



SUMAIRA GUL



THE SLUMS CULTURE

The Slums Culture

The Life and Life Style of our Migrants

Sumaira Gul

ROMAIL HOUSE OF PUBLICATIONS

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This Book is Dedicated to:

Mr. Arif Hassan

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PREFACE

In the contemporary world, the choice of such a book seems quite odd! It encompasses habitat, lifestyle, social upbringing, livelihood, food, education, and health facilities. The population in urban centers is gradually rising despite the hardships of life and majority of the population comprises people attached with poor strata of society.

An effort has been made to compile a work on their lifestyle, which is our asset. This will not only enlighten the future generations about their past but will also pave a pathway for the developed nations. It will also be a reflection for the people living here to think about shedding bad traditions and embracing the good ones.

By looking upon these traditions and lifestyles people will be able to tread upon their sacred land more proficiently. It will bring continuity into the local wisdom because it has been felt that the inhabitants fail to portray their neighborhood to the others because of the inferiority complex. They have been made to realize that this is a poor habitat where people from the marginalized communities are living, and here lives as a horde of uneducated people.

Perhaps, Sumaira Gul is the pioneer and the first person to graduate from such a township who is wrote this book.

It has been attempted to bring the people out of the showoff and make them realize the freedom and human rights as well as local culture, customs, and lifestyle so that they embrace these ways emphatically because it is the basic right of every human being.

The author has made tremendous strides in achieving the status she has among the social fabrics of Pakistani society. It was because of her tremendous journey that she represented her areas in town assembly at local bodies system which is quite an achievement in the local society where women are often thought to be of lower strata of society.

I pray to Allah Almighty to give such a force to her that she will be reckoned as a true patriot.

Amen

Hamidullah

A BRIEF NOTE ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sumaira Gul's parents migrated from Abbottabad way back in the 1970s to earn their livelihood in Rawalpindi. Her upbringing was done in the marginalized area of the city. She graduated from Viqarun Nisa College.

From the worth go, she had to support her parents financially because her parents did not have a male child. She did some social work in a local social welfare organization and became a teacher at a primary school. It was because of her social activities she headed an organization and joined politics and made a name for herself in the city.

It was because of her social work, US Ambassador to Pakistan Wendy Chamberlin personally met her and invited her to visit the United States. Ambassador of European Union Kate Jewell also met her.

She has been bestowed upon with Human Rights award by President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari, whereas the United Nations has also given her TUGI Award in honor of her services for urban development. She has undertaken several foreign tours to take part if training programs. This is her first book.

VOTE OF THANKS

First of all, I am personally grateful to Mr. Hamidullah who gave me an idea that apart from penning down my diary on daily basis and doing social work, I should do some creative work as well, meaning I should write something. Not only did he succeeded in persuading me to do it, but also advised me to write about the inhabitants of the poor neighborhood about which people are reluctant to even tell the world that they were born there or they are living there. After detailed consultations with him, I was able to act upon my thoughts or give words to my imaginations.

Sometimes I penned down my thoughts under the trees, in my office, or in my drawing-room. But I took the services of Mr. Arif Hashim to type them on the computer for me. It was a hard task for him too and I am thankful to him.

Whenever, he brought back a chapter to me, he usually asked a simple question in Punjabi, Madam when and how do you get time to think of such things? Then I usually replied that Mr Arif, it is not an imagination, but my experiences which I have personally experienced or saw it happen before my eyes and these experiences and permanently imprinted on my heart. Then I will express my gratitude for my young staff, Ishtiaq, Ali, and

Asadullah who assisted me in social and literary work at a time when youngsters of their age always tried to escape such responsibilities and preferred meandering around. And their commitment always enlightened my spirit. I am also grateful to Mr. Arif Hasan, Mr. Fayaz Baqir and Mr. Ghulam Mohammad Naz who not only remarked on my book but also galvanized me.

When the time to get this book printed arrived, Mahmood Faisal Raja from Kitabsaz Publications not only printed but also reviewed it while pictures for this book were photographed by Raja Khalid, photographer for The News. I am thankful to all of them. Shehzad Ahmad Fayaz designed its title and when it was ready.

Sumaira Gul

CUSTOMS AFTER THE CHILDBIRTH

In the developed nations everything is quite settled. They decide well in advance as to who will be the doctor to deal with the pregnancy. What will be the child's name? Whether the case will be normal or cesarean and if it will be cesarean then at which hospital and which gynecologist will handle the case. Who will be the first to hold the baby in his/her hands and who will follow them. The child's star and name, perhaps everything is planned well in advance.

But in our poor neighborhoods, the child is often born at the hands of midwives and nobody has ever questioned their qualification, nor does anybody know what sort of training they have undergone to proclaim their experience. It is only told that between midwife, Munawar, and midwife, Kareema; midwife, Munawar is far more experienced and she is often portrayed to have delivered many youngsters who are grownups at the time of the latest pregnancy.

The midwife is often summoned at the peak when a woman is undergoing labor pain by the family head. And the midwife slumbers towards the home with different syringes, in a shopping bag. She proudly tells the concerned family members about the person who was born through her hands around 25 years ago and it is quite astonishing that she even remembers their given name and date of birth. She even tells the family that this is not the first case of its

kind for her as she has handled other such cases before it. In every locality housing around 10,000 populace, around four to five of such midwives are present who have either died or on the deathbed but have trained one of their family members or a woman in the neighborhood about the midwifery.

When the midwife enters the home, either the child is already born or he is near birth. The midwife most of the time has zero time to use injection and sometimes the midwife has to make two to three rounds before the birth and she gives another date for the childbirth and leaves.

Now when the child is born, the baby is given in the hands of the relatives who themselves bathe the baby whereas the midwife only shows her concerns by only giving advice. Then the child is given his first dress which is often second hand and gifted by a family member a month ago. Sometimes, the newlywed woman often stitches some frocks and shirts for the baby without the knowledge of her family members, but she could not put them to use fearing the family elders because they think for the first forty days after the childbirth, the baby has to wear secondhand clothes.

One of the reasons behind this logic is that the new clothes are often coarse and secondly they have no idea what is the quality of the cloth. But above all, wearing old clothes will stave off the evil and also save money.

Often, a child is clothed in a shirt, and if it is winter then a sweater with a three-cornered loincloth, which has been replaced by pampers these days. The child is then wrapped in a cloth according to the weather conditions. Sometimes the baby is even tied with a rope to make him/her grapple with its tightness and the family elders think it will enable the baby to deal with the tough life ahead and have strong nerves and great willpower. Baby has to sport a cap, a handkerchief on the head, or a small headband so that his forehead remains in place and does not fall out too much. It is imagined that by doing so the baby will become a child with broad forehead who has a good fate in his life.

Generally, a small round pillow is placed under the baby's head which is often made up of rice or wheat grains or sand while in many instances a clay plate is placed under the child's head and whenever a question is raised as to why it has been placed under the head, the family members reciprocate that it has been done to bring the head of the child into a round shape. But now in modern times, a ready-made pillow made up of cloth and cardboard is easily available for ten to twenty rupees. The child is not kept straight but often his sides are changed with frequent intervals.

After the first day, the child is massaged with sesame oil and the process continues for around two to five years whereas the sesame oil is used for several medical issues of the child for many years. Even I did the same for my kids. Whenever my kids cried I

applied sesame oil on their belly and if they cried again the sesame oil is poured into their ears and if the baby still cried garlic burned into sesame oil is applied into the belly button which was cut off by the midwife in a hope the sesame oil and garlic potion will relieve the pain. Even a cloth is burnt and its ash is applied on a baby's belly button. I watched the women of poor localities practice these things.

Now let's talk about the eyes of a kid. 'Surma', a powder which is applied into the eyes is brought well before the childbirth into the home by the grandmother. An experienced woman applies this 'surma' into the eyes of the child and makes a mark on the forehead to cast of the evil eye. Now the child is absolutely ready and people come to see him. Whoever breaks the childbirth news into the family members or the neighborhood is often given a gift which we used to call a surprise or 'zeera'. Among the 'Pustho' speakers, the first question often raised is who gave the child 'ghutti' and who called the Azan in kid's ears. Any family elder can say the Azan into the kid's ear, but 'ghutti' is a permanent headache because it is considered the child always follows the traits of the person who has given him/her the 'ghutti'. When the child grows up, and if he does something wrong or is lazy or is over-smart then he is cursed and compared with the person who gave him/her the 'ghutti'. Therefore, the issue is considered quite seriously as to who will perform the 'ghutti'. Sometimes, the midwife has caster sugar with her

which she gives to the child settling the family's headache once and for all. Maternal or paternal grandmothers often prepare special 'ghutti' made up of pure ghee, sugar or 'gurr' (jaggery) and after warming up this thing it is distilled into a small pouch and the kid is given it as a nipple to suck upon. Sometimes 'qehwa' (green tea) is also given as 'ghutti'. These days medical stores have a ready-made 'ghutti' which is not recommended by the doctors but in these localities, people use it in abundance.

After successful completion of all things, the child is fed upon this 'ghutti' for a fortnight. The child is breastfed after three days and that too after special prayers. But now the circumstances and media awareness has also made the people realize that the baby should be instantly breastfed after birth. But the mother's relatives keeping in view her turmoil keep the baby away from her for some time at least.

A mother's breast is cleansed with warm water and all the blackheads are removed. Feeders are not common in poor localities but sometimes they too feel the need to use them. But thanks to the cost of the formula milk which is quite high, it is not the first choice by anyone. The mother's milk is a cheap source of nutrition therefore it is highly recommended and is used by poor families.

Now the time comes for naming the child. This is a tricky situation for the entire family and it often leads to fight between the maternal and paternal families of

the baby and if it is the birth of a second or third child then it is ensured that what is the proportion of naming the kids. Questions are asked as how many kids were named by the maternal aunt and to how many of them were named by a paternal aunt. And in case the naming jury fails to reach a decision then the parents give at least three names to their child and paternal uncles call him/her with a separate name and the maternal uncles and aunts call him separately while the parents in order to maintain paucity between the two families call their child, 'Guddu', 'Pappu', 'Mani', 'Shani', 'Mano' or 'Guriya'.

