



A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MARRIAGE CEREMONIES AMONG KASHMIRI PANDITS AND KASHMIRI MUSLIMS

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ABSTRACT

Hindus and Muslims have coexisted harmoniously when Islam became the predominant religion in Kashmir since 13th century. The Sufi-Islamic way of life of Kashmiri Muslims and the Rishi tradition of Kashmiri Hindus coexisted and complemented one another, forming a separate ethnic group in which both have some common customs. In Kashmir, the customs surrounding marriage are intriguing. The major events that occur in marriage are the same. It is evident that there are numerous similarities between the rites of Kashmir's Muslims and Hindus, such as the special significance of salt and walnuts and the use of mehendi dye. Both faiths have the Laganchir, Phirsal, Gulmuith, the attire and titles of the Maharaz and Maharein, among other things, in addition to the use of Mehendidy. The goal of the current study is to investigate the historical backdrop of the marriage system used by Muslims and Kashmiri gurus. However, the article's main focus has been on how marriage customs have evolved over time.

Keywords- Vivah, Gandun, Guilmuth, manziraat, Dowry, Roth Khabar

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is the cornerstone of civilization, and every civilised people cares about keeping it alive since the family is such an integral part of society. Marriage is essential because it forms the bedrock of society. The Pandits held that marriage was the pinnacle of human development because without it, the continuation of offspring and the ceremonial offering of food and drink to manes via them would cease. It's considered immoral for parents to try to set up their children's marriages, especially their daughters. Marriage among the Pandits is not always the product of individual choice or consent, but rather a carefully structured covenant between two families. It resulted in the joining of not just two people and two families, but also two separate houses. The Pandits were quite selective about which families their daughters would join in marriage. The parents of the girl would be the ones to make the official proposal, albeit a lot of groundwork would have been done

beforehand. Correctly adjusting the boy and girl's horoscopes would determine which partner the family would select. Therefore, the first step in the process would be for the girls' side to obtain a copy or outline of the guys' horoscope. A Priest would be dispatched to obtain this horoscope or outline, and he would keep the ladies' identities secret until it was determined whether or not their horoscopes were compatible. When this was done, discussions could begin, and if the horoscopes didn't match, the subject would be dismissed immediately.

For the Pandits, marriage was an important rite because of its symbolic significance. Many ceremonies were held between the two families. Ceremonies of both Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic origin were carried out. The nuptial rituals performed in various parts of the world also vary. Because of the country's deep-seated religious and social conservatism, however, the general aspects of the Samaskara have persisted from the Vedic period to the current day and may be seen all throughout India. Now that we have your attention, we can talk about the most fundamental protections and rites of passage associated with becoming married. What we're talking about are the traditions surrounding a marriage between two Pandits in Kashmir. Marriage is seen as a positive step in the perspective of the religious canon, or Shariat, as well as a social link. This is also a fascinating time in a Muslim's life since it marks the beginning of his transition into adulthood. The topic is worthy of a comprehensive analysis. The couple, together with the bride's and groom's parents, are eagerly anticipating this momentous event. At this ceremony, old animosities are set aside and a new relationship is forged. Traditional marriage customs and ceremonies vary widely from one part of the world to another and even within the same country. Religion, caste, sect, location (rural vs. urban) and socioeconomic position of the prospective spouse all play a role in shaping these differences.

Marriage ceremony or Vivah among Kashmiri Pandits

Types of Marriage

Marriage with dowry was considered the ideal of the three marriage options available to Kashmiri Pandits. Ideally, from the perspective of the Pandits, a marriage should be



completely free of any negotiation on either side. The second form of this phenomenon, known as "give and take off ladies with presents and money," was founded on the premise of giving and receiving women. The third style of marriage saw the bride making monetary and in-kind gifts to the groom's family. Once the horoscope was confirmed and a home was selected, the two families would begin formal negotiations with the help of a Priest, mutual friend, family, or intermediary. The proposal's other potential acceptor would have the last say. Before the other side's idea could become actionable, there would be a lot of questioning and ear splitting.

