfilment. The puppeteer being generally an expert artiste presents various phases of human life on his stage and in doing so adds his own touches of humour and satire.

Most of the puppeteers originally came from Rajasthan, or received training from a Rajasthani artiste, hence most of the anecdotes which they present are about Rajput folk heroes.

RURAL DRAMA

Folk-drama, the most popular form of entertainment for the villagers of the Punjab, has its roots in the distant past and has been handed down from generation to generation. With the passage of time, it has adjusted itself to the changing situations. During Muslim rule when dramatic activities virtually came to a stand-still, the villages were still bursting with folk-drama, dancing, mimicry, jugglery, *nautanki* and various other forms of fun and frivolity known as *swang*, *naqal*, *tamasha*, etc. The artistes who performed them—*bhands*, *rasdharis*, *naqaals*, etc.—went from village to village beating their drums or step-sticks and collecting audiences. All credit goes to these performers for keeping alive the dramatic tradition of the Punjab.

The folk-drama of the Punjab is of two main types—religious and secular. The former is generally musical in form, in which events of religious importance like the *Ram Lila* or the *Krishna Lila* are presented, whereas the latter comprises mostly *swang*, *naqal*, and *nautanki*, performances of the latter type are meant only for entertainment.

KRISHNA LILA OR RAS

It is difficult to know as to when this form of entertainment began but performance of the *Ras* was a common feature during the Bhakti movement. Guru Nanak Dev has also referred to it in his writings. It is possible that it has its roots in folk-dance. From primitive times dance has been a very common form of propitia-

ting gods and goddesses, and *Ras* is a likely off-shoot of such religious dancing. Worshippers of Lord Krishna, dressed as Gopis, danced round his image. This form of worship later came to be called *Ras*. Gradually it became customary to present in dance and drama different phases of the life of Lord Krishna. The performers of the *Ras* are called *Rasdharis*. One often comes across these troupes in villages. Besides musicians, the troupes include boys in their early teens. One of these boys with a handsome face is given the role of Krishna. His make-up is very scrupulously done. He holds a flute in his hand, wears a peacock crown on his head, and looks impressive. Another younger boy with feminine looks plays Radha. In make-up greater accent is always put on the appearance of Krishna than of Radha. Other boys play the roles of Gopis, and all perform through dance and drama various incidents from the life of Krishna. The incident most popularly performed is the milk-maids' love for Krishna. *Ras Lila* is an assortment of devotional songs, music, dance and acting. The rainy season during which the birthday of Lord Krishna is celebrated, is the most appropriate period for these performances.

RAM LILA

The practice of performing *Ram Lila* started during the Bhakti movement and gradually spread all over northern India. In the Punjab *Ram Lila* starts on the first *Naurata* and continues every evening for the next ten days. The epic is roughly divided into ten parts and every night one part is performed. There is zeal and devotion all along. All the participants are amateurs, and boys in their early teens perform the roles of girls. Great care is taken in the choice of proper costumes and make-up. Ram's army is equipped with bows and arrows, demons wear large masks, and Hanuman has a long tail appended.

The scenes change in quick succession and sometimes three or four of them are shown concurrently although often there is arrangement for curtains. On one side of the stage there is Sita sitting sad and dejected, and on the other war between Ram and

Ravan goes on. The main scenes shown in the *Ram Lila* are Sita's *swayambar*, Ram's exile, cutting of Saroopnakha's nose by Lakshman, abduction of Sita, Hanuman's meeting Sita in Ravan's Ashok Vatika, war between Ram and Ravan, resuscitation of the unconscious Lakshman, Hanuman's carrying a mountain on his palm, defeat of Ravan and victory to Ram. The dialogue between the actors is traditional and sometimes it is improvised on the spur of the moment. The greatest attraction of the *Ram Lila* is in the presentation of scenes and great effort is made to make them absorbing. The tenth day of the performance starts with the victory of Ram and the defeat of Ravan. Huge effigies of Ravan, his brother Kumbhakarna, and his son Meghnad are put up. The effigies are made of paper and bamboo and are nicely stuffed with crackers. A little before sunset they are set on fire and while the flames from the burning effigies leap towards the sky, the air is rent with the boom of crackers.

SWANG

Swang is a sort of semi-religious metrical play in which episodes from the lives of celebrated heroes are depicted. It is partly acted and partly recited and is performed by professional ballad singers at festivals like *Holi*, *Basant* and *Dussehra*. There is generally preference for a hero, whose virtuous life may help arouse religious feelings among the people. Some of the favourite swangs present incidents from the life of Puran Bhagat, Gopi Chand and Hakeekat Rai. Puran was the son of Raja Salwan (Salivahan) of Siolkot, who lived in the first century A.D. His story symbolises the triumph of virtue over vice. Puran's step-mother Loona fell in love with him, but when Puran refuted her, she trumped up charges against him alleging that he had tried to outrage her modesty. The old King was duped. In a fit of anger he ordered Puran's hands and feet to be amputated and had him thrown into a well. By chance Guru Gorakhnath with his disciples passed that way, and discovering Puran pulled him

out of the well, restored his limbs by a miracle, and then initiated him into his own fold. Many years later, Puran went to Sialkot as a jogi and put up his *dhooni*¹ in the garden of Salwan. Suddenly the garden, which had been dry for years, became green. Hearing this, Puran's mother Ichchran, who had gone blind weeping for her son, came to meet this jogi. As soon as she heard his voice, she recognised her son. Puran cured his mother's eyes through a miracle. Loona, who was barren, was brought by the King to the jogi to seek his blessings. Puran said to the King, "You were very unfair to the child you had earlier. However, if the Queen speaks the truth, which she has been hiding, I might be able to bless her." Loona, who was already repentant, apologized for her sins and came out with the truth. The King was furious. He pulled out his sword and was about to put an end to her life when Puran persuaded him to forgive her. He then disclosed his identity and blessed his step-mother that she would soon get a son. Loona, in due course, gave birth to a son who was named Rasalu, who became a famous legendary hero of the Punjab.

The *swang* of Gopi Chand is about the nephew (sister's son) of Bhartrihari, the noted king and poet, believed to be the brother of Vikramaditya. Gopi Chand's mother Menaka persuaded him to renounce the throne and to become a religious mendicant because of the transience of worldly happiness.

The third most favourite *swang* is about Hakeekat Rai, who was the son of Bagh Mal of Sialkot, and was martyred on *Basant Panchami* in 1742 A. D. when he was just twelve. His *samadhi* was constructed in Lahore and until Partition a very large fair used to be held there every year on the day of *Basant Panchami*.