The child only learns of his real name, which is either registered or is in documents, when he reaches the school.

A week after the normal delivery, a woman has to presume her normal family duties. In the name of charity, normally black chickpeas are distributed in the vicinity after a family elder offers some prayer. While in some families, 'halwa' or rice are distributed and the baby's mother is asked to prepare tea for everybody and if the child is born through cesarean then the entire process mentioned above is completed after the stitches are removed.

Later comes the time of shaving off the head of the child which is done a week after the childbirth. Whether it is a girl or a boy, the barber is called at home who shaves the baby's head, for which he is paid around two hundred to three hundred rupees as well as a box of sweat meat. Usually, the hairs

removed from the first child of the family are kept safely in a box at the house as a good omen. I remember, my mother secured hairs of my first son in a box where hairs of my elder sister are also preserved.

Usually, the child is not registered and a form provided by the municipality is usually preserved by the family in which names of all the kids according to their birth are written. Around two to three decades ago, the kids who got registered with the registration authority were deemed quite lucky. But these days, the system has been smoothed by the local bodies system. In every union council office, a form is available for Rs20 and parents can fill the child's detail in it and submit it in the union council office after attaching their computerized national identity cards with it and within a week child's birth certificate can be attained from the union council office.

These days the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) also prepares the B-Forms, but in poor neighborhoods, families seldom use NADRA platform for getting the B-Forms. They make the B-Forms when the child is going to get registered in the school and that too when the matter is about admission in a government school.

Several years ago, for every two to three union councils, a combined spot generally a government dispensary was allocated for the administration of vaccines to newly born kids. There, the children were administered vaccines at the beginning or end of every month. These

vaccine injections left marks on the bodies of the kids which remained with them till youth.

These days the facility of dispensaries has been done away with, now, under the District Health Department polio vaccination teams visit these localities and administer anti-polio drops and other vaccines to children less than five years of age. Now the people of these localities also do have some knowledge and awareness and they visit the district hospitals in the nearby cities to get their child vaccinated. Now the government organizes vaccination drives bi-annually to facilitate public where children under five years of age are administered vaccines.

It is quite unlucky and shameful for the society where female child is often deemed as a burden on parents. Their birth is not celebrated in the locality nor do the midwives demand suits as a gift on their births, whereas, if a boy is born, the family has to bear lots of expenses. Eunuchs and dancers come in abundance demanding some money as a gift on the boy's birth. The relatives and neighbors demand sweetmeat.

The biggest cost for the family after a boy's childbirth is the circumcision. The people who have awareness succeed in getting their child circumcised within a week of his birth, while others keep on planning the event for around a year deciding that the boy will be circumcised when one of his uncles will be engaged or married later in the year. And if there is no marriage or engagement is nearby, then a proper marriage-like ceremony is organized for two to three

days. Earlier, it was the responsibility of a barber to circumcise the child, now a doctor or a quack can do the job and they charge around 500 to 2000 rupees for the task.

From childbirth till the circumcision ceremony, families continue to pour on gifts in the shape of gold rings and other stuff on the newborns. It is considered as a tradition of 'loan' among the families as if they had given gifts on the birth of a child in the family then they expect to receive similar favors on the birth of their child. For these lavish spending, a family often has to borrow money just to keep their status high in the family and they do pay the price for this lavishness.

LIVELIHOOD AND TRANSPORTATION

Rich families do have several imported and lavish cars at their disposal like Toyota, Honda, BMWs, Volkswagen, Willy Jeep as a fashion while many families use the vehicles provided by their offices. The head of a family has a separate vehicle and the housewife has a separate car while separate cars are used for pick and drop of kids from schools while family elders enjoy their own cars.

But in poor localities, people tend to use motorcycles. Usually, because of the smaller streets, it is quite difficult to keep cars. Most of the poor people's livelihood is attached with driving business and they either have their own vehicle or they hire taxis on rent to earn their livelihood. But they cannot imagine parking their taxis inside their homes what to say of parking it in the streets. Most of the streets are smaller than 20 to 30 feet.

Usually, many big parking lots have emerged in most of these marginalized areas where people park their vehicles on 10 to 20 rupees per day fees. But unfortunately, these parking sheds besides lacking protection from rain and heat also do not have a proper security system. People have to park their vehicles at their own risk and if their car is stolen they cannot make a claim of it with the parking owners. Sometimes youngsters, who want to learn driving or are fond of it, pay 50 to 100 rupees to the parking owner and use a master or a duplicate key to

use anybody's car and practice their driving skills in the nearby ground or a bigger street. Mostly the relatives of the parking owners' adopt this practice and have fun at other people's expenses. Even younger kids, who are not allowed to drive a car make full use of this opportunity by stealing the keys of their family car. Mostly they are caught and they have to pay the price for it.

I used to accompany my mother for grocery shopping on a horse cart usually called 'tongas', which usually provided us ride till bazaars on Rs5 to 7, but 9 years ago when the local bodies government ordered the eviction of dairy milk animals from the Rawalpindi Tehsil, these horse carts were also banned to ply in the city. This unfortunately snatched a good and inexpensive mode of transportation from the people of these localities and many lost their livelihoods.

But China came to the rescue of such people! Chinese made Ching-chi Rickshaws replaced the horse carts. In most of our localities, Suzuki pickups are plied on local routes whereas some Hiace vans are also being plied in these areas due to wider roads, but unfortunately they lack space. They either get filled at the first stop and the van drivers do not allow a single female to sit in the van and demand fare for two seats to facilitate a woman.

The auto-rickshaws which are run on CNG are a cheap mode of transportation. Mostly two to three women jointly hire a rickshaw and pay Rs50 to 60 instead of paying Rs45 for Ching-chi Rickshaw and

this rickshaw can enter smaller streets as well and is deemed as a safe mode of transportation for women.

Taxi is considered an expensive mode of transportation and is mostly engaged when some guests arrive from out of the city or is used by people who have come to the city for the very first time. People are forced to hire taxis either early in the morning or late at night or when they have to travel on Murree Road, Rawal Road, Islamabad, Cantonment or Mall Road where Ching-chi and rickshaws are not allowed to ply. While the newlyweds, or a boy who is on a date with his girlfriend hires a taxi to either impress the girl or hide her from their relatives or people in the knowhow.

People also do have horse or donkey carts, which besides being used as a mode of transportation are used for grocery shopping from nearby markets. The rotten or leftover fruit and vegetables are given to the horse or donkey as food. Small traders avail these modes of transportations for replenishing their stocks. In some instances, when the quite efficient, fast, and cheap mode of transportations are available people in these rural areas also use carts for goods transportation.

A large number of people had gone abroad for earning their livelihood during the era of late Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and when foreign remittances started to flow in these localities people started buying televisions, refrigerators, washing machines, good quality clothing, and jewelry while this

remittance also helped the people of these areas to build good homes. From every family, a person had gone abroad to earn the livelihood for an entire family. Our rural areas also have another source of livelihood. There are several courtyards in these localities where truck workshops have been established where besides repairing trucks; the mechanics also use their skills or calligraphy on these trucks. These days this art is called truck art.

In poor neighborhoods of Rawalpindi alone, this is quite a good business, while the people attached to this industry are completely illiterate. They are mostly the kids who have dropped out of school and these mechanics employed them as interneers. Although most of the people attached to this trade cannot write or read Urdu they possess such an impressive skill of decorating the trucks with intricate and beautiful calligraphy work or pictures that even a Master's degree holder or a Ph.D. cannot boast to have these skills. This art is quite popular among Europeans. Foreign tourists used to visit these courtyards and made pictures of these decorated trucks. Many a time these foreign tourists tend to order many items of their liking from these truck artists on the hefty amounts.

Since 9/11 the foreign tourists have stopped coming to Pakistan but they tend to make the orders of the truck art items from these courtyards through their representatives in Pakistan. In order to keep good terms with these foreigners, many Pakistanis gift items made by truck artists to them. Besides the work

is also utilized on making beautiful and intricate designs on stainless steel sheets at these courtyards which are also used in decorating the trucks. These courtyards are a good source of livelihood for many kids who earn respectable earning at their doorsteps.

LIVELIHOOD

Industrialists, feudal, and middle-class families are free of earning a livelihood. They only do business as cover-up or exhibition of their name. They have large sums of deposits in banks from which they have quite a smooth and hefty amount of earning. Like planning their children's birth, they also plan jobs and businesses for their kids. As soon as their kids finish their studies, either they are sent abroad for further studies or an internship or a job and business.

But in poor localities, people either have to work as daily wagers as drivers, masons, laborers, welding mechanics, or have to sell fruits and vegetables in markets. Some also have small shops or businesses to earn their livelihood. Some vendors use to sell their products like shoes, kids clothes, fruits and needles, second-hand shoes, and clothes by setting up their stalls along roads.

Almost all the vendors who use carts for selling fruits and vegetables are inhabitants of these areas. Whether they sell fruits and vegetables in posh localities they have to return to their homes in these downtown localities. Some small businesses are also established in the localities which have now developed into proper markets where beauty salons for women, shoes and readymade garments stores, crockery shops, meat, fruits, vegetables, grocery stores, jewelers, bakeries, 'tandoors' (clay ovens) and decoration shops have been established. Their prices

are a bit high because the traders or businessmen have employed people and besides paying rent they also have to keep margins of their profits and all of this has to come from their customers' pockets. They swear quite proficiently and sell inferior quality items at higher rate because it is just business.

In past due to scarce populations, these rural tend to have large chunks of grounds and fields where coriander, reddish and other vegetables were cultivated which were very inexpensive in these areas. But this source of living is quite scarce these days because the number of farms is limited. These areas tend to have a large 'baradree' (brotherhood) system and they had these farms which were the source of income for the entire family, but now these people instead of cultivating vegetables have started using these fields into housing societies where small two to three-room double storey houses are made. They have put up these houses on rent which are a good source of income for them. The people who come from villages to earn livelihood in the cities hire these cheaper homes because they are close to the markets.