The tooth (the unit of currency and gift giving) would now be in effect. In most cases, a girl's teeth can tell us about her father's financial situation and social standing. The situation was then given careful thought. In the end, the contract's outcome was determined by factors such as the parties' respective family trees, economic standing, and the identity of their respective gotras or originating clans. If both parties are in agreement, some elder males from each side will assemble at the home of a mutual friend or relative on an auspicious day to take an oath at a modest ceremony called Drei- Kasam. For his part, the groom's dad has promised his future daughter-in-law the same loving treatment he gives his own daughter. The father of the bride-to-be gives his blessing, and the bride and groom exchange flowers as a sign of their commitment. Betrothal was to follow the Drei-kasam ritual. Once the kumkum was exchanged, the auspicious thread was knotted around the wrists of the girl and the boy. The family of the bride was obligated to shower the groom and his family with expensive presents, both monetary and otherwise.

Promise Giving

Beholding a betrothal (Gandun or Binding) ceremony was seen as a mark of social status for affluent families, and so, news of an upcoming wedding was spread through word of mouth. People from lower socioeconomic status attempted to avoid it. A Wakadan or Drie kasam, swearing ceremony is commonly held among specific families as a kind of betrothal or vow offering. However, neither of these rites had any legal weight between the two couples.

Devagon was the next major ritual in the order of importance (the invocation to 64 Yognis). In both the bride's and groom's homes, the family priest would perform religious rites and the couple would undergo a purification ceremony by bathing in milk and puja

water. The dowry that the bride was to receive was blessed with some of the puja water. With the Devagon ceremony, the bride was officially initiated into Brahmanism. A massive lunch was served to only the maternal ancestors around noon. Dur- Butta was the name given to this ritual.

Lagan or Nuptial Ceremony

The third or principal ritual was the last and busiest, when the lagan or marriage was finalised. This procedure would take all day, evening, and night. The groom wore an Achkan and Choridar Pyjama with a saffron Turban. In a procession of family, friends, and children, he would go from his house to his bride's. Depending on the Hindu calendar, the family priest would pick an auspicious time for the barat or wedding procession. The procession would go by boat or foot, except for the groom. As the "wedding procession approached the bride's residence, conches were blasted and a relative or honoured guest would meet the company. The bridegroom would stand on the Vyug before entering the main building (a circular pattern drawn on the ground in dry colours)." Women chanted blessings and blew conches. The bride was taken to the Vyug and stood on the groom's left. She'd stand with her head bowed, scarf from head to foot.

The yazmanbai stepped in wearing a "Pheran, bound at the waist by Loongi, and stretched Taranga would come out holding a thali of light lamps made from kneaded flour, flowers, and candies, which she would pass around the bride and groom's heads. She gave the bride and groom sweets and kissed them on the forehead."

The bride and groom were given the sacred fire following the Darpuza (threshold worship). Depending on when the Lagan took place, the party and groom were fed. Lagan's most exciting event may have been the Athwas, but it was different in spirit. Complete strangers, the bride and groom were requested to cross their hands. Under a cloak, they would tussle for the bride's ring. The bride and groom saw each other's faces in a mirror. Seven coins were led around the sacred fire in the Sapta-padi rite. The couple stepped on them. The groom then led the bride across the seven coins, holding her hands. The priest made him repeat the phrase as he guided her over the seven coins. "The bridegroom would feed her, look after her health, give her wealth, be responsible for her well-being, give her offspring, be good to her always, and be her friend." This rite makes the marriage



irrevocable. After the priest read aloud from holy writings about these seven processes, the two were claimed to have shed their individual identities and became one. The bridegroom gave walnuts to the bride, who gave them to her father-in-law, who blessed her. This may have been symbolic of the idea that the husband's children would be patrilineal.

The bridegroom and his party returned home after the Lagan ceremony. Before leaving the bridegroom's house, the Vyug ceremony was repeated. The Vyug ceremony would be repeated in the bridegroom's house, and then the pair would enter. The pair would be welcomed by the groom's sister, or maternal or parental aunts in some situations. Zambrand or money for the bridegroom.

On the same day or the next if the Lagan was done at night, the bride's father gave the new son-in-law a feast. Younger bridegroom siblings joined the couple at the feast. They'd give the bridegroom substantial cash and kind gifts, and the bride a new dress. Sat-Raat was the function. This isn't conducted on Tuesday, Thursday, or Saturday, thus the date had to change. Late at night, the pair returns home, where the bridegroom's mother is waiting with curd, chocolates, and special bread.