The three legends are very popular with the Punjabis, for Puran remains firm in the face of temptation, Gopi Chand renounces the throne, and Hakeekat Rai prefers martyrdom to bending before bigotry and injustice. Next in popularity to these tales are

¹ A smouldering pile of chaff

those of *Nala Damayanti* and *Roop Basant*. On important fairs groups of entertainers enact these *swangs* in order to instil religious feelings into the people. The performances are mostly musical and the songs are set to popular folk tunes. They are among the finest assortments of folk-songs, music, metrical dialogues, acting and dancing, all very cleverly linked by an episodic commentary by the main speaker.

NAUTANKI

Nautanki is a form of *swang*. It takes its name from the legend of a beautiful princess of the Punjab, who fell in love with one Phool Singh. The drama of her life, when played and replayed before audiences, became so popular that in course of time all plays performed on its pattern came to be called *Nautanki*.

Nautanki was a princess of Multan, whose fame for beauty had spread far and wide. Phool Singh, who had begun to love her without meeting her yearned for one glimpse of her. He went to Multan and took up residence near the palace, in the hut of a woman who sold flowers. This woman used to make garlands for the princess. One day she was not well. Phool Singh very carefully prepared a garland for the princess and sent it in. The princess immediately discovered that the flower ornament had been made by a different hand. When she later made enquiries, the old woman told her that her sister who was staying with her had made it. The princess expressed a desire to see the sister. The poor woman was scared, but when she narrated the whole story to Phool Singh, he disguised himself as a maiden, went to Nautanki's room, and made a garland for her in her presence. Nautanki was so delighted that she rushed towards Phool Singh and kissed his hands. Phool Singh was handsome and looked ravishingly beautiful in the dress of a woman. The princess, not knowing the truth, made friends with him and wanted him to visit her every day. Friendship between the two became so intimate that one day she asked her dear friend to

stay with her for the night Phool Singh was only very glad. The whole day they talked and kept talking through the night also Nautanki told her friend that had she been a man she would have married him immediately Phool Singh jumped at her remark and said, "On a full-moon night like this, if you close your eyes and pray earnestly to goddess Bhavani to convert me into a man, I am sure your prayer will be answered" Nautanki closed her eyes and prayed Phool Singh in the meantime shed his feminine disguise and stood before her as he was. Nautanki opened her eyes and was stunned to see a handsome youth standing in front of her She jumped with delight and rushed into his arms One of the maids saw all this and reported the episode to the King The King had Phool Singh arrested and sentenced him to death Nautanki pleaded with her father and begged him to spare the life of Phool Singh, but in spite of her frantic protestations, the King was not prepared to listen to her Just when Phool Singh was executed, Nautanki took a dose of poison and ended her life

The accent in the *Nautanki* is understandably on amorous and heroic feats The main difference between *Nautanki* and *Swang* is that whereas the latter is intended to arouse religious sentiments and is didactic by nature, the former is in essence a presentation of episodes depicting love and valour *Swangs* are serious by nature, but not so the *Nautankis* There is always a jester in the *Nautanki* who occasionally comes to the stage and makes the audience laugh Sometimes he makes open digs at the unfair treatment which the rich mete out to the poor Most of the tunes are adapted from popular folk tunes *Heer Ranjha*, *Sassi Punnu*, *Nala Damayanti*, and *Sucha Singh Surma* are some of the most famous legends adapted for the *Nautanki*

NAQAL

This form of entertainment, low in taste according to the urbanites, is still very popular in the villages of the Punjab It is enjoyable inasmuch as it presents subtly and sarcastically the

seamy side of life. Those who specialised in this art were generally *mirasis*, *naqaals* and *bhands*. Being mainly Muslims, they migrated to Pakistan at the time of Partition. Consequently, there are very few troupes of *naqaals* left in the Punjab. Jullundur alone can now claim to have a really popular troupe of mimics.

A *naqaal* troupe comprises, besides dancers and singers, clowns and musicians. The leader of the troupe is generally called *Ustad*. Legends and semi-historical tales, e.g., *Dulla Bhatti*, *Sohni Mahiwal*, *Kima Malki*, *Hodi* and *Koklan* form the popular repertoire of the *naqaals*.

Bhands generally present themselves in farcical roles. They are quick-witted and it is well known that their mind is like a razor's edge. Their profession is passed on from generation to generation. They are experts at improvising jokes suited to an occasion. The best part of their performance is not so much in the narrative as in gesticulations. Though their apparent function is entertainment, they seldom fail to have a dig indirectly at social evils too. Sometimes they mimic landlords who live in luxury but deprive their employees of the barest amenities of life. A very popular yarn of this type is about a rich person who employed a servant on the only condition that he would not converse except through singing and that for every slip that he made he would be fined. Once when the master's house was on fire the servant came and danced and sang to his master as he gave him the information. In the meantime the house was completely gutted. The master reprimanded the servant for being frivolous on such a serious occasion. The servant rightly reminded him of his service contract and said that he did not want to risk his job. The master hit his own head in sheer desperation. *Bhands* and mimics entertain people on weddings, births and other festive occasions. Sometimes there is a streak of obscenity and vulgarity too in their presentation.

KHEORA

Another form of folk entertainment is a high-pitch singing

usually performed at weddings and festivals. Two groups sit on the terraces of two different houses and, in the solitude of the night, converse with each other through metrical compositions—a unique setting, so different from a regular stage. Most of the compositions are sung in popular tunes. The most appropriate time for such performances is the earlier part of moonlit nights. Sometimes *Kheora* singing lasts through the whole night. It was once a very popular form of entertainment in Lahore and Amritsar, but is now dying out.

MADARIS, BAZIGARS AND SAPERAS

Other entertainers who keep moving through the towns, villages and streets of the Punjab are jugglers (*madaris*), acrobats (*bazigars*) and snake-charmers (*saperas*). A juggler often trains a bear or a monkey and takes it along with him. He sounds his *damroo* (tiny drum), thus inviting his audience. The animals are well trained to perform interesting feats, e.g., a wedding of the monkeys, or a bear dance, or a bear hug.

Bazigars carry long poles and ropes. Where a performance has to be given, they dig up ground stick two poles horizontally, tie a tight rope on them and then make a young boy or a girl perform a tight-rope dance. The nomadic *bazigars* wander about with their families, settling for a few days or weeks at a time in the vicinity of large villages or towns. *Saperas* keep snakes in their baskets, play catchy tunes on specially made pipes called *beens*, and make the snakes dance to their tunes.

GAMES AND AMUSEMENTS

Being sports-loving by nature, the Punjabis have produced some world-famous sportsmen like Dara Singh, Milkha Singh and Balbir Singh, who have made a name for themselves and the country in wrestling, athletics and hockey, respectively. There are all types of games suiting the age and stamina of all persons. While the young persons are engaged in *kabaddi* and wrestling the smaller ones play *gullī danda*, *kokla chhapakī*, *khuddoo*, etc.