Besides, some good and respectable livelihoods in these areas, since Zia era and presence of Afghan refugees, sale of drugs and narcotics as well as liquor also became a source of income for the locals. The Afghan refugees brought opium and heroin from Afghanistan. 'Charas' (contraband) was already common in these localities. 'Desi' (homemade) liquor

was also common in these localities. From 1980 till 1990, this was a basic source of income for around 25 percent populace. This business spoiled future of two generations one, those who were already in their youth and the teenagers who are now in their youth remained attached to this business. They also became drug addicts. Even these days this business is in practice but not that open as was in my childhood. My neighbor's daughter sold 'Charas' (contraband) to people from her doorstep. We used to think these big pieces were chocolates. The 'Charas' (contraband) was kept on a cot in their courtyard and her mother and father both were doing this trade. Now the people attached to this evil and dirty business have either died or left the area. And their kids due to upbringing by their mothers have started earning their wages as laborers. These days, many influential of the area who besides becoming members of the local bodies as well as provincial Assembly and National Assembly have taken over the business. They sell liquor and drugs from their lavish homes. Gambling is also quite common in their homes right under the patronage of local police.

Some prostitutes who use to live along nullahs (drains) in these localities have vanished from the locality. Their children have left this trade by earning their livelihood through other means. Since my adulthood, I have not seen these women in the locality. Some married and left the area, some married the pimps from the same locality and left the

trade while some were killed and the remaining left the business altogether.

Another livelihood that was common in these areas in which women use to make both ends meet was dancing. I still remember that even till my college days and marriage and childbirth these women use to earn their livelihood through dancing. They had come to these areas after migrating from nearby villages and towns and even whole streets were named after them. They have also vanished now. Although their next generation did not follow their profession but have settled down in life while some married to people who were marrying for the second and third time.

Mostly the people of these localities earn their livelihood by doing labor at flourmills, cloth, and pulse mills, while some use carts to transport goods to the local grocery shops.

Every street has a small grocery shop, where, from kerosene oil to needles, everything is available, but at a cost almost double the market rate.

Most importantly this is the business of every person, who has no education or any kind of skills to earn his livelihood. The people who neither get a job anywhere nor have the resources to launch big businesses, set up their small business from their drawing rooms by selling kids' snacks and chewing gums. If the shop is located in a small street that the owner runs it to earn a livelihood for his children, but if it is located in one of the main streets then this

small shop will take no time in turning into a general store where shelves are full of grocery and other daily use items. This becomes a family business where first the man works himself then his son takes over it and later is taken over by his grandson. The women who are widowed and due to social pressure cannot go outside to earn a livelihood for their families start selling milk. They later start a shop in her home's drawing-room. This is not considered odious and even other shopkeepers and neighbors help her in running her shop.

It was till 2003 that along nullahs, especially localities along Nullah Lai, inhabitants from Hazara Division, Gujjar and Awan families had kept milk animals in their homes and they sold milk by mixing water in it. From this poor quality milk they moved on from Nullah Lai and other drains of the city to city areas where the entire Hazara Colony is housed by them and their water mixed milk business could have flourished further if it had not been for Tehsil Assembly to pass a resolution for eviction of dairy milk animals from city limits.

These people migrated to the suburbs of the city but their livelihood is still attached with milk business. They now use motorcycles and Suzukis and other vehicles to bring milk from suburbs to the city.

Besides people living along Nullah Lai and its nearby localities are attached to different businesses. These businesses are related to the butchery and the

processing of entrails and blood of slaughtered animals. Some families are earning their livelihood by burning animals' blood to make chicken feed.

Some people have set up their stalls of old clothes which they have either picked up from litter or bought from 'lunda' bazaars (secondhand clothes markets). They wash these old clothes, repack them, and sell them to the people working in nearby workshops. Mostly near bridges, people are selling these second-hand clothes.

Some people are attached to shoes and tire business which has helped these families accumulate good resources. It is because of financial constraints, women from these families have also started earning their livelihood through different respectable means.

Some earn their livelihood by working as maids in posh areas. Some stitch clothes at their homes. Earlier, around 50 percent of women from these areas worked as rag pickers or prepared cow dung cakes.

Those who studied to some extent are now working in nearby medicine, oil, and cloth factories. The people of these localities are attached to different livelihoods but the one thing they have in common is they do labor or small-time business, while the people who have a large business in nearby localities are not inhabitants of these localities they only come to do their business.

If luckily a person from the said locality is successful in becoming a big businessman or a shopkeeper, his

family leaves the locality and migrates to a better locality and their house is purchased by another poor person. Some women make paper flowers or envelopes in their homes after a middleman orders them to do so. He sells it in the market after buying it from them.

HOMES

Privileged people make homes to satisfy their inner self. If they are in polygamy then they have to buy separate homes for their wives and if they have many kids then they will get a home ready for their kids. If these privileged people use to visit other cities or countries they take ideas from the homes designed by professional architects and get their homes ready like them. In our localities there is no hard and fast rule for building a house.

A person buys land according to his pocket-size, whether it is 3, 5, 7 or 10 marlas land, while some can afford to buy 10 marlas space, but in most cases, majority has around 5 marla (1250 sq. ft.) space and around two to three generations have to make concerted efforts to make the dream of their home comes true. It has never been a case that a person who purchased a plot was able to construct his house in his life time. In most cases people who tend to migrate from nearby towns and villages to the cities in search of jobs rent out a house which in most cases is a single room and the tenants have to use landlords' washroom that most probably is built on first floor, rooftop or under the staircase. The underground sewerage in 10 to 20 per cent homes is also built inside the homes, which is disposed of through small drains inside the houses while the rest is disposed of in the main streets. In several instances the sewerage pipes are connected with main sewerage line without any treatment on self-help basis.

If a family before migration to cities has four to five kids then until and unless these kids are fully grown up, the family lives in rented houses. They have to rent out a two room house sometime in one street or locality and sometime in another. Sometimes it is a single storey house and sometimes it's on first floor and in the meantime the kids grow up. Till then if the family head has established good business and he or one of his kids has gone abroad or their family land back in their village which is of several kanals is sold they are able to buy land.

Sometime they do get share from their father or grandfather's property and by selling his wife's jewelry, the family is able to purchase a 3 to five marla plot.

Then the responsibility falls on the next generation's shoulder to make the dream of their parents to have a home of their own come true. As the family head has either fallen sick or died.

The old parents only have one dream and that is to watch their grandchildren play in their own home in front of them. Unfortunately their dream comes true only when they are on death bed.

In some cases shanty homes are built but the family is only able to paint it when a kid in the family is going to get married.

My father bought a similar house way back in 1979 and it had a courtyard and two rooms in it.

When my younger sister was about to get married we decided to get it repaired. My brother in law

asked a mason to make the construction estimates. He said that according to our budget we can built a room at the space of our kitchen because he wanted to extend his work and linger on. He also recommended that the kitchen could be rebuilt under the staircase near the bathroom for which he will built a concrete roof structure and the entire work will cost us around 20 to 30 thousand rupees and when my sister got the work started, she learnt how difficult it is to cope with such people. Despite spending 100,000 rupees the rooms and kitchen remained incomplete as they remained without doors and windows.

After 29 years when the work on new kitchen with our drawing room and the chips polish was finished, our father passed away.

Till 2008 all the homes in our vicinity were in similar condition these homes had seldom developed into second and third storey buildings. They only added rooms in their homes according to extension in their family members.

In many cases it is witnessed that the grandson of the first owner who had dreamt of a home has reached college level, but the family is still living in shanty homes. Mostly in 5 marla houses, the building comprises two rooms, one for the family to sleep and one is for guests which is mostly used as a drawing room and is always kept neat a tidy for guests. In villages it is called 'baithak' (drawing room) and its door opens in the street. It is meant to entertain the

guests at the outer precincts of the home and they do not have to bring them inside.

In these homes, the bathrooms were built mostly on rooftops and till the end of 1980 a sweeper used to wipe clean the washroom and around 30 to 50 rupees were paid to him every month for his work. After 1990s the bathrooms shifted from rooftops to the ground floors and since then the fashion of attached bathrooms is in practice on behest of newlywed brides. Only few people built underground sewerage gutters but many families built the four walls of the bathroom, lay down toilet seat and leave the sewerage pipes in the streets. This development led to elimination of a sweepers' role and cleaning of pots in the toilets.

Another culture of placing a clay pot under the roof drain has also vanished from our daily lives. While the concept of separate washroom for bathing has also ended.

These washrooms were usually built in the courtyard in front of the thatched roof verandahs where families also used to wash dirty utensils because most of these homes did not have a proper kitchen. The rooftop drain was connected with this washroom and the entire waste water was disposed of through the washroom drains.

Usually, when there were heavy downpours, the rainwater which was disposed of through the washroom drains also backlogged due to higher level of rainwater in the street drains. This rainwater used to damage household goods. Although at that time

the families did not have carpets at their disposal, but they had straw mats. If these mats were used on floor which had lots of potholes and if had they got wet from rainwater then they were placed in the sun for drying out for many days and reused.

The situation in many cases hasn't changed a bit. Some families whose kids have grown up and have become a bit modern have changed the nomenclature of their homes by replacing open drains with plastic pipes and kitchen waste disposal. They have also connected sewage drains with outside drains and a single drain has been turned into multi-drain system. All the washrooms in the homes have underground water storage tanks with a concrete or plastic water tanks at the rooftops for uninterrupted water supply for the house whereas in some cases people tend to add a tap to a water storage drum and use it by placing it on rooftops of their homes. However, around 20 percent of people have installed heating geysers whether they are run on electricity or gas. And if families living in a multi-story home had scuffles over geysers then two to three electricity and gas connections with meters were acquired by the families.