Roth Khabar

After a few days (often between two and four), the bridegroom's family would get a suit for the bride and a huge cake baked especially for the occasion by Roths. Every neighbour, relative, and acquaintance received a Roth. Roth Khabar was the common name for this phenomenon. For religious festivals, both Hindus and Muslims would bake a particular form of bread called roth, which they called kahabar, which meaning either health or message. As a result, it could signify the bride's parents wishing their son-in-law and his family well. The Shushar ritual was held in the month of Poh, or December. The house of the groom would be a great place for a non-vegetarian meal for family, friends, and neighbours celebrating the wedding. This wedding would also be another occasion where the bride would receive gifts.

Zuji (marriage proper)

The marriage ceremony took place here. In the event of an adult couple, it was done during the wedding, but for a minor, it was put off until the child reached puberty. During this time, the girl would swap out her usual headwear for something new, such as a Kal- Posh, Zuji, Taranga, or Putsi, and she would also cinch her waist with a girdle. Father of the

bride would host son-in-law and spend a lot of money on a lavish meal to celebrate the event.

Dowry

The tradition of the dowry appears to have persisted from ancient times. In fact, among the Pandits of Kashmir, the dowry system was held up as a virtue or ideal. The dowry system became almost legally binding as time went on. Many families were put in the position of taking on enormous debt at prohibitive interest rates. This causes them to devote nearly half of their lives to stress and debt repayment. In addition, the Pandits maintain a tradition called as Proog. In order to visit his married daughter, a Pandit father is supposed to pay a monetary gift.

Marriage ceremony among Kashmiri Muslims

Marriages within the relation circle

Pundits marry outside of their family circle. It's against the Muslim habit of intermarrying within the family, with a few exceptions. Some families favour cousin marriages. This technique is being abandoned for many reasons. Thus, the Muslims' inclination for cousin marriage was distinct. "The desire to keep the family pure and free from alien blood is why cousin marriage is still popular in most families."

Khana Damad

If this was not possible, "the father of the girl would seek men of his own class or tribe (who had more sons) for a boy to take as Khana Damad (a resident son-in-law who lived at his wife's residence)." This custom was common among cultivators and Hanjis (boatmen), but it has been abandoned and weddings are now arranged even outside the circle of relatives.

Drei Kasam

The marriage proposal is formalised when a suitable match is found. Drei Kasam (an oath taking ceremony). Soon later, the middle man was summoned in to deliver the message of acceptance and the date of Nishani. When both sides were satisfied with the match, a date was set for Gandun's announcement. Mangini or Kurmai were other names. The boy's father and some relatives visited the girl that day. They carried Majmas (trays) with sugar candies, dried fruits (particularly dates), sweets, jewellery, garments, and cash. Tea and



dinner were offered. The Nishana or Engagement was then declared, formalising the connection. Gandun function (signifying the acceptance of relationship).

Betrothal

Soon after, the bride's father would pay a visit to the prospective groom's home, usually accompanied by only two or three close relatives. As on Nishani, the bridegroom was given gifts and money. Haziri is the local word for this purpose. In addition to this event, the boy's parents traditionally give gifts to the girl's family on all major Islamic holidays leading up to the wedding.

There was no set time restriction between the engagement and the wedding after Nishani, and the ceremonial practise of giving and receiving continued right up until the couple tied the knot. Various social rites were observed, not just Nishani or engagement. However, few of these were officially sanctioned by any sort of religion or ritual. In most cases, a year or more would pass between the Nishani and the wedding.

Doeh Ganden

After much discussion and negotiation, the happy couple settled on a precise date for the wedding ceremony. A formal written contract, called a saat namah, is exchanged a few days after the couple has agreed on a wedding date orally (invitation cards).