Older persons have *tahna* and *chopar* to keep them occupied

Sports are a common phenomenon at fairs. The participants jump into the fields to play *kabaddi*, wrestling, gripping the wrist, etc. Sometimes inter-village championships are held.

Kabaddi is by far the most popular game of the Punjab, and is played by people of different age-groups. This is one game in which the participant has to give a proper exhibition of his physical powers, agility, craft, and practice to hold breath.

The players are divided into two groups. Both the teams stand facing each other and a line is drawn in the centre. One member of the team on one side of the line runs across to the other side, all the time shouting in one breath '*kabaddi, kabaddi*'. His effort is to touch a member of the opposite team and run safely back to his side. If he succeeds, the player of the opposite team thus touched is eliminated from the play. The team on the other side endeavours to ensure that the person touched should hold the attacker and keep him on their side of the line till his breath breaks. If the attacker crosses the line back without losing his breath, he is victorious, otherwise he is eliminated. This is how players are made to go out one by one till one of the teams is entirely eliminated and thus defeated.

Saunchi is a game very popular in Malwa, Ferozepur and Bhatinda. This is a kind of tag played by two men, the object being to strike the other person on the chest with the open hand, without being caught.

Wrestling is another highly popular sport in the Punjab. Almost in every fair wrestling is a must. Wherever there is a wrestling match, the Punjabis flock even if it means leaving a job half done. Wrestling is a severe test for the stamina as also trick and ability. Out of the two competitors, he who succeeds in pinning the other flat, the shoulders touching the ground, is declared the winner.

APPENDIX
FOLK SONGS

Bolian

- 1 Travellers in a ferry boat, girls in a spinning-bee,
It is chance that brings them together
*(Berhi da pur, trinjan dian kurhian
Sabab nal hon kathian)*
- 2 My love is (tall and stately like) a cypress tree,
I'd grow him in my courtyard
*(Mera yar ni saru da boota
Vehrhe vichch lai rakhna)*
- 3 She asked for a single flower with a smile,
I made over to her the whole garden
(Hasdi ne phul mangia, assan bagh havale kita)
- 4 (Girls whose) fickle friends desert them
Get on to the ferry and cry
*(Kachchi tut gai jinahan di yari
Pattanan te ron kharhian)*
- 5 Her teeth are so many pearls,
They'll scatter if she laughs
(Dand motian de dane, hasdi de kir pain ge)
- 6 With a whiff of her veil she blew out my flame,
And O, it could not be lit again
*(Palla mar ke buja gai diwa
Murh meri jot na joggi)*
- 7 When I fell in love, none knew,
When the friendship broke, the world got to know of it
(Saddi lagdi kise na vekhi, tutdi nun jag janda)
- 8 The moon rises daily,
But it remains dark if my love is not there
(Chann bhaven nit charhda, par sajan bajh hanerah)
- 9 I pick up the sands of your fresh footprints
And put them to my eyes
(Teri sajri pairh da reta, chuk chuk iqwan akhian)

- 10 Your life and mine are one,
When you get fever, I groan
(Teri meri ik jindrhi, tenu tap charhe main hungan)
- 11 Your smiles give me pleasure,
I adore your every word,
Come let us talk of love on the river bank,
Our secret is now exposed
As though with the beat of the drum,
Come my darling,
Trust everything to God
*(Tun hasdi dil razi mera, lagde ne bol piare,
Chal kidre do gallan kariye, beh ke nadi kinare,
Luk luk laian pargat hoian, vaj gae dhol nigare,
Sohniyen, a ja ni, dubdian nu rab tare)*
- 12 Love is a sharp-edged saw,
Under the shade of a *barota*¹,
Here the maiden shines her teeth with a twig
And why does she shine her teeth ?
To make her smile sparkle the more
And why does she make her teeth sparkle ?
To enhance her beauty
And why does she want to look pretty ?
For the game of love, of course
O listen, my dear Heer,
Here I am your humble bumble-bee
*(Aari, aari, aari,
Heth barote de dattan kare kanwari
Dattan kuyon kardi ? Dand chitte rakhan di mari
Dand chitte kiyon rakhti ? Sohni banan di mari
Sohni kiyon bandi ? Preet karan di mari
Sun le Heere ni, main tera bhour sarkari)*
- 13 In this oven of love,
My bones are the fuel,
I burn my heart and youth

¹ A young banyan tree

In the fire of Hell
 O, come back, my dear soldier,
 I pine for you every day
*(Ishak tandur, haddan da balan
 Dozakh nal tapowan,
 Kadh ke kleja kar lan perhe,
 Husan plethan lawan
 Sipahiya murh po we,
 Main roz aunsian pawan)*

Mahiya

- 14 Two pieces of cloth are stitched into one,
 Though we sulk and fume without,
 Within we two are one
*(Do kaprhe sile hoe ne,
 Bahron bhaven rusdhe an, vichchon dil tan mile hoe ne)*
- 15 Flowers in gardens bloom,
 But hard are those to find
 Who honour till the end the ties of love
*(Phul baghun khilde ne,
 La ke nibhan jehre, barhe okhey milde ne)*
- 16 Roll on the road, O stone,
 They lived for naught in the world
 Who tasted not of love
*(Sarhkan te rirh vatia,
 Jinhan yari la na dithi, unan dunuyan chon ki khatya)*
- 17 Two leaves of the pomegranate,
 Come to my street, O dear,
 And rid me of my ailment
*(Do pattar anaran de,
 Sadi gali a chann ve, tap tutan bimaran de)*
- 18 My eyes are fixed on you,
 But streams do flow on ahead
 And never retreat
*(Akkhan tere nal jurhian ne,
 Nadian vahan paian, kaddi pichhan na murhian ne)*

Dhola

- 19 *Hing*¹ sells in the bazar,
My life revolves round you alone,
Stay before my eyes, and live long,
O my love, my light,
What need of a lamp when you are here
(*Bazar vikendi hing ve*
Meri tussan de butt vichch jind ve,
Butt rakh sahmne, jiven dhola,
Dhol chananna,
Sadi gali aven diva kahnu balnan)

- 20 There is a spindle for sale,
My love is handsome and slender,
He has drunken eyes, long live, my love,
O, my love, you're like butter,
Hurt not a stranger's heart
(*Bazar vikenda takla,*
Nale sohna te nale patla,
Akh mastani, jiven dhola,
Dhol makhna
Dil pardesian da razi rakhna)