However, they had water pumps to fill their overhead water tanks either from WASA (Water and Sanitation Agency) supplied connections or from water acquired through water boring system. The system of wells has almost vanished.

In a populace of around 500 to 1000 homes a well could be found in only five to ten homes and if the water supply from main supply connections gets interrupted then these wells are used.

Earlier, the water lifted from the well through old oil canisters which were tied with rope. If unfortunately, someone dropped their canister in the well, then they had to take help from a family which had specially designed hooks made up of iron bars to lift the fallen cans from the wells. Usually the person failed to get his own fallen canister and got another canister which had fallen earlier in the well. They use the one which was in best of condition. These are all the memories of my childhood. Now the use of wells has almost vanished.

Now in the prevailing time, modern water supply system has made life a bit easy. But it also has a flaw, the water supplied by WASA is often contaminated with sewerage water as their lines sometime cross with sewerage lines and by chance if the pipelines are broken at some places then they mix up and supply unclean water to the homes which has contamination. Such water smells of rust and its consumption often leads to developing waterborne diseases. Doctors always ask their patients to use water after boiling. Therefore, people either on someone's advice or their own ideas consider well water quite safe, thinking it is emanating from the earth through a natural system and is safe for consumption.

Under the local bodies system, filtration plants have been installed in these localities through 'nazmeen' or 'naib nazmeen' funds. But it is quite unfortunate that only the rooms of these filtration plants which have tiled structures are in great condition, but the filtration system itself, remains out of order after four to five months because the machine used for the filtration plant is locally assembled and people in the nearby localities have made it.

The new filtration plant seldom works for four to five months and then nobody cares to change its filters and its taps are not changed or replaced after they are stolen by the drug addicts. When the local councilors raised their issue in their local body assembly, the Water and Sanitation Agency as well as Tehsil Municipal Administration disown them. They are declared illegitimate. However, the nazim, district nazim and in some cases senators and MNAs have inaugurated such filtration plants with great aplomb, as is evident from the plaques installed on these filtration plants. But after sometime nobody takes care of the condition of houses, filtration plants or the electricity pylons and the wires dangling from them.

However, the one thing which is quite abundant in these areas is the number of children and the rising population is the basic reason behind rising problems of our neighborhood like the rest of the country.

The house whether it is of 3 or 5 marlas which was built by the father for his six to seven kids and it had seven or nine rooms in it has to house around 30 to

40 people complicating the situation. Now with parents, five to six of their kids are forced to live in a single room.

There are some developments because every room has its own television set, in washroom there are shampoos and red soap has been replaced by safeguard and the bathrooms are cleansed with chemicals.

There is some development in the kitchens also as I remember that in past several kids used to sit near a stove in the kitchen on a cot and eat in an iron cast plate which had a single potato and a piece of meat, but now they have luxury of eating out of a bowl and they use a spoon, plate on sit a mat in the furnished part of the house. They also eat at the same time. Now these homes have wooden double beds. And the parents put the kids on separate cot and sleep in the double bed. Only they have to wait till their kids fall sound sleep.

DRESSING

Our people living in similar conditions use dresses according to their own culture and language. The only unanimous thing among them is their financial condition.

In these areas, people from different ethnic groups, dress up according to their traditional ways. You will find women wearing typical 'burqas' and many without a headscarf.

The only thing they have in common is a rapid rise in the use of modern dresses among them. Whatever dress whether it is a sari, trouser-shirt, or 'lehnga', the women of these areas fondly adorn their teenage girls with such dressing. On the other hand, if the grown-up women are lucky enough to get themselves a sari after saving some money, they are only allowed to adorn it and go to a ceremony wearing large shawls and wear a veil. But the family head, elder brother, son, or brother-in-law do not accompany them.

'Burqa' has now become a fashion statement, the 'burqa' is limited to Afghans or tribal women. It seems all the 'burqas' have been forced upon the girls and women in the Pashtun belt and tribal areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. There are several areas in the province like the Hazara Division, from where I belong. Several years ago when everybody used to adorn a 'burqa',

the women in our area use to wear a shawl, my grandmothers used special woolen shawls during winters while in summers they adorned a small headscarf. They had their shirts stitched in different fashions and lengths with baggy 'shalwars' which is now quite common in cities in the form of Patiala 'shalwars'. But when these women come to large cities or towns to meet their children who have migrated to these areas, they are forced to adorn large shawls and veils to cover themselves. It is a phenomenon that women from these open areas are not forced to cover up like the people who live in congested localities.

These things also do matter in these localities where people often have no other choice but to purchase clothes on Eid or wedding ceremonies. They either have to save some money or they join a monthly committee. They can also buy clothes on installments from street vendors who take an extra 200 to 300 rupees for a 300 rupee suit. And if they are unable to pay their monthly installment then ugly situations develop in their families.

After buying the dress, comes the phase of getting it stitched. In most cases, girls have learned the art of stitching from their mothers or family elders or a nearby sewing center. Some families also do have an old sewing machine which their mother had got in her dowry. The girls practice their skills on this machine and stitch the clothes of their younger siblings who can't speak, but the clothes of bigger kids are being

stitched from tailors. Men usually adorn 'shalwar kameez'. Some elderly men do sport a 'lungi'. They get the new dressing mostly on Eid.

The tailors take full benefit of the situation as they close the booking ten days into Ramadan provided they still continue to take orders from customers to rope in extra profits. Tailors also seem to have no other options as they also have families to feed and get Eid suits for their kids as well, which they have to purchase at the last moment on 'Chaand Raat.'

The younger generation seems least interested in 'shalwar kameez', and likes to wear pant shirts after watching TV dramas and copying students coming from other areas to their schools and colleges. They usually fulfill their desires by going to Jamia Masjid Road, Saddar, or old stalls near Railway Station. On every Friday, stallholders put old clothes on display at Ganjmandi Bridge. Most of the youngsters sport 'Kohati Chappli' or sandals while others have no other option but to sport new plastic slippers. Some of those who can't afford these luxuries find imported secondhand shoes from lunda bazaars. Women buy their shoes from shoe stores in their vicinity.

In many families, old dresses are very well utilized. In most families particularly among the Pashtun and rural areas, on the birth of a child, women of the family prepare a quilt or a mat for the kid from old clothes. A plastic sheet is also put in place in these mats to protect the mattress from being spoiled. Similarly, triangle shaped loincloths are also made

from old dresses of father or grandfather. Usually, till first forty days after the child's birth, the baby has to wear these old clothes.

The baby is given new clothes when he has to be taken to a doctor for a checkup or vaccination. In many families dresses of a dead relative or family member is given to relatives or poor neighbors so they can pray for the departed soul. A man dies but his clothes continue to be reused until and unless they are completely torn off or they are reused in quilts.

ENGAGEMENT

Like films in our homes too, the boy and girl put an engagement ring in each other's fingers. But in our neighborhood, the rituals for engagement are different.

When two families have reached the decision of marrying of their children then the first thing that comes to their mind is to get the youngsters engaged. They start visiting each other's home with sweetmeat or fruits and it sometimes took days or years to achieve success.

And many things are considered. The girl's family's financial condition, her family's status in society, her beauty, age are considered while the least preference is given to her education. These frequent visits help the boy's family understand everything about her. Similarly, the same process is adopted for the boy's family. And when all of these things have been understood then a proper proposal is send to the girl's family through elders of the family and when the girl's family says yes then a proper date of engagement is announced.

MARRIAGE

I have often felt that for rich and well-off families, marriage is always deemed as a business. They spend lavishly on their marriages. They plan the wedding well in advance. Which hotel or marriage hall will be booked for the reception and who will be the musician or which dancers' party will be invited to entertain the guests. Who will be the guest of honor for each and every event and how this event will be covered in electronic or print media. Which designer will be hired to prepare the bridal dress? Which makeup artists or saloon will be hired for bridal makeup? And where the honeymoon will take place? What sort of dishes will be served before the guests?

In downtown slums or poor localities, marriages are fixed formally. Some elderly of a family including men and women from groom's family visits the bride's home to fix the date which is usually fixed in winters or by the end of summer if there is no religious festival clashing with the dates of the marriage ceremony. Most of the time, marriage dates are not fixed in the months of Ramazan, Rabi-ul-Awal and Muharram ul Haram, whereas the majority of families used to fix dates after Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-u- Azha. The marriage ceremonies continue for many days and festivities like 'dholak' where women from the families of bride and groom at their homes are joined by girls from their respective neighborhoods and they continue playing

traditional as well as movie songs for entertainment of guests.

Usually, tea for the entire entourage at the musical event is prepared in a large pot. A lot of effort is made to ensure the throats of the family singer do not go awry during the marriage ceremonies as it could spoil the fun. The musicians are given cardamom with sugar to soothe their throats. This entertainment continues three to four days in advance of the marriage ceremonies.

The day of 'Mayoun', is the first event which kick starts a Pakistani wedding with singing, playing the 'dholki' (drum), dancing and of course food. It's a kind of stage before the marriage, as the bride and groom are secluded from all household chores and they are celebrated by their relatives. The bride and groom are not supposed to see each other until the wedding. They also have a ceremony called 'mehendi' or 'Rasm-e-Heena'.

Three days before the proper marriage the groom's family which ranges in numbers from 10 to hundred in cases, arrive at the bride's house and perform the 'mayon'. The bride is seated either in the courtyard or within the room, she has been secluded to and the 'mayon' is performed. Usually, the married women from nearby families perform this traditional ritual.

They belong to both the families of the bride and groom or some close friends. (It is a condition that in the beginning seven married women are allowed to perform this ritual, while the divorcees or widows are

not disallowed to perform this ritual in the beginning and they have to perform the ritual after the married women).

First of all the seven married women apply perfumed sesame oil in the bride's hair, but not before putting some token money into a plate or her spread scarf which is the responsibility of either the elder sister or one of the cousins to take care of the money. The money collected during the 'mayon' ceremony, is either given to the girl who is responsible for its collection, or the family which is not too well off gifts some money to that girl and utilizes the rest of it in the marriage expenses.

