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MUHAMMADAN PREGNANCY OBSERVANCES IN THE PUNJAB.

By H. A. ROSE.

Charms against miscarriage.

AMONG some tribes a woman who has previously miscarried wears a charm, such as a thread or amulet, on her navel; others wear a cowry on that part to avert the child's being born dead. The charms are blown upon before being put on, the fee paid depending on one's means.

Satwahn.

In Ambâla the observance in the seventh month, or *satwahn*, is said to be confined to the towns. It simply consists in the parents sending sugar, rice, etc., to their daughter on her first pregnancy, a woman related to the family also drops fruit into her lap.

In Sirmûr the woman's parents try to arrange for her to be sent to their house, but if this cannot be done they send her presents of rice, sweets, fruit, etc., with clothes for herself and the child. This is called *kîokâ*.¹

In Kângra on the commencement of the seventh month the woman's parents bring her presents consisting of red clothes, dry fruit, henna, scented oil, and *missî*, with other perfumes and an ornament, preferably one for the arm. These gifts are brought in procession, musicians and singers accompanying it. On arriving at the husband's house, they make their daughter sit on a stool, while the *nain* dresses her in the red suit and dyes her hands with the henna. She is also garlanded with flowers, and her lap filled with dry fruits, such as cocoanut or dates. These are all eaten, apparently by her husbands' parents, she herself not being permitted to partake of them. Then the husbands' parents make *karâhi* (of flour, *gur* and *ghî*), and this is eaten by people of the *gôtâr*, but by no others. Persons not belonging to the *gôtâr* are feasted separately. Prior to this observance a pregnant wife may not wear new clothes or ornaments. After it she must not go to her father's house until forty days have elapsed from her confinement.

In Kapûrthala the parents first send their daughter clothes, etc., in the sixth or seventh month, and then she is taken to their house, the sweets sent by them being divided among her husband's kin. Similarly in Ludhiâna it is thought that the first confinement ought to take place in the woman's own house. In Mâler Kotla the Muhammadans, especially the dominant Pathân families, observe two distinct customs, on a first pregnancy. As a rule the first, the *satwahn*, takes place at the husband's house. The woman's mother is formally notified of the fact that her daughter is in the seventh month of her pregnancy, and she comes to the house, bringing a suit of clothes, sweets and dried fruit. Towards the end of the seventh month the woman bathes and puts on new

¹ *Kîokâ*, not traceable in the dictionaries.

clothes brought by her mother, perfuming herself with scents. Fruit is then put in her lap, and she then sits on a floor which has been plastered, while a *mirásan* sings the appointed eulogies, called *sohla*, of Shaikh Sadr Jahân, to a drum accompaniment. Throughout this performance the woman sits with her head bent down, and her hair unloosed, but combed and oiled. Occasionally she falls into an ecstasy under the influence of the Shaikh, who often makes her his mouth-piece. Sweets are then sent round to relations and neighbours, and the *mirásan* dismissed with her fee. In the evening the *darweshes* are fed at the mother's expense, and next day she takes her daughter home, if the husband's parents agree to this.

In Lahore the *rît* is observed in the beginning of the seventh month, as follows:—The kinswomen assemble and eat out of one tray, the matrons of the family giving the woman fresh fruits as an auspicious omen. The mothers of the couple are also congratulated. Then the kinswomen are feasted, and a *Dûmnî* sings songs. After this the woman is dressed in coloured garments, and puts on ornaments of flowers. At night her hands are stained with henna and the girls of the family sing. This observance is only held by the lower classes of Muhammadans, such as the Kakezais (distillers), Qusâbs (butchers) Arains (market gardeners), Dhobis (washermen) and *mâshkis* or watermen. Among all classes the woman's mother brings her to her own house at the commencement of the ninth month, and on the day of her arrival sends for the almonds, dates, saffron, etc., required on or after her delivery. *Tapâshâs* are distributed among the family, and also among the women of the quarter, a rite called *sanda* by the women.

It is a very general rule among all Muhammadan castes in the north of the Punjab that the woman should avoid eating fruit, wearing fine clothes, or any kind of adornment until the *rît* is performed on the commencement of the seventh month. This *rît* consists merely in feasting the brotherhood, but it is also not uncommon for the woman's parents to send her a present of a *trewar*, and to boil rice which is eaten at a feast in the name of their ancestors. The *trewar* is then given to the husband's sister, or the daughter of his nearest kinsman. After the *rît* the woman may use scent. Wheat, too, is parched, mixed with jaggery, and made into balls, which are distributed among the brotherhood.

In Râwalpindî a pregnant woman avoids the use of antimony, or *dañdâsa*.¹ She also avoids the shade of the *dharek*² and the shadow of a woman suffering from *athrá*,³ i.e., one whose children die in infancy.

In Fateh Jang *rît* is observed in the seventh month, *halwâ* being distributed among the brotherhood. This is done either in her parents' house, or in her husband's, but in the former case the consent of the husband's parents is necessary.

¹ *Dañdâsa* or walnut bark is used as a tooth-stick (the literal meaning of the word), or for chewing, in order to redden the lips.

² *Dharek*, the *Melia Azedarach*.

³ *Athrá* (? lit. a bead—the word does not appear in the Panjabi Dictionary). An *athrá-wâlî* is a woman whose children are born prematurely and generally die. A bead, which changes

The Satwānsā.

