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HINDU BIRTH OBSERVANCES IN THE PUNJAB.¹

By H. A. ROSE, Local Correspondent of the Royal Anthropological Institute.

I. OBSERVANCES BEFORE AND AT BIRTH.

Lucky and unlucky births.—The auspiciousness—or the reverse—of a birth depends upon several factors, such as the season or time of its occurrence, its sequence relative to preceding births in the family,² and the child's position at birth.

Premature birth.—Birth in the eighth month of pregnancy is attributed to a cat having entered the mother's room in a former confinement. A child born in this month will, it is believed, die on the eighth day, in the eighth month, or eighth or eighteenth year, after birth. Hence the number eight is never mentioned in speaking of a child's age, *an-ginat* or "uncounted" being used instead: thus, *an-ginat din* = eighth day,³ *an-ginat barhā* = eighth year.

In Kāngra a child which dies at birth, or immediately after it, is inauspicious, and its nose is bored, for a gold ring to be inserted, in order to avert its evil influence.

The athwāhā.—In the Dera tahsīl of Kāngra a child born in the eighth month is called an *athwāhā* (fr. *ath*, 8), and is regarded as unlucky to both its parents, foreboding the father's death. As a remedy a spinning-wheel is passed thrice round the mother's head, and then given to the midwife.

Unlucky times for Birth.

Monday is an unlucky day for birth, and as a remedy the child's nose or ear is bored.

In some parts, *e.g.*, among orthodox Hindus in Bahāwalpur, Ferozepore and Mandi, the following remedies are used to counteract the evil influences of the various planets:—

Saturn: seven kinds of grain, or anything black, such as iron or a black buffalo, should be given away in charity.

Mars: articles such as copper, *gur*, cloth dyed red, oil, etc.

The Sun: reddish things, such as *ghā*, gold, wheat, a red-coloured cow, etc.

The Moon: white articles, such as silver, rice, a white cow, white cloth, etc.

¹ This paper is a continuation of the paper on "Hindu Pregnancy Observances in the Punjab" (*J.A.I.*, vol. xxxv, p. 271).

² For the significance of the sequence of births, see *Folk-Lore*, vol. xiii, pp. 63–67, and pp. 279–280.

³ But the same writer (S. Gurdīāl Singh in *J.A.S. Bengal*, lii, Pt. 1, p. 205), says that a child is never said to be so many days or months old, but so many *years*, *e.g.*, *chār barhe* = four days or four months old, as well as four years.

Mercury and Venus: green articles, such as *mung* (a kind of pulse), green cloth or fruit, such as oranges, etc.

Jupiter: yellow things, such as yellow cloth, gram-pulse, yellow sweetmeats (*nukhti* and *laddu*), gold, etc.

To avert the evil effects of Rāh (or ascending node): coconuts, *ghî*, sugar (*khand*) and *māsh* (a kind of pulse); and that of Ketu (Kret) or typhon (the descending node): *samosā* (a kind of sweetmeat) and bluish cloth are given in charity.

This is termed *girāh-pūjā* (or worship of the planets).

A birth which occurs during the *panchak* period will, it is believed, be followed by the birth of three children of the same sex.

The *gandās* are five days which fall in the dark half of the lunar month, and a child born on any of these dates bodes ill to its parents. Accordingly, the father must not see the child until, in the recurrence of the *nakshatra* in which it was born, he has worshipped the gods, or until five dolls have been made, put in a copper vessel and anxiously propitiated. Fruit is placed before them, as they are believed to eat; and Brahmans recite *mantras*. Lastly, an earthen jar is pierced with twenty-eight holes and filled with water and various drugs. It is then hung up some distance from the ground and the water allowed to trickle on to the parents heads. After this the Brahmans are rewarded.

As we have already seen, eclipses affect the parents during pregnancy. So too a child, of either sex, born during an eclipse brings ill-luck, to avert which the following observances are in vogue, at least in Kāngra:—

The image in gold of the deity connected with the asterism in which the eclipse occurred, and one of the sun (if it was eclipsed), or of the moon (in the case of its eclipse), together with an image of Rāhū, are revered. A *hawan* is also performed, *ak* wood being used if the sun was eclipsed, or, if the moon, *palās*. Like other unlucky children, a child born under an eclipse is weighed every month, on the *sankrānt* day, against seven kinds of grain, all of which is given away.

A child (unlike a calf) born in Bhādon is lucky, while one born in Kātak is inauspicious, and the mother of such a child should be turned out of the house, though she may be given to a Brahman and then redeemed from him. Children born under certain asterisms are peculiarly liable not only to misfortune themselves, but to cause evil to others, and various rites are performed to avert the consequences of their birth.

A child born in Kātak must either undergo symbolical birth from a cow (*goparsab*), or both it and the parents must bathe, on the first *sankrānt* after the end of Kātak, in water drawn from seven wells and mixed with turmeric, sandal, ginger and other drugs. These are termed *sarbokhadî*, and are placed in an unbaked earthen jar, with 1,000 orifices and a lip, the appropriate *mantras* being duly recited. Water from seven wells or rivers is then similarly purified by *mantras*. The parents, with the child in its mother's lap, are then placed under a sieve, through which the water is poured. *Hawan* is then performed, and lastly a tray of *ghî* is given away by the parents in charity.

A child born when the moon is in the sixth or eighth zodiacal sign is ill-omened, and to avert its influence the following rite is observed: On the twenty-seventh day after the birth a basket made of bamboo is filled with sixteen *sêrs* (thirty-two lbs.) of rice, some camphor, a pearl, a piece of white cloth and some silver, and given away in charity, together with a team of white calves yoked, and vessels of milk and *ghî*. Worship, in which white sandal-wood and white flowers figure, is also performed. This, however, is an orthodox rite, and in Kângra the popular idea is that a child born in the *ghâtî-chandarmân*, i.e., when the moon is inauspicious, is not ill-omened.

The unlucky *tiths* or lunar days for birth are the *amâwas*, or last day of the dark half; and the *chaturdashî* (vulg. *chaudas*) or fourteenth, the last day but one. Children born on the former day are unpropitious to the father, those born on the latter to the mother. To avert their evil influence an idol of Shiva is made of silver, and in an earthen jar are placed leaves from various trees, mango, *palâs*, *pîpal*, etc. A coconut is then placed on the jar, which is covered with a red cloth; and on this is put the idol of Shiva, after it has been purified by *mantras*. *Hawan* is performed with sesame, pulse (*mâsh*) and white mustard. The idol is given to a Brahman.