The sweets, perfumed oil, and candles adorned colorful readymade boxes for 'mehndi', are easily available at decoration shops around the city, are put in the hands of young girls. Both the families of the bride and groom practice it while going to the bride or groom's house. The bride usually wears a simple yellow 'ShalwarQameez' and all her friends tie a thick string called a "gana" (a band) around her wrists. The girls who perform the ritual "gana" are considered lifelong friends of the bride and the bride has to perform the traditional rituals for being the "gana" friend and she is also given importance when their kids are born. Most of the time the "gana" is made up of shining silvery strings, which are now even available in different metals like iron, copper, and even silver in the market. Even floral "ganas" or garlands are also adorned by the bride and grooms.

In past, elder family members used to make a 'gana' of dry fruits and tied it to the bride's hands and on the night of consummation, the bride asks the groom to open the knot and she feeds him the same dry fruit from her hands. But now only glittery "gana" are in practice.

Similarly, the boy is also tied a thick string "gana" around his wrists, by his sisters, sisters in law and friends. Most of the time the figure is limited to seven "gana" friends and they are blended in a lifetime friendship.

There is a slight difference in the bride's 'mayon' or 'mehndi' to the groom's 'mayon' or 'mehndi'. A red scarf is put on the groom's head and perfumed oil is applied to his hair. But a special ritual is also performed on the day of 'mayon' or 'baraat' in which the groom shows his symbolic anger. The groom goes to one of his friends or one of his relatives' homes and the bride's family members go there to pacify him. However, the groom makes them accept his condition which is mostly related to setting the amount of "mahr" (an arbitrary payment, in the form of money or possessions paid by the groom, to the bride) or jewelry or any other term or condition of his choice and returns to his home where he is put into a seat and all other traditional rituals are performed like the one performed with the bride. Recently in the marriage ceremony of the daughter of a well-to-do family in my surrounding, I saw them gift golden rings and jewelry as well as thousands of rupees in cash to

the bride. But it all depends on the family's financial position.

After the conclusion of both the bride and groom's 'Rasm-e-Mayon' and 'Rasm-e-Hina', the time of 'Baraat' comes.

On this particularly there is different sort of feeling among the homes of the bride and groom, where on one hand there is joy and appeasement at groom's home, there is a sense of sorrow and separation at bride's home. Most of the time, the sensible families perform the 'nikah', a week before the actual festivities of the marriage ceremony begin and finalize all the details of the "mehar" and dower to allay any future chances of misconceptions. But usually 'Nikah' is performed on the day of the marriage ceremony and several hours are spent on it. All the matters are settled as the family of the bride is concerned about their daughter's future settles the matter of jewelry, monthly expenditure.

Sometimes the matters are settled in advance while in case it is settled on the day of marriage sometimes, it leads to scuffles between the two families. The family of the groom is settled in one of the rooms with the Nikahkhan (religious scholar) and a couple of his witnesses while the bride is settled in another room with elder family members and friends. Two witnesses, who most of the times are maternal or paternal uncles along with the religious scholar ask her about her consent for the marriage, and they take the marriage contract to the bride and ask her about

her consent in loud voice after reciting the groom's as well his father's name against the amount of "mahar". Her consent is sought thrice. The girl often gives her consent after crying in sorrow for a long while. The witnesses and the religious scholar have all the time in the world and they are allowed not to make haste is such a matter.

Even I witnessed some marriages where the witnesses and the religious scholar had to wait for around six hours to get the bride's consent. Even at the time of my maternal uncle's marriage, when the bride was not giving her consent till the time of 'fajar azaan' (Morning Prayer call), the witnesses and other family members asked the elderly women present around the bride to push her head so they should consider it as her consent.

But these days the brides within half an hour give their consent and sign the marriage contract. Everybody is congratulated. The sweets are distributed by the groom's side. Dried dates are distributed among the guests.

Nowadays families also distribute packets filled with sweets, almonds, and dry dates. Mostly this ritual is performed as per the financial situation of the groom's family.

Then the bride and groom are seated as a couple in two chairs. But this situation does not arise immediately. Most of the time, the groom's sister-in-law or a friend of the bride sit in the chair with the bride and does not get up until she is paid some

amount to clear the seat for the bridegroom. The groom then sits with the bride and now it is the turn of other sisters-in-law or bride's friends to perform the ritual of feeding some sweets and milk to the groom and get some cash in return. After all these rituals the family members present cash to both, the bride and groom, which is followed by the "Rukhsati" (sending off), and the groom and bride leave the bride's home together with the elders of the family.

But before it, the groom is also sent off. Traditionally, a "sehra" is tied around the forehead of the groom and he is adorned with currency garlands and the more the number of currency garlands, the groom is considered to have more respect at the bride's home. While on one hand, the groom is happy at his 'Rukhsati', the 'Rukhsati' of the bride is itself a sad moment in her life as she has to leave the home where she had spent her early life and her parents themselves see her off with lots of goods. All the close relatives are crying. In the smaller streets, the girls are seen off in a "doli" or palanquin while in cases where the bride's homes are in bigger streets, the groom's family brings their cars to the bride's doorstep. The palanquin is usually decorated with a red shawl or the bride's family's traditional shawl. Then she is seen off under the Holy Quran and after she is settled in the palanquin or car the Holy Quran is given to her as a gift. But before that, the bride is asked to throw behind her a handful of rice with the sense that she does not take away her fate from her

father's home. Brothers and uncles shoulder the palanquin and drop her off in her new home. In some Pasthun families, I also witnessed the bride was seen off while sitting in a chair.

While at the home of the groom, the bride does not enter his home until she is paid a gift in the shape of cash or an animal or some other kind. But after the ritual is completed the bride returns the gift. And for the rest of her life, the bride tells her sisters-in-law and mother-in-law that this animal or gift was given to her by them on her palanquin holding ceremony and she returned it. Even my mother was given a cliff as a gift in a palanquin holding ceremony by my grandfather and she to date considers it as her ownership.

Usually, the bride is not allowed to show her face to everybody in haste. First of all the Holy Quran is placed in her lap and some money is put on it. The money is gifted to the local mosque. Similarly, the palanquin holding ceremony money is also paid by the groom's family and it is also given away to the mosque. Similarly the religious scholar is paid for 'nikah', and after getting the extra money which is around 1000 to 5000 rupees and it makes the day for the 'maulana' and he gets quite happy over it.

After the bride is given a glass of milk and she returns it with some gift money. Then a beautiful baby, mostly a baby boy is placed in her lap and she also gifts some money to the baby according to the directions given to her. This ritual is followed by a face seeing

ceremony in which a family elder or her mother-in-law sees the face of the bride first and gifts her some money or gift. The practice is followed by other family members as well. These rituals continue till midnight.

In our families, it is hard for the bride and the groom to consummate their marriage on the first night. Due to small homes, sometimes guests are also adjusted in the bride's room. But in cases, where a sharp-witted woman is present or the groom is quite influential in the family, he gets his room vacated and consummates his marriage on the first night before the fajar prayers. And for it, he even had to pay some gift to the women standing guard at the doorstep of his room. She even guards the room to ensure nobody teases the bride and groom during the rest of the night.

The groom after entering his room gives a gift in shape of silver or golden jewelry, cash or, some other gift as per his pocket. Usually, the cash is taken back while the gift becomes hers. After that, if the groom is able to get the time to consummate the marriage, he only has time till fajar prayers to stay with the bride and is asked to come out after that. However, in cases where the groom is quite young, he is only successful in getting to the introduction stage. Sometimes his friends advise him that if he is unable to consummate the marriage on the first night, his 'walima' (reception) will not be permissible. Then the groom either takes bath in a relatives' home or at the shop of a local barber, while the bride is taken care of

by the family's elder ladies who guide her through the shower at the corner of her new home before fajar prayers. The bride's family sends breakfast early in the morning which is brought by her sisters or friends. They too join her at the breakfast and the ritual continues for three days at least.

On the day of 'baraat' at some specific groom's families, the bride's family performs "gharoli" (a glass adorned clay pitcher) filling ceremony in a beautiful manner. The family members as well as specific or special neighbors are invited for this ritual. Twenty to thirty women adorning colorful traditional clothes visit a well in their neighborhood or at a distant place to fill the pitcher. Most of the time the girls in the family sing traditional songs, but sometimes some dancing girls who are settled in these localities are hired on remuneration, while they get all the money showered in gratulation. They put a 'dhol' around their neck and sing songs. Most of the time the decorated pitcher is kept on the head of the groom's sister or sister-in-law and on reaching home, the groom gifts some money to the carrier of the pitcher and takes bath from the water of this pitcher. But these days the groom splashes some water from it on his face. Usually, this traditional ritual is performed a few hours before the 'Baraat' leaves groom's home. Mostly men accompany the 'Baraat' that is why women at groom's home make their celebrations by performing such rituals. But nowadays the women from groom's family also accompany the 'Baraat'.

On the day of 'Baraat' at the bride's home, her friends who have been selected to tie the 'gana' around her wrists perform the ritual at someone's home in the neighborhood. The music playing is kept to a limited level, however, the girl if is unable to take bath is at-least made to perform ablution from the 'gharoli' water. If the bride does not have a real brother then her cousin brother opens a small band of hair and gives her special advice and the brother or cousin is like a special figure in her life and he has to look after her for the rest of her life.

Another special ritual is bringing suits to the bride's home. Usually, the ritual is performed by friends or sisters or aunts of the groom who bring suits, shoes, comb, oil, mirror, soap, sweetmeat, 'gana', and even a gold ring placed in decorated and covered plates is brought to the groom's home. The more the things the more impression it creates. Young and beautiful girls are assigned the duty to carry these items while music bands also accompany the participants of the rituals for entertainment. The more the number of women in the party visit groom's home, the better it is considered and they are served with tea and other things. There are around one to five suits for the groom from the girl's family.