Songs of the Spinning-wheel and the Phulkari

- 21 My spinning-wheel is multi-coloured
Inlaid with nails of gold,
O mother, I think of you
Whenever I see my spinning-wheel
(*Charkha mera rangla, vichch sone dian mekhan,*
Ni man tenu yaad karan jad charkhe wal wekhan)
- 22 *Burfi*² sells in the bazar
Oh, bring me a small spinning-wheel
That I may spin my cotton rolls of sorrow

¹ Asafoetida

² A₂sweet-meat

- (*Bazar vikendi burfi,
Mannu lai de nikki jehi charkhi,
Dukhan dian poonian katan*)
- 23 Carry my spinning-wheel
Where your ploughs are plying
(*Mera charkha utthe hi lai chal
Jithe tere hal wagde*)
- 24 Hearing the sound of the spinning-wheel
The ascetics came running down from the mountain-tops
(*Charkhe di gunj sun ke
Jogi uttar paharhon aye*)
- 25 Peacocks shine on my silken phulkari,
Your talk sounds so sweet, but you are false within
(*Phulkari saddi reshmi, utte chamkan mor
Gallan tusadian mitthian andron dil ne hor*)
- 26 After embroidering the lotus, I say this prayer
"Come soon and meet me dear, forgive me my errors"
(*Kaul phul main kadh ke, kardi han ardas,
"Chheti a mil sajjanan bhull-chukk kar de maaf"*)

Marriage Songs

- 27 O my daughter,
Why do you stand beside the sandal tree ?
I stand beseeching you, my father
To seek a match for me
What kind of match, my daughter ?
A match who shines like the moon among the stars,
Nay, who is a Kahan¹ among the moons,
Let Kanhaya be my match
(*Beti chanan de ohle ohle kiyon khari ?
Main tan kharih san babal ji de bar,
Babal war lorhiye
Ni jaiye keho jiya var lorhiye ?*)

¹ Lord Krishna

Babal jiyon tariyan vichch chann

Channan vich Kahan

Kanhariya var lorhiye)

28 Ours is a flock of sparrows, dear father,

We'll fly away

On a long, long flight,

We know not to which land we shall go

Through your mansion's door, dear father,

The *doli* won't pass

I'll have a brick dislodged, O daughter,

Go, for that is your home, my dear

Through your orchards, dear father

The *doli* won't pass

I'll have a *tali* tree uprooted,

Go, for that is your home, O daughter

In your mansion, dear father,

Who will do the spinning ?

My grand-daughters will spin

You go to your home, O daughter

There is my left-over embroidery,

Who will finish it, father ?

My grand-daughters will do that, O daughter,

You must depart, for that is your home

(Sada churhian da chamba ve, babal assan ud jana

Sadi lammi udari ve, babal kehrhe des jana

Tere mehlan de vich vich ve, babal dola nahin langda

Ik it puta devan, dhuye ghar ja apne

Tere baghan de vich vich ve, babal dola nahin langda,

Ik tali puta devan, dhuye ghar ja apne

Tere mehlan de vich vich ve, babal charkha kaun katte ?

Merian kattan potrian, dhuye ghar ja apne

Mera chhuta kasida ve, babal das kuun kade ?

Merian kadhan potrian, dhuye ghar ja apne)

- 29 O Father, what a match have you found for me ?
 He is not to my liking
 Whether I bake one or four loaves,
 Not a bit he leaves for me
 Father, what a match have you found for me ?
 He is tall as tall can be
 He puts his head on one bedstead
 And his legs have to rest on another
 Father, what a match have you found for me ?
 He is a dwarf, and not to my liking
 Up the roof I climbed to see him,
 He looked like a pebble rolling homeward
*(Babla var ki detoi, main na mere jiha,
 Ik pakavan char pakavan, chappa na rehnda bia
 Babla var ki detoi, lamman lam sulamman,
 Ik manji te sir dhrenda, duji manji te tangan
 Babla var ki detoi, madhra main na bhawe,
 Kothe te charh takan lagi, gita rirhda ave)*

Miscellaneous

Sohni

- 30 Whoever could love like Sohni ?
 Even the goddess of love pays homage to her
 Herself though she was drowned,
 Her spirit still swam (for the fulfilment)
*(Sohni jahi kise preet na karni
 Uhdı preet vi pani bhardı
 Vichch daryavan de
 Sohni ap dubı rooh tardı)*

Sassi

- 31 Your garden in Bhambor has been plundered,
 O ignorant Sassi,
 You fell in love in innocence,
 When you came back to your senses, he had already left you,

Now who can bring him back, O ignorant Sassi ?

I passed my youth in ignorance,

Mahi left me without a word,

Others took him away from me

I will go after my *Mahi*,

And lay my life for him,

And rest only in my grave

(Tera lutia gia Bhambor, Sassie bekhadre

Bekhabri vich preet lagai,

Hosh ai te vichcharhia Mahi,

Kaun liave morh, Sassie bekhadre,

Besamji vich umar guzari

Mahi na milya jandi vari

Le gae hot vichchorh

Main mahi de maghre jasan,

Us de piche jan gavan,

Pat jasan vich gor)

32 Fly, fly, O starling,

Go on a long, long flight,

Go and ask my love

Why have you forgotten your fair love ?

I cut my heart and make it a parchment,

Of my finger, I make a pen,

From the collyrium in my eyes I gather ink,

I wet it with my tears

(Uddin uddin ve tilyer kaga

Lammi te lain ve udari

Ja akhin mere mahi nun

Gori kyon manon visari

Dil da tukrha main kagaz banawan,

Ungli kat ke kani

Akhan da kajla main shahi banawan,

Hanjuan da pandi an pani)

33 O you dry pipal leaf !

Why are you rustling ?

It's time for the old leaves to fall,
 The season of new leaves has come
(Pipal diya pateva ve
Kyon kharh kharh lai a ?
Patjharhe purane ve
Rut navian di ai a)

FOLK-TALES

THE WAYS OF GOD

Once Haria kept a fast. He said to his wife, "This time I am not going to break my fast so long as God Himself does not offer me *parathas* to eat." His wife said, "No one ever heard of God offering food to anyone, though people have heard that God fulfils the prayers of his devotees. Strange are His ways."

Haria went into a forest, climbed a tree, and sat there. In the afternoon a traveller passed that way and came and lay down under that tree. He had a small packet in which some *parathas* were rolled up. He hung it on the tree. As he was very tired he soon dozed off. When he awoke he realised that he had slept too long, and he departed in a hurry, forgetting his packet behind.

Haria saw that the man had forgotten to pick up the food packet. Although he was very hungry, he said to himself, "I have vowed not to break my fast unless God forces me and coaxes me into eating *parathas*." So he kept sitting where he was.