The following thirteen *nakshatras* and conjunctions, especially 1 to 6¹, are unlucky:—

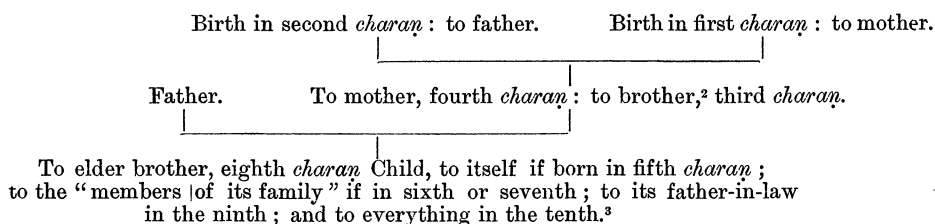
1. Asauni (Aswini).
2. Rewati, Reotî (Piscium ζ and 31 other stars, figured by a tabor).
3. Maghâ (δ Regula, γ, ζ, η and ν of Leo, figured by a house).
4. Shlêkhân (Ashlekhâ, the southern claw of Cancer).
5. Mûlan (Mûl, the tail of Scorpio).
6. Jêshṭan (the eldest or first lunar asterism, and consequently of the same import as Mûl, the "root": see Bentley's *Hindu Astronomy*, p. 5).
7. Grahn (eclipse).
8. Atepât.
9. Saṅkrânt (passage of the sun or planetary bodies from one sign into another).
10. Gand.
11. Chaudas (14th of the lunar fortnight).
12. Amâwas (the first day of the first quarter in which the moon is invisible: see also Platts, *s.v.*)
13. Bhadrâ, (the 2nd, 7th and 12th days of a lunar fortnight).

Each *charan*² has a special influence of its own. Thus in Shlêkhân the

¹ In Nurgpur tahsîl of Kângra the evil influence of a birth in any unlucky *nakshatra* is averted by bathing the parents and child with water from a jar, containing 1000 holes, into which leaves from 108 male trees are put (mango, *pîpal*, banian, are male; while *nâkh*, 'pear,' and *berî*, 'plum,' are feminine). Children born in the remaining seven of the thirteen *nakshatras* specified are not very unlucky, and the planets are merely worshipped by the more rigid observers of Hindu precepts.

² Lit: "foot."

second *charaṇ* is fatal to wealth, the third to the mother and the fourth to the father.¹ In the Jêsthâ asterism, which is divided into ten *charaṇs*, each of six *gharṭs*, we have the following scheme of fatality :—



In the Mûl asterism the first *charaṇ* is unpropitious to the father, the second to the mother, and the third to wealth.⁴

The Gandṣ.—The fourth *charaṇ* in the Shlêkhân, Jêsthâ and Rêôtî asterisms, and the first in the Mûl, Ashwini and Maghâ are called *gandṣ*, and a birth in these is unlucky : if it occur by day, to the father ; if by night, to the mother ; and if in the morning or evening, to the child itself.⁵

But all these refinements are hardly known to popular astrology, and the general practice is to regard births in the Jêsthâ, Mûlâ, Shlêkhân and Maghâ asterisms only as unlucky.⁶

In the Simla hills the evil influence of a birth in the Krishnpak chaudas is averted by propitiating the nine planets. A birth at the end of a month and in the Jamgandhjag, Kalijag, etc., is unlucky to the parents, etc. ; and they should not see the child's face until alms have been offered. Triplets portend the speedy

¹ To avert the evil influence five earthen jars, filled with water and leaves (*pîpal*, etc.), are covered with a red cloth, and the golden image of a serpent placed on them and worshipped. The person to whom the birth forebodes evil gives alms, and a *hawan* performed with *ghî* : Kângra. In Dera the five jars should contain gold images of Brahma, Vishnu, Mahêsh, Indra and Varuna.

² Special attention may here be directed to the position of the mother's brother in astrology. The part played by him in weddings *may* conceivably have an astrological basis. He is curiously affected by his sister's child cutting its upper teeth first : see *Indian Antiquary*, vol. xxxi, 1902, p. 292.

³ To avert the evil a piece of ground is plastered with cow-dung and a platform for a *hawan* made on it. On this platform *mantras* are written in flour. In five jars, full of water, are put the leaves of five trees (*pîpal*, mango, *palâkhar*, *palâs*, and a fifth), with *panchamrṭ* and *panchgabh*. In a sixth jar, unbaked, with 1,000 orifices, are placed 107 different drugs. The parents and child are then drenched through a sieve, and then they join in the *hawan*, which must be celebrated by sixteen Brahmans. Finally parents and child bathe in the water from the five jars : Kângra.

⁴ The rites are the same as in the case of a Jêsthâ birth, except that the idol made is a gold one of a râkhshasa : Kângra.

⁵ The rites resemble those in the Jêsthâ or Mûl cases, but a cow is also given as alms in the child's name : Kângra.

⁶ In the Dera tahsil of Kângra the rites observed on such births, or in those which occur under an inauspicious (*ghâtak*) moon, are simple. Images of Brahma, Indar, Sûraj (Sun) and Chandarmân (Moon) are placed in four jars, with the leaves of seven trees ; the jars are then filled with water and covered with a red and white cloth. Mother and child are then sprinkled with the water.

death of parents, and, to avert the evil, *hawan* is performed, alms are given to the *parohit* and the *shānti markat* is read.

The First-born.—Speaking generally, the birth of the first-born child, provided it is not a girl, is the occasion for special rejoicings—and in Kāngra a pilgrimage is made to the family god (*kul-deota*), and a he-goat, called the *kudnu randā*, is let loose in his honour, another being also sacrificed at his shrine, and a feast given.¹

In Sarāj a few people of the village visit the parents' house and fire off guns. The father feasts them, and gives each guest a small turban and a rupee; the village *deota* and musician also receiving each a rupee. This money is called *wadhāī kī rupīya*, and it is all deposited with an honorary treasurer, and when enough has been collected a great feast is held.