Muhammadans in Hānsī observe the *satwānsā* in the seventh month of pregnancy. Seven or nine jars of water are brought from as many different wells, and the woman bathes in the water thus brought. Some Muhammadans take the woman to the nearest mosque with the jars on her head, and make her draw water from the well attached to the mosque. Her nearest kinswomen accompany her, and the observance is often held at night. Others simply give the woman a hot bath.¹ Friday, at the time of the Asar prayers, is an auspicious day for this ceremony, in connection with which alms are given in the names of ancestors and the Prophet.

Some castes send the women a suit of green clothes, red bangles, a *nahernā*, some *mehndī*, and a silver vessel. The clothes and bangles are worn by the woman, but the henna is used not only by her, but by her friends as well, if they are desirous of offspring, while the *nahernā* and silver vessel are kept for the *chhattī*. After this one and a quarter *pāos* of sugar are sent to each relative and friend. Some families boil rice with sugar, and with it feast the woman and seven others, who are also married, some being also given to *faqīrs*. After this the woman is given vegetables and sweets.

In Sirsa the rite is called *satwānsā* and simply consists in the parents sending their daughter a gift of clothes, henna and dried fruit in the seventh month of her pregnancy. In Rohtak the *satwānsā* is held at the beginning of the seventh month. The woman is dressed in red, and sugar also put in her lap. The Dûm women, who sing songs on the occasion, get a rupee or two.

In Rohtak, among the more orthodox Muhammadans, there are no regular rites during pregnancy, but the barber is sent to announce to the mother's parents, and he takes them a rupee as *til chāwālī*.² In the seventh month one or two men, and several of the women, bring parched unhusked rice, *tapāshās* and fruit, with some red cloth, to the woman, with cloth for her husband's parents and near kinsmen. The woman puts on the red cloth, and the rice, etc., is thrown into her lap. The menials also get certain dues. This ceremony, however, is not universal.

Determination of sex.

If the milk in the woman's breasts before birth be thin the birth of a boy is anticipated, otherwise a girl is expected. Or sometimes some of the milk is

its colour, is believed to counteract the effects of *athrā*. This bead is rare and is sold by gipsies at fancy prices. It is also tied to the leg of a new-born child as a talisman against *athrā*: and *athrā kā mankā* means one of a changeable, volatile disposition (*mankā* = bead in Panjābī).

¹ The Hammāls of Hānsī have a curious custom, which looks like a relic of the *couvade*. The woman's parents send her a present of Rs. 5, a suit of clothes, some scent and a comb. After bathing she puts on her husband's trousers, and a chaplet of flowers. Dûm women also sing songs on this occasion. Boiled rice is distributed among the brotherhood.

² *Til chāwālī* is simply rice and *til* mixed: it is used as a food.

put in a shell, and fire applied to it; if it dries up completely, a girl is expected, otherwise a boy.

In the city of Delhi, where Muhammadans of good birth are numerous, many elaborate customs connected with pregnancy survive. The craving for tart, savoury food has given rise to the polite phrase: *In kâ khatte-mithhe ko jî chāhtā hai*, lit. "her heart yearns for bitter-sweet things," i.e., "she is pregnant." Other phrases are *pāon bhārî honā* (to be heavy-footed), *do-jîyā honā* (to have a second life), *din chayhnd* (to dawn), *umed honā* (to have hopes) etc.: and women friends say *mubārak, salāmat!* i.e., "may you be blessed and the child be safe!" to the expectant mother.

The Satwānsā : in Delhi.

When the seventh month begins the woman's parents bring her *sadhaur*,¹ a Hindu custom. This *sadhaur* consists of seven kinds of vegetables, dried fruits, cakes, etc., and at 4 p.m. the woman's lap is filled with these things; then she bathes and is dressed in coloured garments, with a red sheet over her head, and flower ornaments are put on her—to make her, as it were, *again a bride*. Her husband's sisters then fill her lap with the seven kinds of fruit, etc., and receive presents of money in return. They get the vegetables, dried fruit, the head-sheet, and the rupees of the *neg*,² all the rest being divided amongst the other members of the family. A cocoanut is then broken in half; and if the kernel be white the woman will have *uylā phūl* or white fruit, i.e., a boy. This cocoanut is called *jhandālu*, or "hairy," just as a new-born child is so called.³

The Naumāsā : in Delhi.

At the beginning of the ninth month, the woman's parents send her various presents, including a red veil, seven kinds of fruit, *neg* for the husband's sisters, and rupees to buy the *panjîrî*,⁴ which must be made at the woman's house. Her lap is filled, as in the *satwānsā*, by the husband's near kinswomen. The midwife at this stage rubs the woman with oil, and receives a fee, to which all the women contribute. The fruit is the perquisite of the husband's sisters, together with the *neg* and the red veil, as before. The midwife gets the nail-parer, one of the presents given by the woman's parents, and the silver oil cup used for the oil. The woman now goes to her parents' house—an observance called *pāon phernā*, or turning the feet, with some *panjîrî*, and returns some six or seven days later, bringing with her fresh fruit and sweets. After the *naumāsā* is finished, the midwife goes to buy the *kholā*⁵ or various drugs required for the confinement.

¹ *Sadhaur* is said to mean seven things in Hindî. In some families it is brought in the fifth month.

² *Neg* is any customary present at weddings, etc., made to relatives or to servants, *v.* Shakespeare's *Hindustani Dictionary*, s.v.

³ In songs a new-born child is often so termed : *cf. holar*.

⁴ *Panjîrî* consists of five (whence the term) ingredients, viz., dry dates, gum, water-lily seed, cocoanut and ginger—all mixed with *sājî* or meal and fried in *ghî*.

⁵ Cf. *supra*, p. 279 : the word seems to have a different meaning in Sirmûr.