Soon afterwards a gang of robbers happened to pass that way. They also sat down to rest under the same tree. One of them accidentally saw the packet hanging there and took it off the branch. He was delighted to see *parathas* in it. The robbers

were all very hungry, but just when they were about to eat, their leader said, "Beware, there may be foul play in this. Someone may have mixed poison in them. We may all die after eating them and our enemy may walk off with all the booty." As an afterthought he asked them to look round for there was a possibility that that man might be hiding nearby. If they caught him they should make him eat those poisoned *parathas*. The robbers looked around and one of them noticed Haria hiding behind the leaves, perched on a branch. The robbers ordered him to come down. Apprehensively Haria came down. They asked him to eat that food but Haria refused. Now they were convinced that he had poisoned those *parathas*, and they began to beat him. They went on beating him till he had eaten all the *parathas*, and then they ran away.

COUGH

Once two friends had an argument. One said, "God gives one's due to everyone, but to deserve even that every individual has to put in an effort. Even your food you cannot carry to your mouth, unless you move your hands."

The other said, "I don't agree with you at all. When God is out to give, He gives even if you make no effort." For some time they kept arguing like this. Ultimately the second one said, "I can prove it to you." He then went to a nearby inn and sat down in an isolated corner and said to his friend, "Now see, I shall remain sitting here and will get my food without any effort." Thus he sat there all day till it was evening, but no one cast even a glance at him. Travellers came and rested there for some time, had their food, and went away. Two days passed like this. No one bothered about him and he felt as if he was going to die of hunger.

On the third day a group of travellers came. They all washed themselves first and then sat down to eat, but no one as much as looked at him. He had not eaten anything for three days now and was completely famished. He coughed lightly and attracted

their attention. When they saw this lean and hungry-looking man, they took pity on him and said, "Do you want something to eat?" and threw two loaves of bread at him.

When he met his friend again, he said, "You were right, my friend. God does give to everyone but to earn even that one has to make an effort, even if it be a light cough."

CHHAJJU THE VIRTUOUS

Once a certain merchant went abroad in connection with his trade, leaving his wife behind to look after their children. In his absence his wife fell ill and was in sore need of money. She went to the village money-lender, Chhajju Bhagat, the virtuous, borrowed two *mohurs* and promised to return them as soon as her husband came back from abroad.

After some months, her husband came back. In the darkness of the night he put down his baggage just as it was, all fastened up, and went off to sleep. Early next morning, before he awoke, his wife opened the bag containing *mohurs*, took two pieces out, and fastened it again as it was. She wanted to repay them to Chhajju to fulfil her promise to him.

But when she reached Chhajju's shop, she found no one there. She put the two *mohurs* under the mat spread on the floor where Chhajju usually sat, and then returned home. Thereafter she got so engrossed in her household work that she forgot to tell her husband what she had done. Shortly afterwards her husband awoke and took his bag of *mohurs* to the market to sell them. He first went to the shop of Chhajju because he was known and admired in the village for his honesty in dealings.

The merchant showed his *mohurs* to him, but they could not strike a bargain. So he picked up the *mohurs* and while counting them as he put them back into his bag he found two *mohurs* missing. He accused Chhajju of concealing them. Chhajju denied it and a quarrel ensued. All unexpectedly a corner of the mat got upturned and the two *mohurs* under it were revealed. By now a number of people standing about in the

market gathered there and the merchant cried out, "Look at this hypocrite. He pretends to be an honest man, but in reality he is an absolute crook."

People were shocked when they heard this. They all joined the merchant and reprimanded Chhajju. The news spread like wild fire and Chhajju's reputation was reduced to mud.

When the merchant's wife came to know of it, she went running to the market and admitted that it was she who had taken the two *mohurs* out of her husband's bag, and then repeated the whole story. She apologised to Chhajju and so did her husband, who was also ashamed of his behaviour.

When the people learnt of it, they again began to praise Chhajju and rebuked the merchant.

When the merchant was about to leave the shop, Chhajju took one handful of ashes and threw it to his right and another handful to his left. The merchant's wife who was still standing there, asked him why he had done that. Chhajju said, "One handful of dust I have thrown at them who praise others, and the other at them who find fault with others. Both are thoroughly undependable."

DEAR AS SALT

A certain king had seven daughters. One day he called them all and said, "Who provides you with food?"

Six of them said simultaneously, "O King, you very kindly provide everything for us." But the seventh and youngest one said, "Father, my benign provider is God."

Once again he called all the seven girls and said, "How dear am I to you?" Once again six of them said simultaneously, "O King, you are as dear to us as sugar." But the seventh and youngest one said, "O King, you are as dear to me as salt."

The answer of the seventh and youngest girl so infuriated the King that he decided to marry her off to a leper. "Then," he said, "I'll see how God comes to your rescue to give you food and other things." He married her off to a poor leper who lived in a jungle on the outskirts of the town.

The Princess would put her leper husband in a basket and place it on her head and then go from place to place begging for food. One day she put the basket near a pond and went to beg.

The leper noticed a very strange phenomenon. Black crows went flying to the pond, dipped in it and came out white and pure. The leper decided to try his luck also. He crawled out of the basket and dragged himself into the pond. He had a good bath and when he came out the disease was completely gone.

When his wife returned after her begging round, she was absolutely stunned to see an absolutely healthy and clean man standing where her husband was. At first she would not believe it, but when the leper showed her a finger which he had not dipped into the water she was convinced. She was overjoyed at this great mercy of God.

This leper was in reality a prince, but he had left his kingdom to roam about in jungles because of his incurable disease. Now that he was cured, he went back to his father and took charge of the kingdom.

Strange being the ways of God, the king who had dumped his daughter on a leper lost his entire kingdom and went from door to door in a state of poverty. It so happened that he came to the door of his daughter who was now a queen. She recognised her father but without divulging her identity took him inside, and offered him lots of sweet things to eat, but nothing which had salt in it. The old man ate some of these delicacies and asked her if he could have something saltish just to change the taste in his mouth. The girl laughed and said "For this salt I have undergone immense suffering, O father." And then she narrated her entire story to him. The old father was ashamed of his vanity and was penitent for all that he had done.

THE SAME TASTE

Once a merchant set out to far-off lands in connection with his trade and left his beautiful wife Roopmati alone at home. One day the king happened to see her and was so captivated by

her beauty that he decided on the spot to marry her

One day he sent for her and addressed her thus "You are wasting your youth and beauty for the worthless merchant. You are not sure when he will return, or whether he will return at all. Even if he does, he will bring nothing outstanding for you. Why don't you marry me and live in comfort?"

Roopmati was a virtuous and sensible woman. She did not like what the king said but she could not dare to offend him. So very evasively she said, "My husband promised to return within a year. A lot of time has since passed. If he does not return by the end of the promised year, I shall marry you." Her assurance and her manner won her the day. Pinning his hopes on the future, the king sent her back home respectfully and properly escorted.