In Hamīrpur the *panjāb* rite, which consists in giving alms to the poor, is observed on the eleventh day after the birth. Brahmans and the kinsmen are also feasted, menials also receiving gifts. A good deal of money is thus spent.

Place of confinement.—It is a very general, but by no means universal, custom for the wife to return to her own parents' house for her first confinement.

A child born in the house of his *nāna*, or mother's father, often receives the name of Nānak.²

Care is taken not to let the fact that the pains of labour have begun be noised abroad, lest publicity increase their severity. And if the pains are severe a tray (*thālī*), on which a charm is written, is shown to the patient in order to remove them.

It appears to be the universal custom for delivery to be effected on the ground.³ But after it is over the mother is usually seated on a mat or hassock. It appears to be almost the universal custom to tell her that she has given birth to a girl,⁴ in the curious belief that if she were to learn that she had become the mother of a son, the after-birth would not come away.

As a rule the umbilical cord is cut with a sharp knife, but in Ludhiāna it is tied with the *janeō* of an elderly man belonging to the family. This is also the usage in Hoshiārpur and Siālkot, but in these Districts, if the child be a girl, the cord is tied with the thread of a spinning-wheel. Any other method is supposed to injure the child. In Gūjranwālā the cord is not cut till two or three hours after birth.

¹ A great many Hindu women who have never had children, or been unable to bring up any, propitiate the Deity by vowing that their *first-born*, if preserved, shall, till he comes of age, or of a certain age, serve in the procession of the Tāzia as a water-carrier, or in some other capacity; and such sons always wear the green uniform till they attain that age during the Muharram, and serve as their mothers have vowed they shall serve, but return to Hindu rites and ceremonies as soon as the Muharram is over, without prejudice to their caste or reproach from their associates. MS. note in a copy of *Sleeman's Rambles and Recollections* (? by the late Mr. Carr Stephen).

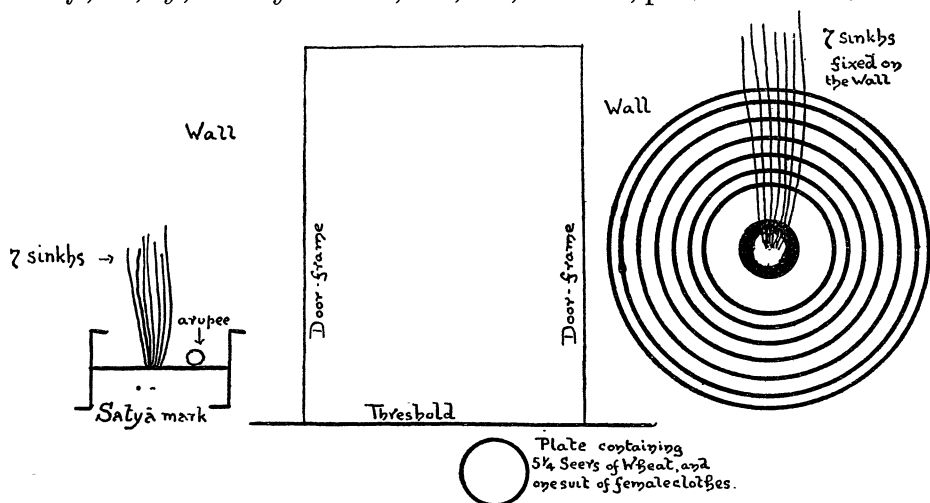
² Cf. Temple in *Proper Names of Panjabis*, p. 50. I am unable to say whether Nānak, the founder of Sikhism, was so named for this reason.

In Hoshiārpur delivery is said to be effected on a *chārpa*.

³ And if she has given birth to a girl, she is told she has borne a stone.

Satyā-worship.—A curious custom is observed in the Jind State and adjacent territories. On the birth of a boy the worship of *satyā* is thus observed: on the *chhati* (sixth day after the birth) seven concentric circles¹ are made with cow-dung on one side of the wall near the door of the house, and in a lump of cow-dung, stuck in their centre, is fixed a four-anna bit (*chuannī*), while seven *sīnkhs*² are also stuck in the central lump. On the other side of the door the *satyā* mark is made on the wall with cow-dung, seven *sīnkhs* being fixed in the middle of it on the wall, and a rupee put near them as shown in the diagram. A plate containing five and a quarter *seers* of wheat and a suit of woman's clothes is placed at the middle of and outside the threshold. The mother now comes out and sits by the plate. She worships these things, and then the wheat, suit of clothes, and the two coins are given to the boy's father's sister.³

This observance appears to be identical with the propitiation of Satiāi in Bombay; see, *e.g.*, *Bombay Gazetteer*, xvii, 155, and xviii, p. 471.



Disposal of the after-birth.—In Ferozepore the secundines are buried in a corner of the house.

In Mandī the after-birth is buried at the spot where the child was born, after the eldest matron of the family has made the mother worship it.

Death in child-bed.—If a woman die within thirteen days of her delivery it is believed that she will return in the guise of a malignant spirit to torment her husband and family. To avert this a *shāntī* is performed at her funeral, a piece of red cloth and the grass image of her child being placed on the bier. Some people

¹ In some parts this ceremony is shortened, and instead of seven, five circles are made, and so on.

² *Sīnk* or *sink* means a twig from a broom.

³ The people of Bāpurā, in Tahsīl Bhiwānī, put the *sīnkhs* in the reverse of the usual way placing the thinner or upper ends downwards. The reason is said to be that owing to an accident to Lakkhan Mahājan, their ancestors bade their descendants do so until they had gained a victory over the people of Sanwar and brought bricks from that village. This is the form of the *satyā* as drawn in the account received from the Jind State. Elsewhere the *satyā* or *satiā* resemble the ordinary *swastika* in shape.

also drive nails through her head and eyes, while others also fasten nails on either side of the door of their house.

In Hoshiârpur a woman whose child has died within forty days is called a *parehkhâwân*,¹ and she must not see a woman in confinement during the first forty days after birth.