On Baraat's next day 'Walima' reception is organized in which food is cooked in large cauldrons and their quantity depends on the bridegroom's financial status. 'Walima' is usually arranged on the rooftop of the groom's home or in the street after tents are tied

either on the rooftop or in the street. Sometime the ceremony is arranged in an empty ground in the vicinity. Sometimes the reception is arranged in hotels and marriage halls or marquees for which the entire saving or even pension is spent. Sometimes the family has to take a loan for arranging the feast for guests. Some also sell their asset for this ceremony to tell their relatives that gave the 'Walima' reception at a good marriage hall. On such occasions, only decent and special guests are invited who can give a gift of around Rs100 to 1000 to the groom. But it is usually said that this gift always makes a comeback and if you have paid around 100 as salami then the family whom you had given it will return the double amount when the time of marriage in your family comes. However, the major issue that arises that lunch or dinner is always served late and even men are preferred to eat before the women. In the case of the 'Walima' reception taking at the rooftop of the groom's home then the women are given the food almost late in the evening whereas their kids had enjoyed the food with the men earlier.

RITUAL OF PUTTING BRIDEGROOM ON HORSEBACK

On the day of Baraat, a prayer is said that everything goes smoothly and this marriage culminates happily. Then the bridegroom is put on a horse because in some streets cars cannot enter, secondly a bridegroom riding a horse clearly explains to the entire area that this is a 'Baraat' and the bridegroom is riding the horse. Earlier the entire 'Baraat' used to ride on the horses but now the horse is hired on rent.

The bridegroom rides the horse while his friends continue showering currency notes on him amid tunes played by the musical bands accompanying 'Baraat'. It is usually said that the Baraat which is not accompanied by a musical band or the bridegroom is not riding a horse is not a special 'Baraat'.

People on foot accompany 'Baraat' and sweetmeats and other things are showered on the participants. In earlier times coins of small denominations were showered on Baraat, which were usually picked up by the kids. Earlier, the 'Baraat' was taken to a 'Mazaar' or tomb of a peer because it was felt that if it is not done then the marriage will not prove to be successful. But now media and literacy have made people understand the situation. People now have lots of money and they can hire decorated cars from rent a car or horse carriages for 'Baraat'.

RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL FESTIVITIES

Politicians while celebrating the religious festivities mostly ensure that they visit a spot that is frequented by a large number of people, which will get them coverage in prime time bulletins or even national newspapers. Similarly, every religious or cultural event is celebrated with aplomb in our country. Likewise, I will begin with 'Shab-e-Baraat' and 'Shab-e-Mairaj' that are celebrated with religious zeal and fervor. There is a lot of significance to these two festivities in our country. For the entire night, people offer 'nawafil' (special prayers) and recite 'Na'at'. Soon after the evening prayers, people distribute sweets and other food items in their neighborhood. The people who distribute these things also get something in return from the families they had something. Usually, this practice is adopted for 'esal-e-sawab' of holy prophets and deceased relatives. On this day, the newlywed brides also visit their families while the girls who are engaged, receive food from their in-laws.

On 'Shab-e-Baraat', people tend to light candles and illuminate their homes, while the children celebrate the event through firecrackers. The entire neighborhood continues to resound with sounds of firing and firecrackers which also draws the wrath of the local religious scholar who in his sermons tries to clarify that it is Hindu cultural norm, but all his preaching befalls the deaf ears, as children don't

listen to him. The 'ulema' continue to pray the whole night in the mosque. Especially the mosque belonging to Barelvi schools of thought continue with their prayers for the entire night. Meanwhile, the people belonging to Shia school of thought remain silent on this occasion and they neither support this celebration nor oppose it.

A fortnight after 'Shab-e-Baraat', the holy month of Ramazan begins and everybody wants to celebrate this holy month with religious zeal and fervor. Everyone ensures to visit and pray at their local mosque while, the most important event of the whole month, called 'iftar' is arranged with aplomb. Most of the houses prepare food delicacies like 'fruit chaat', 'pakoray', 'samosas', dates and other juices to break their fast. After the 'iftar' most of the families eat their dinner and offer 'Isha' prayers and 'taraweeh'. During the whole month, the hotels and 'tandoors' (clay ovens) remain shut during the day time. They open in the wee hours for 'Sehri' and 'Iftar'. Usually, the milkmen open their shops after 'asr' prayers. But observing fast is everybody's choice. Usually, the youth despite taking 'sehri' skip their fasting during the hottest weather. But they avoid eating in front of their family members. They eat secretly. However, they never miss the 'iftar' time. The kids also tend to observe their fasts. The kids upto the age of six to seven observe fasting very enthusiastically and receive gifts from their family members. On 27th Ramazan, 'Laila-tul-Qadr' is celebrated with religious

zeal and fervor. For the entire night, people tend to pray at mosques, seeking God's forgiveness and repenting for their sins. For the next three days, the people organize 'Mahafil-e-Shabina' (Late night prayers in which tend to stay awake for the whole night and pray).

At every household, people distribute food after completing their recitals of the Holy Quran. Most of the time people in villages distribute rice, and curd, while the families that are well-off distribute, dates, rice and fruit as per their pockets from the 20th Ramazan, people also sit for 'Aitikaf' at their local mosques during which they are not allowed to come out of mosques and must pray in the premises of mosques. Men observe their 'Aitikaf' at mosques while women observe it at their homes. The people in their neighborhood also send food items to the mosques for people sitting for 'Aitikaf' for God's Blessings. Usually, at large mosques, special arrangements are made for 'Iftar'.

During Ramazan, the sale, and purchase of fruit is quite abundant but during the last three days the shopping spree spurs up. Every person whether rich or poor remains engaged in Eid shopping as per his financial condition. Usually it is Eid for rich every day, but in our country, Eid is celebrated twice a year and on this occasion, people whether they have to take loans or have money do the Eid shopping for their kids. Children want new clothes, shoes and 'mehndi' as well as bangles to celebrate the festive occasion.

‘Chaand Raat’ is very important years ago it was only PTV which announced the celebration of Eid on ‘Chaand Raat’.

But now there are many news channels in the country and they get the news about the sighting of crescent of Shawal month from any part of the country. And soon after hearing the news about the ‘Chaand Raat’, the families rush towards the markets to do last minutes shopping which mostly is related to purchasing shoes, bangles, and applying ‘mehndi’.

Apart from their special apparel, people make special arrangements for food including sweetmeat, ‘phainian’ (traditional vermicelli), chicken, meat, and other delicacies. On the morning of Eid, the Ulema continue to start their sermons from early in the morning making the announcements for Eid prayers. After all, they had led the ‘taraweeh’ prayers for the entire month and it is also their day to receive Eidi.

On the last day of Ramazan they announce the amount of ‘fitrana’ or Zakat al-Fitr which is a charity taken for the poor a few days before the end of fasting in the Islamic holy month of Ramazan.

Our parents tend to deliver the amount of ‘fitrana’ to a poor family in the neighborhood. However, men and children put an amount from Rs10 to 100 in the box of the local mosque where they offer their Eid prayers. However, the mosque where a madrassah exists is considered eligible where people can give their ‘fitrana’. Soon after the Eid prayer, people embrace each other and visit the homes of their real relatives. People tend

to seek forgiveness for their ill deeds or wrongdoings from their relatives and start afresh.

Usually, families put Eid delicacies and tea in front of their relatives or friends who come to visit them on Eid day.

Special Eid dishes like 'sheer khorma' are made in almost every household. Every guest is treated according to his taste and the guest also distributes Eidi whether it is Rs10 or 100 among the host's children. The girls also get henna applied to their hands.

There is lots of rush at the local parlors where women tend to visit and for the entire 'Chaand Raat' there is lots of rush over there as they charge hefty amounts for facials and plucking. The parlor businesses that don't have hefty businesses during the entire year make hey on the 'Chaand Raat', while the women tend to visit their families with their children in far-flung areas.

Apart from cash, there is also a trend of giving gift items in the shape of readymade clothes, bangles, and henna. On the occasion of Eid, the girls who are engaged, their in-laws bring new clothes, shoes as well as rice and vermicelli for them while after the marriage, they get similar things from her parents which are delivered by her brother.

These rituals tend to strengthen the bonds among the families. On the second day of Eid the same situation continues. The children celebrate their Eid by enjoying swings installed in the streets and eat food

from the street vendors and spend their Eidi eating delicacies like 'dahi bhalay', ice cream, and drinking cold drinks. They also visit parks. The girls whose parents live in other cities tend to visit their parents and leave their in-laws' homes on 'Chaand Raat' and return after spending their Eid days. The routine life returns to normalcy a couple of days after the Eid festival.

The people return to their routine and a couple of months speed by and the festival of Zil-Haj arrives. People leave for offering Haj by arranging the amount of money through hook or crook. Due to hefty expenses the number of people leaving for Haj is limited as everybody cannot afford this religious obligation. It is difficult for those who earn their livelihood through rightful means. However, the people who leave for Haj or Umrah are seen off with great reverence and zeal. They are garlanded with flowers as well as cash garlands. Their families also arrange ceremonies for 'Khatam-e-Quran'. On their return, people also return and celebrate this occasion by bringing in sweets and clothes for the Hujaaaj.

While the Hujajj bring gifts, dates and Zam Zam water for the guests. On the day of Haj, special prayers are arranged at the neighborhood level for the well-being of the locality and special food items are prepared on this occasion. The next day is Eid-ul-Azha when people tend to offer sacrifice following the footsteps of Prophet Ibrahim (AS) which continues for three days.

With time and due to high prices, the sacrifices of smaller animals like goats, lambs are rare because their price is unaffordable for every person as a single person must sacrifice a small animal while in the large animals like cows, buffaloes or camels seven persons can put their shares and offer the sacrifice. Nowadays, in every plot, and ground, people tend to make sacrifices of cows, buffaloes, and camels on Eid-ul-Azha.