Time passed and soon the stipulated one year ended, but the merchant did not return. Roopmati despaired. The king was very happy when he learnt that the merchant had not come back. He reminded Roopmati of her word. She was now in a real fix. It was not easy to dodge the king. She racked her head in order to think out a scheme that could get her an extension of time.

As, however, she stepped out of the house, she saw her husband returning home with donkey-loads of things. She hurried back and apprised her husband of the whole situation. The merchant was greatly upset. If he stopped his wife from going, he was afraid of the displeasure of the king, and if he allowed her to go, he ran the risk of losing her. He was in a dilemma from which there seemed no escape.

Roopmati was as wise as she was beautiful. With great presence of mind, she thought out a plan. She assured her husband that she could take care of the situation and that he should not worry. Thereafter she got some eggs from the market, painted them in different colours, and set out towards the king's palace.

As she reached the palace, she piled the eggs in front of the king and in a very pleasant manner asked him to pick out the egg that appealed to him as also the one which did not appeal to

him at all. The king pointed towards a golden egg saying that that was the best. Then he looked at a mud-coloured egg which he said he did not like. She picked up both the eggs, then handed them to the king and requested him to break them and put them in two separate vessels. The king was so fascinated by her looks and manner of speaking that he did exactly as she asked.

When he had put the egg content in two separate vessels, Roopmati said, "See Your Majesty, though these two eggs look absolutely different from the outside—one is beautiful, the other is not—in reality they are exactly alike, and they taste the same too." She stopped for a moment and then continued very calmly, "Please pardon me, Your Majesty, if I point out that in the same way the difference in the looks of women is a matter of outer appearance alone. Every woman is a woman, and nothing but a woman. Therefore, if you marry any other woman you will draw as much pleasure out of your companionship with her as you hope to do with me. But whereas in the former case you will harm none, in the latter your pleasure will ruin my husband's home." And then she told him that her husband, who was very dear to her, had returned from abroad.

Roopmati's arguments impressed and convinced the king. He rewarded her for her wisdom and sent her home under proper escort.

RIDDLES

1. A handful of rice tied in a piece of blue cloth,
Lost in the day, found again at night (Stars)
(*Nili taki chawal baddhe, dine gwache ratin labhe*)

- 2 The mother is not yet born,
And the son goes up the roof (Smoke)
(*Man jamen na jamen, puttār chhate nāl plumēn*)
- 3 Rosy came and she went away, no one ever noticed her,
She is thinner than water and sweeter than sugar (Sleep)
(*Al Gulabō, gai Gulabō, jandī kīse nā dītthī,*
Panī nalon patlī te patase nalon mītthī)
- 4 A parrot dancing in a shelf full of cowries
(Tongue and teeth)
(*Kaudīan bharia āla vich totak nache*)
- 5 There is a bramble on the roadside
That catches every comer and goer (Hooka)
(*Rah utte dhingari, aunde jande chambari*)
- 6 Happy-go-luckies came from outside,
Wearing green caps and with purple faces (Brinjal)
(*Bahron ae malang, hariān topian udde rang*)
- 7 Two maidens come from outside,
Raising dust in turn (Shoes)
(*Bahron aian do mutīaran, ghatta udawan waro warī*)
- 8 One tree with two types of leaves—
Half black, half white (Day and night)
(*Ik darkhat do patte, adhe kale adhe chitte*)
- 9 Sister distributed pearls at night,
Joti (light) ate them up in the morning (Dew drops)
(*Raat bhen ne wande motī, tarhke uth ke kha giā Jotī*)
- 10 A dry bramble lays eggs (Spinning-wheel)
(*Sukka dhingar ande dewe*)
- 11 A chit of a girl with a line on her belly (Grain of wheat)
(*Nikkī jahī kurhī, uhde dhiddh te lakeer*)
- 12 On a high hillock dwells my mother's sister
Whenever I go there, she laughs (Cotton plant)
(*Uchche tibbe masī vasse, jad janwan oh khīrh khīrh hasse*)
- 13 A blue sheet without a corner,
For the vast universe, just two traders (Sun and moon)
(*Nilī chadar binan kīnare, itnī duniya do vanjare*)

- 14 A golden girl with a white face (Maize)
(*Kurhi sunehri te munh chitta*)
- 15 Four pitchers full of ambrosia
And not overflowing though turned upside down
(Udders of a cow or buffalo)
(*Char gharhe amrit bhare,
Dullan nahin bhawen muddhe dhare*)
- 16 A pond of glasses and a hedge of thorns
If you can't answer the riddle, you get out of the group
(Eyes)
(*Sheeshian da toba, kandian di var,
Bujh nahin tan pirhon ho ja bahar*)
- 17 You get along, I follow (Door)
(*Tun chal main aiya*)

PROVERBS AND SAYINGS

Punjab and its Soil

- 1 Those who are born in the Punjab
Are constantly on an expedition
(*Punjab de jamean nu nit mohuman*)
- 2 A Punjabi neither flees from the arena,
Nor stretches out his palm
(*Punjabi na pirh chhaddai na hath taddai*)
- 3 Ploughing land in the Punjab is like
The cream of milk—there is always profit in it
(*Punjab di wahi te dudh di malahi sada lahewandi*)
- 4 Riverine land is a basket of gold
(*Kachchhu sone di pachahhi*)

- 5 A half at home is better
Than the whole elsewhere
(*Ghar di adhi bahar di sari*)

Historical Sayings

- 6 Mannu is our sickle
And we are a crop unto him,
The more he cuts us, the more we grow ¹
(*Mannu sadi datri, asi Mannu de soe*
Jyon jyon Mannu wadhda dune chune hoe)
- 7 Whatever you eat and drink is yours
The rest goes to Ahmed Shah ²
(*Jo khada so lahe da rehnda Ahmed Shahe da*)

Farming and Weather

- 8 There are clouds that look like the feathers of a partridge
And a widow who puts antimony in her eyes
One brings rain, the other longs for a husband
(*Tittar khambi badli, randi surma pa,*
Eh vasave meghla, os da khasam te cha)
- 9 If it thunders much, it does not rain
(*Jo gajje so vasda nahin*)
- 10 Sparrows have spread out their feathers,
It will rain copiously
(*Chirhian khamb khalere, vasan minh bathere*)
- 11 Clouds that thunder in the early morning
Like the words of a respected man
Never go in vain
(*Sawer da garjia te purush da bolya birtha nahin janda*)

¹ Mir Mannu was Governor of the Punjab in 1748. In order to annihilate the Sikhs, he sent many expeditions against them but he failed to extirpate them. On the other hand, their number swelled. This saying refers to the ruthless persecution of Mir Mannu.