II. OBSERVANCES SUBSEQUENT TO THE BIRTH.

The observances after birth are manifold, and their character complex, so that it is as difficult to distinguish between the religious and social observances, as it is to say what usages are based on magic and what on the first glimmerings of medical skill. Nevertheless, under much that is barbarous and puerile there are traces of more rational ideas regarding cleanliness, and even a kind of primitive anticipation of antiseptic treatment. One important point to note is that the observances are far less elaborate in the case of a girl child; and this idea, that the birth of a girl is a misfortune, re-acts injuriously on the mother, less care being bestowed upon her, and every observance being hurried over and many stinted, if the child is not a boy. Thus in Râwalpindî the mother of a son is carefully tended for forty days, but if the child is a girl for only twenty-one.

The period of impurity.—The period of impurity is most commonly called *sâtak*, but it is also known as *chkât*, especially in the north-west of the Punjab.

Its duration is, in theory, ten days among Brahmins, twelve among Khatriis, fifteen among Vaisyas and thirty among Sudras, thus varying inversely with the purity of the caste. But in practice it is eleven days among Brahmins and thirteen among Khatriis; or only eleven or thirteen for all castes.²

Among the Jâts of Hoshiârpur, who may in this connection be regarded as typical of the Hindus of the Punjab proper, the following is the method of treatment after birth:—

The midwife washes the child in a vessel into which silver has been thrown, before she gives it to the mother. But the child is not suckled for one and a half days. The pap must be washed by the husband's sister before the child can be fed. For this she receives a fee.

As on all auspicious occasions, oil is thrown on the ground and under the mother's bed, beneath which green *dâb*³ grass is also placed, as it is a sign of prosperity; and, as such, some is also presented to the child's father by his friends.

To prevent mischief to the mother or the child, a number of precautions are taken:—

- i. Fire must be kept in the room, as must also
- ii. Grain close to the bed, as an emblem of good luck.

¹ Cf. *Paṛkhain*, shadow.—*Panjabi Dictionary*, p. 868.

² In Rohtak and Lohâru it would appear to be only ten, expiring with the *dasâthan*. In Gujranwâlâ it is said to be thirteen days for Brahmins and sixteen for others.

³ Probably *dabbh* is meant. *Dabbh* or *drabbh* (*Eragrosti*; *Cynosuroides*), is a spear-grass used in various rites: *dâb* (*Cynodon dactylon*) is a close-growing grass well adapted for turfing.

- iii. Water must also be kept there, as it is a purifier ; and
- iv. A weapon should be placed close by the mother.
- v. Under the bed should also be kept the handle of a plough.¹
- vi. There should be a lock on the bed, or else it should have a chain round it. This is termed *bel mārīa*.²
- vii. On no account should a cat be allowed in the room, nor should the mother hear one call, or even mention the word "cat." It is most unlucky for her to dream of the animal, and if one is seen in the room, ashes should be thrown over it.
- viii. The house should not be swept with a broom—lest the luck be swept out of it.
- ix. No small drain into the room should be left open, lest ill-luck enter by an aperture which must be unclean.
- x. A lamp must be kept burning all night, and allowed to burn itself out in the morning. A son is called *ghar kā dīwā*, so if the lamp were blown out, he too would be destroyed.

Neither mother nor child must come out of the room for thirteen days.

On the thirteenth day the mother gives her old clothes to the midwife, who sometimes shares them with the *nain*. The latter brings some cow's urine in a *thūkrā* or jar, with green grass, a *supārī*, and a *nahernā*, or nail-parer. She sprinkles the cow's urine over the mother with the grass, burns some incense, and pares her nails for the first time since her confinement. Then the mother must put on the *nai's* (the *nain's* husband's, not the *nain's*) slippers, and walk out of the room carrying the child. The *nain* sprinkles oil on the ground outside the door, and there the *jhūwarī*, or some other menial, stands with a pot of water and some green grass. Both she and the *nain* are paid for their services.

In the outer room Vidhâtâ (vulg. Bidh) Mâtâ is worshipped, no men, not even a Brahman, being present. The women make an idol of *gobar*, covering it with a red cloth and offering to it the food cooked for the feast. Drums are then beaten, Brahmans and relatives fed, and the members of the household congratulated. The idol is kept for one and a quarter months and then deposited near the well.

The period of confinement lasts forty days, and the mother must not stain the palms of her hands with henna, nor wear clothes dyed with *kasumbha*, until the ancestors have been worshipped and kinsmen feasted. On this occasion the *dhiānis*,³ or girls born in the tribe, must also be fed, fee'd and revered.

¹ Probably because the plough turns the soil which produces grain, and so witches will not come near it.

² In Panjābī *bēlnā* or *vēlnā* = to press or roll ; also to strike the bridegroom's hand at a wedding. *Bel mārīā* is not traceable in the *Panjabi Dictionary*.

³ Or *dhiāhan* or *dhiān*, a sister or daughter. The term is used by Brahmans, *mīrāsīs*, etc., in addressing the daughter or sister of a patron,

Third day.—On the third day the observance called *bâhir* is current in Rohtak, and, as the name denotes, the mother on this day comes “outside,” from the room in which she was confined, at an auspicious hour fixed by a Brahman. The women of the brotherhood assemble at her house, each bringing half a *páo* of grain. The *nain* makes a *chauk* on the ground, in which are depicted the planets. The eldest woman of the family then puts five *sers* of grain, some jaggery and oil on the *chauk*, and all the others follow suit. Then the mother comes out of her house and touches the grain, which is divided, with the jaggery and oil, between the *nain*, the Brahmani and the midwife. A *chhaták* of jaggery is then given to each female of the brotherhood present, and songs are sung. Menials also get their dues, and, when the mother comes out of the house, the *nai* waits at the door with a *nahernâ* with which he touches the boy, for which he gets a rupee. He also puts blades of *dabbh* grass in the turbans of the child’s forbears, in order that they may multiply like the grass. For this he receives a second rupee.

In Hoshiârpur the mother in some places is bathed on the third day, if she has given birth to a girl: a function postponed to the fifth day if her child is a boy. In Sirmûr, too, she bathes on the third or fifth day; and in Mandî a rite called the *tirphal kâ gontar*¹ is observed on the former day. In Râwalpindî the mother bathes on the third, fifth or seventh day, and *chûrî* (baked bread, sugar, and *ghî*) is then distributed among the females of the brotherhood. In the evening of the same day she puts the child in a winnowing basket and takes it outside the village gate—accompanied by the midwife.