Marriage Ceremony

After saat namah, wedding preparations began. When the wedding date approached, numerous rites were done in succession, beginning with Mass Mucharavun or removing hair plaits, followed by Mala Menz. On that eve, neighbourhood women were invited and fed tea, close relatives and neighbours gathered, and some groomed the bride's hair while others sang in chorus. It was a female job. Menzirat came next (henna night). Hinna, symbol of marriage, was spread on the bride's hands and feet. "Generally, a boy's palm or finger was daubed and the ceremony was performed with equal zeal and marriage as in the bride's home. Manz Raat began the celebrations. Neighbors, relatives, and close friends sing on that eve. While Henna was applied to brides' hands and feet, the remaining henna was applied to the participating women' hands and feet. Priority was given to unmarried females, as it was believed they too would marry soon." The groom's parents send him Hinna. Singing women would carry it. From henna night till the wedding, family poured

into the bride's home. Tumbankari (a Kashmiri musical organ) would be played, not an empty pitcher.

Gulemauth

Kashmiri Muslim wedding guests gave financial gifts to the bride and groom in their houses. Locals called it Gulemauth. Close relatives of the bride or groom's parents donated gifts such lambs, blankets, and food grains to ease their load on the wedding day. Pooh was this practise. On this eve, the groom and his relatives and friends prepared to visit the bride. The boy prepared during the day. After a bath, he'd get a haircut and dress like a Maharaja in extravagant clothes and shoes (or the conquering hero of the occasion). Elderly family members usually wear silk turbans. After adequate grooming, he was transported to a nearby shrine to worship. It was also common to visit an ancestral graveyard to request the blessings of ancestors, especially the father or grandpa, for the blissful union of the couple.

A palanquin and gifts were sent to the bride's house an hour before the wedding. Four or six people carried the bride's palanquin to her in-laws' house. When everyone was ready, the wedding procession left late at night. The party walked modest distances. In case of a long travel to the bride's home, boats or togas with a magnificent horse would be used. During our study session, torchbearers ignited the wedding procession, and women singing joyous songs followed them. Horse keeper demanded Koltar if procession crossed a bridge (fairly charges). Immediately, he was given money. Even today, when travelling by car or bus, the bridegroom must pay the driver symbolic fees for traversing the area.

“As the company arrived at the bride's residence, the women would sing them happy songs. Rof (women standing in a half circle singing songs of welcome and wan-woon or praising the bride and groom) would be performed. As the bridegroom entered the welcome arena, he was showered with sherin (soft crystal candy pieces) and ground nuts.

If both parties are adults, the Nikkah must be done in their presence. According to societal custom, neither bride nor groom comes before the Priest. Instead, they are each represented by a close relative, such as a maternal or parental uncle or brother, who secures their approval in front of two witnesses and an attorney. Nikkah includes all six names. Each side had three representatives: Wakeel and two witnesses. The bride's family would



inform her of the marriage in place of a predetermined dower or Mehr and ask for her agreement at the Nikkah ceremony. In the valley, as in other areas of the country, the bride's silence meant she accepted the proposal. After getting the bride's agreement, the party would return to the Kazi. He would then recite the Khutbah in Arabic, which included Holy Quran passages and Prophetic traditions, and invoke heavenly blessings on the marriage." Ijab-o-Qabul, the acceptance offer, followed. The Qazi and everyone present then prayed for the couple's love and marriage. After praying, the Wakeel would go to the women's chamber to execute the marriage. After Khutba, relatives and others received dates and sugar balls. Wakalatan is a popular form of Nikkah.

Bridegroom and his guests were served Kahwah and Bakerkhani after the Nikkah ceremony. They're now provided with milk, cakes, biscuits, and sweets. After dinner, four people shared big copper plates called Trami. Dinner included meat, veggies, and curds. After the bride's Wazwan (dinner in honour of the bridegroom), only the bridegroom and a few close relatives and friends stayed to see the bride prepared by her people. Late at night, the groom rode home on horseback with his bride in a palanquin.

Conculsion

The Kashmir valley is becoming a homogenous civilization, with just a tiny minority of Muslims, Pandits, and Sikhs coexisting and conserving their customs. The Muslim and Hindu wedding customs in the valley are rapidly changing as a result of modernization, liberalisation, and changing communications systems. The majority of weddings are quite extravagant, with hundreds of meat dishes served in Wazwaan and millions spent on gifts like gold that are divided between the two families. However, many weddings these days are rather simple since some young people choose to wed using the Khazran-peth-Khandar method or marrying by giving out dates. Even though some Islamic-minded, pious families want to forgo as many rites as they can, a Walima is nonetheless given to as many guests as their financial circumstances allows.

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