² Ahmed Shah Abdali who invaded the Punjab eight times between 1747 and 1767 plundered and disrupted the peaceful life of its people. His exactions are referred to in this saying.

- 12 She who asks for rain in Assu is mistaken
(*Bhullī phire ganwar, je Assu mange meghla*)
- 13 If it rains in Chetar,
Neither home nor field will hold the grain
(*Vasse Chetar, na ghar mewe na khetar*)
- 14 Where Jeth¹ is hot and Har² rainy,
Why should famine go near that land ?
(*Jeth tae, te Harh vasae*
Os mulkh de kaal kyon nerhe jae?)
- 15 Clouds by day and stars by night
Tell my husband, it is no use striking the bullocks
(*Dinne badli ratin tare*
Akhin mere khasam nun baldan nun na mare)
- 16 Farming is as good as royalty
(*Vahi badshahi*)
- 17 Farming depends on the owner (who trusts personal supervision)
(*Kheti khasam seti*)
- 18 If the owner does not go to look after his farm,
It will eat him up
(*Jis kheti vich khasam na jae, O kheti khasam nun khae*)
- 19 He who works like a slave, eats like a king
(*Golla hoke kamae, raja hoke khae*)
- 20 Plough the field deep and you will have plenty to eat
(*Dab ke vah, raj ke khah*)
- 21 Sesame should be sown widely, rice thickly,
Cotton at the distance a frog can jump,
Maize so widely that one can pass through the plants
With a quilt on
(*Til chhidde, dhan sanghne, dadd tapp kapah*
Jhum mar razai di vichch makei de jah)
- 22 The more you hoe, the richer the fruit you get
(*Jitni godi utni dodi*)

¹ May-June

² June-July

- 23 As the sun shines, the wheat crops ripen
(*Dhupan lagan kankan pakan*)
- 24 Farming is best if the owner himself looks after it,
It is middling, if his brother looks after it,
It is the worst if a servant looks after it,
If it is damaged, who cares ?
(*Uttam kheti ap seti, madam kheti bhai seti,
Nikhid kheti nokar seti, vigarh gai tan bala seti*)
- 25 Cut the crop at the roots, thresh it fine,
If you then suffer a loss, recover it from me
(*Muddhon wadh, nike gah, ghata pawe tan methon pa*)
- 26 Plough the land after manuring it,
If God pleases, the profit will be double
(*Pah pa ke pichhon wah, Sain chahe te dohra laha*)

Family Life

- 27 The more clothes you wear, the more you feel the cold,
The larger the family, the greater the chance of disgrace
(*Jitne kaprhe, utna pala, jitna tabbar utna mukala*)
- 28 A benefactor is tested in time of famine,
A milch cow in Phaggan,¹
And a wife when there is nothing left in the pocket
(*Data kal parakhie, dhain Phaggan mah,
Nar tan parakhie je dhan palle nah*)
- 29 I am saying it to you, my daughter, but I want you
To understand it, my daughter-in-law.
(*Dhie ni tun gal sun, nuhen ni tun kan dhar*)
- 30 The flesh cannot be torn away from the nails
(*Nahuan nalon mas vakkh nahin honda*)
- 31 A woman's brain is buried under her foot
(*Zanani di mat khuri vich*)
- 32 A woman wears away as wears away
Her husband's pair of shoes
(*Zanani mard di jutni nal hand jandi hai*)

¹ February-March

- 33 When betrothed a man is hung up,
Married, he is ruined,
He spends the money and gets caught
*(Mangia te tangia, parnia te galia
Takke vi lagge te jawan we arhua)*
- 34 What a nice couple God has made
One is blind, the other is a leper
(Rab milai jorhi, ik anna te ik kohrhi)
- 35 When barley is green no one comes,
When barley is ripe, everyone joins in as a close relative
*(Jon save, tan koi na ave
Jon pakke, tan milan sakke)*
- 36 As the cotton pod bloomed the birds pecked them
(Jeha doda pia tiya ghogha chug ghia)

Castes

- 37 The Jat like a wound is better when bound
(Jat te phat, badhey bina na awan ras)
- 38 When the Jat is irritated God alone can help
(Jat bhooteria Allah nigheban)
- 39 Jat for real farming, Nat for acrobatics
(Wahi Jat di bazi nat di)
- 40 If a Khatri does nothing except smear his head with dust,
Even then he makes some profit out of it
(Je Khatri sir kkeh udawe, tan wi khatri khat liave)
- 41 Vex not the Jat on his farm,
The grocer in his shop, and
The boatman at his ferry—
For if you do, they will break your head
*(Kheti Jat na chherhiye, hatti vich Kirarh,
Beru Malah na chherhiye, maten bhan sute butharh)*
- 42 The Dum does not make a good servant,
Nor a fiddle a good weapon
(Dum na belu, king na hathiar)
- 43 The cobbler's tomorrow never comes
(Mochu di kal kade nahin aundi)

- 44 As an alligator in a well,
So Sud in a village
(*Khuh vich machh, pind vich Sud*)

Character

- 45 He has an empty stomach, but goes about
With grains of rice sticking to his moustaches
(*Andran bhukhhyan te muchh te chawal*)
- 46 A blind man distributes sweets and gives them
Over and over again to his own relatives
(*Annha wande shurni mur mur apnean*)
- 47 An empty vessel makes much noise
(*Sakhna bhanda bahun kharhke*)
- 48 Wearing bracelets on the forearms
When the stomach is burning with hunger
(*Hathan vichch karhe, dhidh bhukhan nal sarhe*)
- 49 The fish is still in the river,
And the woman is pounding chillies
(*Machhi rehi darya ran mirchan kute*)
- 50 A hut of straw with an ivory gutter
(*Kakhan di juggi, dandkhand da parnala*)
- 51 Not a grain in the house, but Mama gone for grinding
(*Ghar dane nahin amman peehan gai*)
- 52 A bald woman keeping a pair of combs
(*Siron ganji te kanghuan da jorha*)
- 53 She knows not how to dance and blames the courtyard
(*Nachch na jane vehrha dinga*)
- 54 She came to get a spark of fire and became
The mistress of the house
(*Agg lain ai, te ghar di malik ban bauthi*)
- 55 A lizard by birth coming to grips with rafters
(*Zat di korkirli, shehtiran nal japphe*)
- 56 Since he cannot get up he blames his knees
(*Utth na sakan te lahnat godian nu*)
- 57 Mother and father are weeds, but the son is saffron
(*Man akrurhi, peo tandla, puttari kesar di jarh*)