Fourth day.—As a rule the mother bathes on the third day, or on one bearing an odd number after it, but in the Dasuya *tahsíl* of Hoshiârpur she is bathed on the fourth, seventh, thirteenth, twenty-first, thirtieth, and forty-eighth days.

Fifth day.—Excluding the bathing already mentioned, the rites of the fifth day are confined to Jhelum, in which district and Hoshiârpur the *panjwân* or fifth-

¹ This rite is thus described: The courtyard of the house is swept, and circles drawn on it with mud. These circles are called *makol*. The threshold of the house is painted red. The person who sweeps the yard gets *pûrâ tar* (rice, sugar, cash, etc.). Then the mother is bathed in hot water and made to worship Ganpatî, whose idol is put on a yellow *chauk*, and offerings made to it. A Brahman now makes *panchgabh*, mixing it up in a jar with a blade of *dabbh* grass. He gives three spoonfuls of this mixture to the mother, and thus removes her impurity. He next receives his fee in money, and then places a ball of cow-dung, containing gold, silver, a pearl, and a bead of coral, near the idol. This ball is called *biyâhî*, and is worshipped like the goddess. After all this, the mother’s breasts are washed and she suckles the child. Then balls of boiled rice are placed daily in the *chauk* for three days—until the impurity has been removed—and are then given to the midwife. The mother’s brother then goes to the forest with a Brahman and a musician, and cuts four branches from a *thohar* (*Euphorbia Royleana*), and these he is made to worship by the Brahman. Tho receives a fee for this from the mother’s brother. Of these four branches the Brahman places two, one on each side of the door of the house in which the birth took place, and sticks two in cow-dung near Ganpatî’s *chauk*. They are then covered with a red cloth. The mother’s brother’s forehead is then marked with the *tilak*, and the nearest kinsmen are fed. Songs are also sung. The eldest matron of the family also gives the mother rice mixed with salt, a dish called *pichhlagrâ*. (*Pichchh* = rice water.)

day observance simply consists in a bath. In the latter district a foster-brother is made for the child out of cow-dung, and grain, sweets and bread placed beneath it. A red cloth is then thrown over it. All these things are the midwife's perquisite. The rite is performed both for a girl and a boy. The mother also bathes on this occasion, and her head is washed with milk and cow's urine. Elsewhere in this same district the mother is bathed on the fifth or seventh day, and the *nain* plaits her hair. Then she is brought out into the courtyard, wearing the *nain's dopatta* or shawl. The yard is previously plastered with cow-dung, and in it the mother is seated on a stool, and given cow's urine and Ganges water to drink. She then re-enters the room in the house, which has in the meanwhile been re-plastered with cow-dung. Inside she sits by a wall, close to which is placed some grain on which a lamp is lit. Each of the kinswomen then brings some grain and money and puts them by the lamp. Then rice, loaves and *māsh* are distributed among the brotherhood, the grain and money brought being divided by the midwife and the *nain*.

Sixth day.—The ceremony called the *chhattî* was doubtless originally, as the name implies, observed on the sixth day, but it is now extinct (in Sirmûr), or else held on the sixth or any subsequent date.¹ Only in Mandî must the rite called *chhattî gontar*² actually be held on the sixth day.

Elsewhere the *chhattî* is known as the *dhaman*,³ and is held only in cases when the child is a boy.

When the mother goes to her parents' house for her confinement the *chhattî* is observed on her return to her husband's house, and in Ferozepore it is in this case postponed till the twenty-first day.

In Ludhiāna the rite is simple. The mother is bathed (*chhattî kā ashnan*), and boiled rice and sweets are distributed among the members of the brotherhood. The mother fasts all day until sunset, when she is given starch to eat,

¹ In Gujrānwālā the *chhattî* is described as being observed on the fifth day, on which day the child is named.

² This resembles the *tirphalla*. The house is swept, as before, and Ganpâtî again worshipped. Then images of a cow, a calf, and a herdsman are made of brass. These are known as *dand wachhā*, and are placed near the goddess' idol. *Panchgabh* is given to the mother. The females of the brotherhood assemble and sing songs. They are regaled on moist grain, and red thread is then sent to the mother's parents, a custom called *ḍorî dand*, or "giving the thread." In return they send money and sweetmeats. In Mandî is also performed the third or last *gontar*. On the evening preceding the day fixed for this rite, the house is swept. All the near kinswomen are invited, and they spend the night in singing, while the priest makes the mother worship Ganpatî. Alms are also given to avert evil planetary influences. On the following day the priest performs a *harvan* (*hom*), in much the usual way. The mother and all the members of her family are then purified, and finally a *biydhî* of cow-dung is made, and the mother instructed to clean her teeth with twigs of a fragrant plant. These twigs are stuck in the *biydhî* and preserved as long as the child lives, being worshipped at its birthdays. The *biydhî*, with the twigs stuck in it, must, at this *gontar*, be set afloat on a river or stream.

³ According to the *Panjabi Dictionary*, *dhaman* or *dhamān* in Potohāri means "the period of child-birth." Possibly the word is really *dhammān*, and is derived from *dharmā*, and so means simply "rule" or "due observance."

and then she is brought out of the room by the midwife with a lamp burning in the winnowing basket. After the sixth day the mother is not so carefully looked after.

In Amritsar the *chhattî* is said not to be observed by Brahmans or Khatriis, but only by Arôras.

In Montgomery the *chhattî* is termed *sathî*,¹ and the Brahman suggests the boy's name—no such observance being required for a girl.²

In Rohtak and Lohâru it is said to be the occasion on which the goddess of fortune will visit her house and partake of grain and water therein, so water is set forth, and pen, paper and ink placed ready for her to record a happy future for the child.

The kinswomen and the priest's wife sing songs all night, the idea being that the goddess will record a better fate for the child if they are awake and a lamp is kept burning. After this the mother is allowed to eat grain, and the child is dressed in a *kurta* and cap, and ornaments are put on it. If it is a boy, mango or leaves are hung on the door of the house, and *thâpâs* or hand-prints made on either side of it in the corners, with henna.