Usually, the homes in cities are small and people are unable to keep the sacrificial animals even for a day so they make the sacrifice in open grounds where ditches are dug to dispose of the blood of the sacrificial animals. The skins of the sacrificial animals are given away to the local mosque or 'madaris' or a welfare organization. While the meat is shared in seven equal parts while the head and trotters of the sacrificial animals are either shared or given to the family which has more share in the sacrificial animal.

Most of the time the animal is shared by family members as all brothers and sisters share the cost equally and distribute the meat accordingly. Then the meat as per Sunnah of Holy Prophet Hazrat Mohammad (peace be upon him) distribute the meat in three equal shares and keep one share for themselves, distribute the second for the relatives and the third one is distributed among the destitute.

The sacrifice of animals continues for three days. The offals are usually left in the open and the scavengers and sweepers used to pick them but now it is utilized

in making chicken feed therefore it does not become a problem for the locality anymore.

After Eid-ul-Azha, two months, Safar and Muharram-ul-Haram are of great importance. These months have great importance in the eye of people from Shia school of thought. As our neighborhood has great numbers of followers of Shiasim and there are many Imambargahs and soon after the start of Muharram, Majlis begin and people distribute food in name of Hazrat Imam Hussain (AS) and his followers of Karbala.

Shias stay away from arranging any celebratory ceremony while the people from Sunni school of thought also tend to stay away from celebrations during the first ten days of Muharram to maintain brotherhood. That's why no major sectarian issues ever surfaced in our locality. T

he people from Shia school of thought tend to observe Muharram and Safar in memory of Imam Hussain and his followers of Karbala. For the entire duration of two months, small and large processions continue in the area. These processions are taken out according to a set schedule. After 20th of Saffar, when the fortieth (40) day of Imam Hussain (AS) and his followers of Karbala is observed these congregational meetings continue.

Now comes the time of 'Choori Roza', which is celebrated on the last Wednesday of the month of Safar when people prepare a special dish with wheat flour, oil, and dry fruits. The people tend to fast on this

day and the dish is distributed in the entire neighborhood.

The month of Rabi-ul-Awal has a special reverence in the eye of Muslims as Holy Prophet Hazrat Mohammad (peace be upon him) was born on 12th of Rabi-ul-Awal. People from the Sunni school of thought, celebrate the day with great religious zeal and vigor. Special Na'at ceremonies are organized, large processions are taken out. Since the onset of Rabi-ul-Awal, youngsters in groups sporting prayer caps and holding Milad banners seek donations from people by standing along roads. Usually they do not spend the money on the purpose it was collected for and spend it on their fanfare. They also collect donations from influential people of their locality.

Usually, people tend to display banners inscribed with slogans celebrating the birth of Holy Prophet Hazrat Mohammad (peace be upon him) while streets and homes are illuminated and preparation and distribution of food items continue.

HEALTH FACILITIES

In foreign countries people get health facilities through insurance companies. While in Pakistan rich people enjoy better health facilities. But in our poor neighborhoods, people take care of their health through local quacks or smalltime doctors besides utilizing household remedies or visiting a shrine to seek the blessings of the saint.

It is really impossible for them to get their disease properly diagnosed and treated.

Decades ago, our neighborhood lacked a proper doctor. There was only one doctor in our locality who was a Syed by caste. His father used to treat people through 'Dam and Darood'(prayers) but his son who had studied and was a matriculate found it really awkward to continue the family profession therefore, he put up a gown and a stethoscope, learned about the medicines from a medical store, and started this practice in a four by four room. He became well known in the area as a doctor.

Usually, at that time a person who checked his patients with a stethoscope or could check the temperature through a thermometer was considered a doctor therefore, he became a doctor. As far as the experience of a doctor was concerned, he gained it through changing and chopping of syrups and tablets of his patients. Some people used to get healthy from his medicines and some did not. To date, the clinic is functional in the locality, but now his son who had

sought a degree of Tib or homeopathy is running the clinic even after three decades. Their forefather healed the childless couples through spiritual guidance and 'taweez'. These people are doing the same but through tablets and capsules. People use to have faith in them and with the passage of time, they overcome their illness with the Help of God and their medicines. However, they now attained experience by using three medicines for the past three generations.

I am saying this because he usually did not give medicines and when the patient came for a follow-up checkup, he used to say that yesterday the medicines in the clinic were finished and he gave him grounded rice in packets and it was because of the 'shifa' (cure) in his hands and his (patients) belief in him (doctor) that he overcame his illness while the patient with weakness was asked to take the medicine with milk and eat fruit. It was obvious that milk and fruit used to help in overcoming the weakness.

This kind of medical treatment was quite popular among modern families. Those who were poor and destitute, but were a handful in numbers used to visit saints and mausoleums of different people for treatment of different ailments. They used to get their treatment through sacred strings tied to their hands or around their necks by the saints. They also visited a far-flung area where in a village, a woman or a man used to give them special accentuated oil for their ailment or give him a 'taweez' (a locket or piece of paper usually containing verses from the Holy Qur'an

or other Islamic prayers) made up of dry twigs of a tree and they had to repeat the practice at least five Sundays.

The time these healers took for the treatment was usually the same for the treatment of hepatitis and after visibly getting better in just 10 to 20 rupees these people became happy, but if they had got their tests they could have easily found out that they still were suffering from Hepatitis.

Similarly, there were specialized mausoleums for the treatment of children while the oil burning in clay lamps is used for the treatment of joints' pain. It is obvious that if the oil is burning in a clay lamp and it is applied on a paining joint it will provide some relief. Similarly, these people tend to visit the shrine of Masoom Shah and get their typhoid whether a child or a man is treated.

At the shrine of Teenwala Baba, treatment of ordinary fever is done. There are separate shrines for shia and sunni people. Shah Chan Chiragh's shrine which dates back quite old in the history is frequented by people for the treatment of their girls as well as making 'manaat' (wish) for their marriages.

The children with weakness or underweight, which they had since birth is treated at the shrine of Choor Wala Shah Piyara and they have to visit it for seven consecutive weeks. You can imagine this sort of treatment from my personal experience as my mother used to take my sister who is now 35 years old. She was taken there for seven consecutive weeks when

she was two-years-old. After becoming a mother, the same sister took her two-year-old daughter to the same shrine for seven weeks where the child is put on a scale and the shoes present in the shrine are put in the other scale to weigh the child. You can imagine the level of the mentality of such people or their insight that a child could gain some sort of weight for going to the shrine for 49 days.

Similarly, a so-called Mr. Shah is present everywhere who besides treating ailments also perform an exorcism. They take cash or even milk, saffron, or oil from their devotees. Similarly these devotees in sheer devotion give money and kind for the fulfillment of their desires. When there was no electricity, people used to put oil in the clay lamps to get treated while in case they got better they had to pay a fee either in cash or in shape of oil.

Now to pay the electricity bill cash is put in the donation box. Similarly, the people who are bit well-off and if their daughters are not getting marriage proposals and have become patients of hysteria or epilepsy are told by these quacks that their girls have been possessed by a Jin.

Similarly, the people who want to go abroad for greener pastures have specialized shrines for the fulfillment of their desires. While the couples who remain childless for numerous years, tend to offer a cauldron of rice at a shrine for treatment. While those with stomach, liver ailments tend to visit their local shrines and get treatment every Thursday and Friday.

People tend to bring 'ajwain', 'makhanay', and even salt from these shrines for treatment of their ailments. While for the children and even adults, there are many technical persons who are neither doctors nor spiritual healers. If someone has a throat infection which usually upsets someone's stomach as well and both the conditions easily lead to vomiting and loose motions in a person, especially a child.

Usually, it happens with the kids when they start missing someone, therefore they are taken to a spiritual healer who gives them a massage with oil. The same healer (Baba Hazarvi) tends to address the headaches and joint aches. He also tends to relieve muscular pain through exercises. His treatment also used to help in treatment of headaches. Similarly, if someone was having naval pain that after lifting something heavy, Baba Hazarvi could treat the patient easily. Usually, for this treatment, the patient is asked to come empty stomach and oil is applied to his belly and a cloth is placed onto his stomach right under the naval. The patients are asked to lie on their bellies and their back is pushed again and again. The person usually gets better in a couple of days.

Baba Hazarvi does not ask for money but takes the oil the patient has brought with him, which is usually around 250 grams, which earlier amounted to Re1 and now it amounts for Rs50, but it is quite sure no specialist will ever treat a patient in such an amount. Similarly, there are people who used to treat people for broken bones even better than doctors by placing wooden

planks on the broken arms or legs. These people treat the people by taking x-rays of the patients and are called bone healers or 'pehlwans'. They charge separate fees for every bone and give specific oils and ointments for their treatment and patients tend to visit them for several days and experienced bone healers get the patient better earlier than a doctor. But this also comes with a catch, several quacks have also joined the business which has resulted in people avoiding this sort of treatment.

But now in some old localities or new housing societies some MBBS doctors and Allopathic doctors have established their clinics and they too give injections to patients on their insistence that they will give 100 rupees to the doctor only when he gives them a red injection. These people ask for injections to get rid of fever and cough. These doctors usually use a syringe made up of glass which is usually sterilized in hot water and they tend to only change its needles for separate patients. Nowadays there is a trend of disposable syringes but these doctors in order to save some money using a single disposable syringe for several patients, which eventually leads to the spread of dangerous diseases among these patients.

They are all quacks however; they have displayed hoardings of MBBS or homeopathic doctors on their setups. Most of the time they treat the patients all by themselves, but sometimes they do call the actual doctor for face-saving. I will quote here a story of such a quack who is a close family friend who tells what he

had to do to become a doctor, which is also the same experience of all such doctors.

The doctor who is running a three-story hospital has a medical store and laboratory as well visited a nearby town to learn medical skills from a doctor, God Knows, if he was an MBBS or a quack, and was running a big clinic. He learned all the skills of the trade from him and he usually paid him 5 to 10 rupees per month for around a year. He used to work there in a 12 hour shift from 8 a.m. till 8 p.m.