- 58 A potter's wife always praises her own pots
(*Ghumari sada apne bhande salahndi hai*)
- 59 How can a sieve reproach a winnowing basket,
When it has nine hundred holes in itself?
(*Chhanani ki akhsi chhaje nu jis de no so ved?*)
- 60 The grain is still in the farm, the daughter in the womb
(and she says) come my son-in-law, take the sweet cakes.
(*Kanak khet, kurhu pet, ah jawahiya mann dek*)
- 61 Blind in the eyes, and her name is 'custodian of light'
(*Akhon anni, nan 'Nurbhari'*)

Worldly Wisdom

- 62 Weeping before a blind man, talking to a deaf man,
And sending a message through a dumb man—
All are in the category of futility.
(*Anne agge rona, dorey agge gall,
Gunge hatth saneha, ghall bhawen na ghall*)
- 63 In this world there are three ways of addressing a man
(the poor) Parsu, (the respectable) Parsa, (and the
honoured) Paras Ram.
(*Is duniya vichch tin nam, Parsu, Parsa, Paras Ram*)
- 64 The best occupation is farming, trade is middling,
Service is no good, but the worst of all is begging
(*Uttam kheti, madham vapar, nakhuddh chakari,
bhikh nidar*)
- 65 One who expects any yield from an unripe harvest
Or a cow in calf is a fool
(*Kheti kachhi, gan gabbhani, murakh as kare*)
- 66 Old grain, fresh ghee,
A prudent wife in the house,
And the back of a horse—
These are the four marks of heavenly living
(*Ann purana gheo nawan, ghar kulwanti nar
Chothu pith turang di, surg nishanian char*)
- 67 A one-eyed daughter, a quarrelsome daughter-in-law,
A crooked axle of the well and a field close to a village—

Are four curses

*(Dhī kanī te nuh haddnī, dīngī khuhē dī latth,
Muddh pavahe de khetrī, eh chare chorh chapatt)*

68 Stretch your feet according to your coverlet

(Jitnī chadar vekhīe utne pair pasar)

69 When all that you possess is likely to be lost,

It is wisdom to give away a half

(Sara janda vekhīe tan addha dāīye wand)

70 There is no wisdom in sinking a well

When the house is on fire

(Agg lagīan khuh nahīn khutīda)

71 Three things once gone into another's hands

Never return—the book, the pen and the wife

(Par ghar gai na bhourhātī, pothī, līkhnī, nar)

Miscellaneous

72 I am a queen, you are a queen,

Who then is to fetch the water ?

(Main vī ranī, tūn vī ranī, kaun bharega panī ?)

73 He who gave us teeth will also give us grams

(Jis dand dīte oh chane vī desī)

74 It takes two hands to clap

(Tarhī do hathan nāl vajdī hai)

75 Wash your hands while the river flows

(Wagde daryā vīchch hath dhō lō)

76 Serve milk to a snake, it will still spit out only venom

(Sappe duddh pyāīe vehu mukh thī sutte)

77 One who has been burnt by fire, fears even a fire-fly

(Agg da sarhīha tatehne tūn vī dardea)

78 It is the hair you pull that feels the pain

(Jihra val khīcho use nu dard)

79 The shop is big, the food is tasteless

(Uchchī dukan phīkka pakvan)

80 A single bad fish makes the whole pond stink

(Ik gandī machchī sare jal nu ganda kardī hai)

81 Why use poison when you can kill with sugar ?

- (*Je gur ditian marda howe tan zehir den di ki lorh ?*)
 82 It is the man who rides the horse that falls
 (*Jehra swar hundai uh hi digdai*)
- 83 Fire is not put out by fire
 (*Agg nal agg nahin bujdi*)
- 84 The right hand washes the left one
 And the left hand washes the right one
 (*Sajja dhove khabhe nu tan khabba dhowe sajje nu*)
- 85 Among the blind, the man with one eye is a king
 (*Annian vichchon kana raja*)
- 86 The bigger the head, the bigger the headache
 (*Vade sir vadian sir-pirhan*)
- 87 A lie has no legs to stand upon
 (*Jooth de pair nahin honde*)
- 88 It is enough to test one grain from a cooking pot
 (*Dal da ik dana tohna kafi hai*)
- 89 One who keeps his feet in two boats is always drowned
 (*Dohan berhuan vichch lat dharn wala dubh mardai*)
- 90 Even iron floats along with wood
 (*Kath nal loha vi tar jandai*)
- 91 You have to play the drum which is hung
 Around your neck
 (*Gall pia dhol vajana hi paındae*)
- 92 If the hedge eats up the crop, what can the watchman do?
 (*Warh khet chare te rakha ki kare ?*)
- 93 It is no use repenting
 When the sparrows have pecked away the harvest
 (*Hun pachhtaan ki hoye jad churhian chug lia khet*)
- 94 As you sow, so shall you reap
 (*Jo bijo so waddo,*)
- 95 It is the thirsty that goes to the well
 (*Piasa khooh kol janda hai*)
- 96 There is no smoke without fire
 (*Agg bina' dhoon kithe*)
- 97 The rope has been burnt, but the twists still remain
 (*Rassi sarh gai val na gia*)

- 98 Drums beating at a distance sound sweet
(*Dur de dhol suhavene*)
- 99 No one can guess what is cooking under the lid
(*Dhaki riye koi nan buje*)

NAQAL

(A Servant and his Master)

- Servant Shahji, will you have something to drink ?
- Shah Not yet, I don't feel like it
- Servant Have something Shahji, it is already quite late in the day, and you have not had anything at all
- Shah Very well then, bring something if you must
- Servant (Brings a bowl full of milk) Here Shahji, have a bowl of milk
- Shah No, I must have 'something' and not milk, because you wanted me to have 'something' only
- Servant Then what shall I bring ?
- Shah Bring 'something' as you said, otherwise I am going to fine you. Don't forget that I appointed you on the clear understanding that for every mistake that you make, you will forfeit one month's pay
- Servant (Puzzled Brings a glass of buttermilk) Here Shahji, take this
- Shah (Takes a good look) I am telling you I don't want buttermilk I'll have 'something' only
- Servant (Remains lost in thought for some time Then suddenly) Very well, wait for a while Shahji, I'll bring 'something' for you
(After a while Shahji feels thirsty)

- Shah** O Ruldoo ! Bring me a glass of water (The servant suddenly brightens up, snaps his finger, fills a glass with water and puts dead a fly in it)
- Servant** Here Shahji, take this
- Shah** (Looks into the glass) You fool, look, there is something in the water Go and throw away this and get me some clean water
- Servant** (Beaming) Shahji, this is that 'something' which you have been demanding My part of the job is done (Shahji looks at the dead fly in the glass and makes a grimace shamefacedly)

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