Special care is taken that the sounds of mourning may not reach the mother's ears if a death occurs in the neighbouring houses.

Dhamân.—In the Hazro tahsil of Attock the term *dhamân* is applied to the custom whereby the mother keeps her bedding on the ground. On the first Sunday or Thursday after the birth, mother and child are bathed and dressed in new clothes. They are then placed on a *chârpai*. Sweet porridge is also distributed among the brotherhood on this day. If during the *dhamân* period thunder is heard, a pewter vessel is beaten, lest the sound of the thunder reach the mother's ears.

Seventh Day.—The *satvân*, or seventh-day observance, is only known by that name in Jhelum and Râwalpindî, in which districts it consists merely in a bath—as in Hoshiârpur—in lieu of or in addition to those previously taken.

Tenth day.—The tenth day is not generally marked by any special rites, in spite of the fact that it gives its name to the *dasûthan* (lit., bathing on the tenth day after childbirth).³ In Sirmûr it is also called *sondhia*,⁴ and is observed at any time before the child is five years old.

Dhamân.—In Siâlkot the *dhamân* rite is observed on the eleventh day by Brahmans, and by other castes on the thirteenth, *i.e.*, after the *sûtak* is over. Four copper coins and an idol made of cow-dung are placed under the mother's feet. After bathing and putting on new clothes the mother worships a lamp, placed before the idol on a pile of grain (which is the midwife's perquisite). Each woman of the brotherhood then gives her a coconut and five dates. She is then

¹ By corruption, apparently. There may, however, be some connection with *satya*—see *ante*.

² In this District, the *dhamân* appears to be observed, as a distinct rite, on the first Sunday or Wednesday after the birth.

³ See Platts, *sub voce*.

⁴ *Soudhia* is a word not traceable in the Dictionaries, but it is probably derived from *sôudhû*, to rub or wash out.

taken to the kitchen, where a Brahman administers the *panchgabh*, receiving a fee of annas four or eight, and a meal. Lastly, the idol is taken away outside the village and placed under a plum tree. On this same day the child is invested with the *taraggā*,¹ a thread on which are strung a cowry, an iron ring, another of green glass, a tiger's claw, and a piece of the child's umbilical cord, cut off after its birth. The kinswomen are also feasted on this occasion. In the Dogar country this thread is made of silk.

Thirteenth day.—The thirteenth day is important, because the *sutak* period very commonly ends on that day, and it is therefore signalised by rites of purification. Very generally the mother is bathed, all the earthen vessels in the house are broken² or replaced, and those of metal are cleansed. Clothes also are washed, and the house plastered. Brahmans are sometimes fed, and occasionally the child is named on this day or dressed for the first time.

Twenty-first day.—The twenty-first day is merely marked in Hoshiârpur by bathing the mother and purifying by fire all the vessels used by her since the birth.

Thirtieth day.—The thirtieth day is only the occasion for a bath, in Hoshiârpur.

Fortieth day.—On the fortieth day the mother bathes for the last time, and then ceases to be even ceremonially impure, and can take part again in the duties of the family kitchen. Strangers also can now take food from the house.

The chārā karam.—In Mandī an observance called the *chārā karam* or *jarōlan* is held in the third or fifth year of the child's life in Māgh, Phāgan, Baisākh, Jêth or Hār, which months are auspicious for it. Two children must undergo the rite together. All their relatives are summoned the previous day. On the day fixed a *chauk* is painted red, and over it is placed a platter, made of cow-dung, and containing four hollows, one of which is filled with cold water, another with hot, a third with milk, and a fourth with curds. In each a little Ganges water is also poured, and a bundle of *dabbh* grass is placed on the platter. A little oil is then dropped on the children's heads, and their bodies are rubbed with *batnā*.³ They are next bathed, and the eldest matron of the family passes sweets round their heads to avert evil spirits from them. Then they are made to reverence Ganpatī, and the priest parts their hair into three, tying each with red thread. A young girl is then told to apply all the contents of the platter, with the *dabbh* grass, to their hair.⁴ Brahmans are then fed. Next day at dawn the priest makes the two children worship the nine planets, and then he receives his fee in money. Oil is then poured on their heads and the barber cuts their hair, which must fall into the mother's skirt.

¹ Like the *tagādhri* in some parts, and probably the *sātrā* in Amritsar, the *taraggā* appears to foreshadow the *janeo*, and to be a stop-gap for it during childhood, until the child is of an age to be invested with the sacred thread. For *taraggā*, cf. *tarāgarī*, or *tarāgī* (*taṛ-* also), which means a string tied round the waist : a string or silver string worn round the waist of men or boys, especially Mārwarīs (*Panjabi Dictionary*, p. 1106).

² This is not done in Amritsar, in which District the room is simply cleansed.

³ Hindi *ubṭan*, a paste made of meal, turmeric, oil and scent, used to clean and soften the skin.

⁴ This rite is called *jarā senchnā*.

The barber is paid his due. The mothers offer the hair at the temples of their family goddesses. Then the children are bathed and dressed in new clothes, their brothers' wives, or their sisters, painting their eyes with antimony. A goldsmith then bores their ears and puts gold ear-rings in them, receiving a he-goat and some cash as his fee. Copper coins are finally distributed among the poor, and a feast given to the Brahmans and near kinsmen.

Well worship.—In Rohtak, a month or so after the birth of a boy, a rite called the *dôghar pûjâ* is observed. If the mother is very weak the other women of the house place a jar of water by her, and they themselves visit the nearest well, singing songs as they go. The well is worshipped, rice and *dabbh* grass being offered to it. On their return copper coins are given to the menials. Or if the mother cannot perform this rite herself, it is observed at home. In Ferozepore the mother goes, on the twenty-first day, to a well, and there distributes boiled barley amongst children.

Suckling.—Suckling the child for the first time is the occasion for a curious rite. At sunset the midwife washes the mother's breasts with water, using some blades of *dabbh* grass as a brush. They are again washed by the child's sister, or some other female. The midwife gets annas two or four, the sister a rupee, for this. Next day the midwife brings some green *sarîn* leaves and ties them with a *mauli* thread to the house door—a fee of annas two or four being paid her for this also. In Ferozepore the child is not suckled till the evening after its birth, and then the mother's breasts are washed by a young girl, who gets a rupee if the child is a boy, but only annas two or four if it is a girl. Jaggery is applied to the child's lips before it is given the breast. If the milk does not flow freely the child is given sheep's milk.

Fosterage.—Fosterage is not very common in the Punjab, and sometimes it is a mere concession to superstition, as when a Brahman declares that it is inauspicious for a mother to see her child, it is put out to nurse, if the parents can afford it.¹ The people in the submontane tracts, however, sometimes employ Gûjar women as wet-nurses, the object being to ensure the child's health.

*Head compression.*²—For some notes on this practice in the Punjab, reference may be made to *Man*, 1902, No. 2.

Cholâ.—The ceremony of clothing a child for the first time is usually called *cholâ*, and is held on various dates. In Râwalpindî a Brahman fixes a day; in Amritsar this is the usual custom, but often Aroras and Khatriis hold it on the thirteenth day.

In Ferozepore the *cholâ* ceremony is elaborate, and is thus described:—A part of the house is plastered and a figure of a cow made by the midwife—both with

¹ Temple (in *Proper Names of Punjabis*, p. 27), moreover, says that a child is given sometimes to a Chûhrâ (sweeper) woman or to a Muhammadan to suckle—apparently to avert evil.

² It has been suspected, not without reason, that the *chuhâs* or “rats” of the shrine of Shâh Daula in the Gujrât District in the Punjab are children whose heads have been artificially compressed, but many, if not most of them, are undoubtedly microcephalous idiots. The present writer hopes to publish a full account of this shrine shortly.

cow-dung. This image is covered with red cloth and designated the Bidh-mâtâ, or "goddess of fortune." Next the barber brings cow's urine in a cup, in which he also puts some blades of *dabbh* grass. Then the mother puts on the barber's shoes, and, holding his skirt in her hand, she reverses the Bidh-mâtâ, her children sitting on her lap. Two copper coins, the barber's perquisite, are also placed beneath her feet. The barber now applies the cow's urine to the child's lips, with the *dabbh* grass, and then gives it to the mother, who is thus purified, as is the child. If the latter is a boy the parents place a rupee in the cup, but if it is a girl annas two or four suffice. *Pinjîrî* and lumps of parched wheat are distributed to the brotherhood, and the females belonging to it place grain before the image of Bidh-mâtâ. This grain is divided between the barber and the midwife. The mother is given strengthening food after this. The ceremony¹ appears to be usually observed on the thirteenth day, but this is not always the case.

In Montgomery the *chôlâ* also takes place on the thirteenth day, but if the boy was born on one of the six unlucky asterisms, the observance is postponed till the twenty-seventh. In Gujârânwâlâ, however, the *chôlâ* is held as early as the first day, *i.e.*, immediately after birth, or on any day till the thirteenth. Speaking generally, the customs connected with the rite are social rather than religious, but in Hoshiârpur the family god's temple or some Muhammadan saint's shrine is usually visited.

Naming Customs.—In some parts, *e.g.*, in the Himalayan valley of Kullû, it is customary to mark a child's forehead with charcoal until it is given a name, in order to protect it from evil spirits; but this custom is confined to the higher castes.

The naming of a child is a regular Hindu rite, and is called *nâm karan sanskâr* in Siâlkot. It is performed in many different ways² even in the same locality, and at various times. Sometimes it is performed in connection with the *chôlâ*, as in Amritsar, or after the *dhamân*, as in Ferozepore, but no precise time is specified, although, in cases where a Brahman is called in, the thirteenth is the most usual day. As a rule, the rites observed are simple. The child's name is chosen by the oldest representative of the family, or ascertained by astrology, or by simple rites

¹ The accounts of the *chôlâ* rite are very confused, because *chôlâ* literally means a cloak, and the child is dressed in that garment on other occasions, *e.g.*, on the fifth, seventh, or ninth day; when the mother is bathed, the child is dressed in a yellow *chôlâ*. And a boy, born after several successive female children, is dressed in one made of cloth, which must be given by a friend (Ferozepore). But in Râwalpindî the cloth is got from a friend or the mother's relatives under any circumstances.

² In Mandî a girl is named in the fifth and a boy in the sixth month, on an auspicious day fixed by a Brahman. The house is cleaned and the threshold painted yellow. The kinswomen are invited in the evening, and they sing songs throughout the night, *dâms* and *mîrâsîs* being also called in. The priest makes a *chauk*, and on it places an effigy of Ganpati, which, with the nine planets, the child and its mother worship. The priest receives a fee in money for this. At dawn the father gives the child a *dhotî*, a *janeo* and a nut, a gift called *âbarnî*. *Havan* is then performed, and the child is clad in new clothes. The name chosen is then written on a poplar leaf and whispered thrice into the child's ear by another child. *Khîr* of the roots of grass is then made and some of it given to the child by a young girl with a coin of gold or silver. A gold ring is also put on its finger.

of divination. Thus in Hoshiârpur the *pandit* takes five bits of paper, on which he writes as many names, rolls them up, and puts them in a jar. A young girl is then worshipped and a *tilak* applied to her forehead. She then draws a name, and the observance ends with the distribution of sugar among the assembled brotherhood. This is done on the thirteenth day, but any day before the fortieth, or even before the child is six months old, will serve. In Ferozepore the family choose the name for themselves, or at least select one of several suggested by a Brahman after casting the child's horoscope. In this District the mother goes to a well with the child on this occasion, and then distributes boiled barley among children, bringing back with her a pitcher full of water, for which service the Jhiwar gets a rupee. He and the barber, priest, and midwife get a cloth each at this observance. In Amritsar, where the rite is called *sûtrâ*,¹ the mother's parents send her clothes and sweets, and threads are tied on the child's wrists as soon as the period of impurity is at an end. The Brahman announces the first letter of the name after an astrological observation,² and the father's sister is the first to call the child by name. On her, too, devolves the task of choosing the name if there be no Brahman.

As a rule, a girl's name is merely chosen by the women of the family without any ceremony.

Nomenclature.—A volume might be, and a small book³ has actually been, written on the proper names found among the people of the Punjab. The time or season of the birth often determines a boy's name, *e.g.*, Mûl Chand for one born under the Mûl asterism; Salêkh Ram (Salekhu), born under the Shlêkhân; Itwârî, born on a Sunday, and others.⁴ Similarly, many names are derived from months, such as Sâwan Mal, Jeṭha Mal, Chetâ, Baisâkhi, etc. As in the rest of India, from Peshâwar to Cape Comasin, opprobrious names, designed to avert jealousy, the evil eye and ill-fortune, are numerous. Thus, a boy born into a family which has had no sons, or in which the boy-children have died, is called Ghâsîtu, Ghâsîta or Aṛûra, and on his birth he is placed in a winnowing basket and dragged in it. His head, too, is shaved from the middle, a custom apparently resembling that found among the Muhammadans, who shave only half a child's at a time to avert misfortune from it. Many other proper names are based upon rites and superstitions. Thus, the child redeemed from a *faqîr* may be named Faqîrîâ, Khairâtî (fr. *khairât* alms); Chûhrû,⁵ etc. (fr. Chûhrâ, *i.e.*, one weighed against grain given to a "sweeper"); Chhajjû (dragged in a "winnowing basket"); Ghûrât and Menḍû (from the custom of burying the umbilical cord in a "dung-pit" or "field boundary"); Bûr, etc. (lit. "crop-eared," when the mother cuts off a piece of the child's ear and eats it); Nathû, etc., Bulâqî or Chhedâ⁶

¹ Lit. "thread."

² Each *nakshatra* consists of four letters, and the name must begin with one of these.

³ Temple, *Proper Names of Panjabis*, Bombay Education Society's Press, 1883.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁵ But this name may be referred to the custom of employing Chûhrî women as foster-mothers, see p. 232 *supra*.

⁶ *Nath*, a nose-ring; *bulâq*, nose-stud; *chhedan*, to pierce.

(from the custom of piercing a boy's nose and dressing him as a girl). Many children are named from the deity or saint to whom they were dedicated before birth, such as Gûgan, "vowed to Guggâ," Zâhirîâ, "dedicated to Guggâ (Zâhir Pîr)," and so on.

Chhuchak.—In Rohtak the mother's parents send her clothes and ornaments for herself, the child, and her husband. This present is called *chhuchak*, and it is sent in response to the *badhdâi*.

Festivals.—The Lohrî following a birth is observed with special pomp, copper coins and cowries being given away to the poor.

So, too, the next Dîwâlî is celebrated by a grander illumination than usual, sweets being also distributed among the brotherhood.

Tonsure.—The first tonsure of a child is an important rite, but it is known by various names and celebrated in various ways by different castes¹ and in different localities. In the south-west it is known as the *jhand*² and in other parts as the *mûṇḍan* or *bhaddan*.³ If the mother has made a vow prior to the birth of her child to observe the rite at a certain shrine or temple, it is duly carried out there; otherwise it may be done at home.⁴ An auspicious hour should be fixed by a Brahman, or the rite should be performed on the marriage of a near kinsman, or on the Baisâkhi or Dasehra. In Hoshiârpur⁵ a boy's ears are bored on this occasion, and some people smear his forehead with goat's blood. In Ludhiâna the rite is, like the birth observances, described as the *mûṇḍan sanskâr*, and it is unlucky to shave a child's head until it has been performed.

The menials receive fees, and the brotherhood is regaled with sweets prior to the first tonsure, and a day or two afterwards the barber shaves the child's head, after which the *bodî*⁶ or tuft of hair is allowed to grow,⁷ but it is more usual to let the *bodî* grow only after the marriage of a near kinsman.

As a rule the rite is performed between the ages of one and a quarter⁸ and four years, or, in Ferozepore,⁹ as soon as the child has cut its teeth. Sometimes the

¹ The Hindu Bânias of Mahrâj in Ferozepore have a special time for the rite, viz., the light halves of Asauj and Chet, and a lock of the hair is then left uncut.

² *Jhand*, lit : *lanugo*, or down, is the hair on the head of a new-born child.

³ *Mûṇḍan* = *munnâ*, to shave. *Bhaddan*, s.m. = shaving.

⁴ Some sections have fixed places for the observance of the rite, e.g., the Khanna Khatriis observe it at Dîpâlpur. In Râwalpindî, most of the Khatriis observe it at home, but not so the Jaggi and Awal sections, and some families observe it at Katâs in the Baisâkhi, or at the Jogî shrine at Kot Sarang.

⁵ But in this District a distinction appears to be drawn between the cutting off of the *jhand*, which is removed at a tank or under a *jand* tree, before the child is three (though only a few families observe this rite), and the regular *bhaddan*, which is performed at a *ṭhâkurdwâra* or *gurdwâra* between three and five years of age, and is often celebrated with considerable pomp.

⁶ *Buddi*, syn. *munnî* or *rakhnî*.

⁷ In Ferozepore the *bodî* is allowed to grow on the Baisâkhi or Dasehra, and in Râwalpindî on the seventh day after the *jhand*.

⁸ One account puts the minimum age at five months (Ferozepore).

⁹ It is stated that in this District some people shave the child on an auspicious day *without informing the parents*. If this is so, comparison may be made with the idea that (unlucky) children should not see their parents.

rite is repeated once or twice. In Gujrânwâlâ the observance is called *rit* and is held in the third or fifth year.

In short, the observance is essentially a domestic usage, varying in its details according to the ancestral custom of the caste, section, or even family. Sometimes women vow that a child's hair shall never be cut (Montgomery), and a girl's hair is never cut. Among Sikhs the rite is not very common, and, if practised, is observed when the child is only two or three months old. In a well-to-do family the rite is the occasion for a feast to Brahmans, otherwise Brahmans appear to have no part in it.

The "janeo" or sacred thread.—For an account of the ceremonies connected with the sacred thread in the Punjab, reference may be made to the *Indian Antiquary*, vol. xxxi, 1902, p. 216.

NOTE.

One of the main difficulties experienced in investigating these multifarious local customs in the Punjab is the want of adequate dictionaries, especially of dialects like the Pahârî or languages spoken in the Shiniâlayas. Many words are not traceable in the existing dictionaries. A Glossary of the commoner words, not explained in the text, is appended, p. 260.