While learning the medical work, his matriculation result was out and he had to re-appear in a paper so instead of granting him leave to tend to his studies, the doctor kicked him out of the clinic. This infuriated him. Our family friend besides studying started a smalltime clinic in a small room in a nearby township and started befriending people especially women in the locality. For around 4 to 5 years, he used to treat people in Rs10. Being young; he attracted a large number of women to his clinic.

A rival, a doctor in the same vicinity raised the objection in the locality that he was young and used to check female patients in absence of their male family members. However, this was wrong that only females tend to visit the doctor and that too without the knowledge of their family members, men too frequented him for treatment. He also used to visit the homes of several women. It also became the reason for propaganda against him that he was treating people during house visits at the same fee, which his

opposing doctor did not do. This made him quite popular. He used to give a pair of injections to every patient, irrespective of his ailment. These injections were Neurobian and B-Complex. He tend to prescribe blisters of packed tablets and capsules to his patients. He also hired a nurse, who tend to exploit the male weakness and they remained eager to get their injections from her. This situation led to a rise in the number of male patients. He did not rely on injections alone. He started injecting glucose drips to each and every patient irrespective of their ailments whether they were suffering from fever, vomiting, hepatitis, or constipation, he was putting four to five injections in the drip making the patient spend around 2 to 3 hours in his clinic which also helped him to socialize well in the local community. The patient had half his ailment treated while talking to the doctor and his nurse. This emboldened the doctor and he continued charging double and in some cases four-time fees from the patients.

Later, he shifted his clinic from a small room to a large room. They also got a two-room house with a bathroom in the locality and his nurse started abortions of unwanted pregnancies in the new set up. The nurse started protecting the honor of many families whose unmarried daughters were getting pregnant. They did not worry about the safety of the girl after the abortion; they only cared about their honor which was safe after the successful abortion of unwanted pregnancy.

It also became a propaganda tool against him, but it spurred his popularity. Every person who was troubled by the unwanted pregnancies started visiting him. Instead of doing this business in the dark of night, he started abortions in daylight adding to his income and popularity all at the same time.

He probably made people addicted to his injections because they did not tend to get relief from their ailments from any other doctor or medicine. All the drug addicts tend to get themselves injected from him. He became a massively popular doctor. He gained all his experience from the illiterate and poor patients of the poor locality. He had acquired a certificate for running a medical store after matriculation but is running a successful hospital in a poor locality.

He visited quite serious patients and gave them injections which sometimes worked and sometimes backfired and killed the patient. Some patients whether children or elders died of his injections and their relatives protested against him by breaking the windowpanes of his clinic but because of socialization every clan leader, political worker, elected councilor, and even policemen were his friends and nobody dared to raise their voice against him. Nobody took any action against him.

Even his nurse after an experience of 20 years had become an experienced doctor. His popularity led a journalist to his door and he tried to extort money from the doctor. However, the doctor refused to pay him money. Once a girl's condition deteriorated due to

abortion performed at his clinic. The journalist used the situation to his advantage and reported the matter in the press, which drew the attention of the Health department and police and the doctor had to pay huge amount to the police and health department instead of just small amount to the journalist.

He got his clinic restored within a month. He just changed his signboard and even the health department deputed an MBBS doctor who seldom visited the clinic, but instead of treating people he sits at the reception just to sip few cups of tea and charge few thousand from the clinic. The doctor is running the clinic for the past 15 years with the help of the same nurse.

Earlier, they charged Rs10 to 15 but now they charge 100 rupees. Now the doctor has performed several Haj and is called Al-Haj. The doctor and nurse are heard to be fifty per cent partners in the clinic income and have built their homes in posh areas of the city.

The doctor through experience has become a real doctor. He does not use the syringe twice and whether it is an antibiotic or an injection course, he makes the patient complete it. Several medical representatives tend to visit his clinic and he uses their companies' medicines at his clinic. However, he does not prescribe injections to his friends.

This is the state of medical treatment in our poor locality and in case there is a complex case, he refers them to the hospital and it is because of him that people have started visiting hospitals to get their

tests. Whether it is Railway Hospital, DHQ, Holy Family or General Hospital people visit them, get OPD slip, and wait even for whole days to get their treatment. Even pregnant women from the poor locality have started visiting the hospital for treatment. 10 to 15 percent of them get their babies delivered at the hospital, while the rest are still dependent on local midwives for their pregnancies.

TREATMENT THROUGH HOME REMEDIES

Majority of our people while sick don't like to visit a doctor and have a proper checkup. They tend to get their disease treated through home remedies or from a spiritual healer. Sometimes, these things pay off, but most of the time such treatments aggravate the sickness which often leads to serious health complications. However, most of the followers of such practices belong to the old school of thought and we can't put restrictions on thinking of such people. For example, if someone is suffering from back spasms then people ask a person who was born upside down to kick him. If someone is having pain in his arm or has twisted his ankle, then a girl who is engaged for long but not married yet is asked to tie a black string on the hand of such person to relieve him of his pain. If a child cries a lot, then it is believed that he is suffering from the evil eye. And if a person is thought to be casting an evil eye on such a child, then a string is taken from his clothes, and in case it is a woman then the string is taken from her shawl and burnt and the child is fumigated from it. Sometimes the evil eye is treated through the burning of sugar, alum, or round chilies after they are circulated over the head of the affected child. It is believed that if the burnt things do not yield a smell then the child was suffering from evil and this act will alleviate him of evil eye. In case of stomach ailments, a child is given 'ajwain' (thymol seeds) with water. If the child is a newborn

the 'ajwain' is either given in a powdered form or the mother gives it to a child after chewing it in her shawl and the water coming out of it is dropped in the child's mouth. Sometimes 'ajwain' is roasted in a pan and after adding sugar it is given to the child for treating the stomach ache.

Usually, oil is also used in home remedies. If it is used in massage, then garlic, onion, and wheat are boiled in the oil, and then it is either poured into a child's ear or his naval. 'Saunf' (fennel seeds) and 'ajwain' is boiled in water and it is given to the child in treatment while green tea and 'poodina' (mint) and 'motiilaichi' (black cardamom) are also given to children with different ailments. Sometimes turmeric is used in many home remedies. Sometime it is given in milk sometimes it is cooked in oil and applied to an injury.

Egg is also used in different home remedies. If someone is suffering from pneumonia, influenza, cough, or back spasms he is given either in cooked or raw form. In blood pressure garlic is eaten before breakfast. Use of 'lassi' (yogurt drink) daily is deemed as a treatment for blood pressure. For treatment of hepatitis C, yogurt drink is mixed with pumpkin pickle, which reduces LFT and ESR.

Several herbs are used for treatment in home remedies. If someone is having an upset stomach then is treated with 'isaphaghol' (Psyllium husk) in milk or curd. Even the same thing is recommended by doctors. If someone has been injured then the bleeding is stopped by applying ash from a burned

cloth. If someone is suffering from a night vision problem then the person is given loaves of bread which have been asked from seven families, blood from the spleen of a goat is poured into the eyes of a blind person and even the spleen is eaten for treatment. While black sesame is used for the treatment of night blindness.

A person with stomach ailments is given different advice. Similarly, a person burnt with fire is treated in different ways. If a person's hand is burnt then (neel) a chemical used for whitening clothes is applied on the hand. Toothpaste is also applied on the burnt portion for relief from pain. In the case of a hailstorm, hails are collected in a bottle and when its water is applied to the affected portion, it gives some relief.

There are many home remedies used for the treatment of different ailments.

THE RITUALS AFTER DEATH

The entire city is present at the funeral of the wife of a police officer, but people seldom take interest in the funeral of the police officer himself. The situation is quite different among the rich and influential. These people had their kids adjusted in bureaucracy, army, or businesses and on their demise, people from different walks of life are present and show their remorse. Even the condolences messages are published in newspapers. The rituals continue till the third day or even in cases till the 'Chehlum' and food items are distributed.

But in our poor neighborhood, the rituals for the funeral of children and the elderly are almost the same. However, large numbers of people attend the funerals of elders of the locality. Whenever a person dies, the first thing which is debated in the house is when and where the funeral will be held. The decision is taken usually by the heirs of the deceased including his sons, brothers, or family elders. Most of the people have migrated from villages and the first suggestion usually is to hold the funeral and bury the deceased in the village.

The poor people who had migrated from villages live in small rented homes and they don't have the resources to tend the guests who will come from the village for the funeral or the place to keep the dead body. Therefore, they take their deceased back to their village. Ten years ago, it was usually practiced tradition but now the

funerals are kept in the streets, open plot of the locality or even rooftops or courtyard of the home, while for guests a nearby drawing room of the neighbor is taken to offer prayers for the departed soul for at least three days. As soon as the place and time of the funeral are decided upon, by the family members because time is of great importance in this matter, they take bury the deceased. In case it is summer season, the funeral is not kept for a long time because doing so requires lots of ice and fans or room coolers to keep the body safe from decomposition.

Usually, the funeral for a family with a smaller home brings lots of troubles. In winters the funeral is usually held the next day and family tends to wait for the relatives who have to come from other cities or abroad to attend the funeral. In order to protect the dead body from (stiffening up), a blanket or quilt is placed over it to keep it warm.

Announcements for the funeral are made in mosques in the nearby vicinities giving the information about who has died and who he was related to and to when and where the people are requested to attend the funeral and seek Blessings of Allah Almighty. Usually at the funeral of the family which is new in the locality, or the people are not accustomed to them in the locality, only a handful of people appear. It is a common saying that only that person will come to the funeral of your relative at whose relatives' funeral you had visited or you had a friendship with them. Even close relatives also take revenge on such occasions.

Usually elderly women of the locality are ready with their cloaks or shawls to visit the family where someone has died only with the intention of seeking Allah Almighty's Blessings. Whether it is a child, woman, or a man, these elderly women embrace every woman in the house and weep with them.

Usually, in homes, the women visit twice, once soon after hearing the announcement of death and then at the time of the funeral. The more the women at the house of death it begets popularity for the family of the deceased person. However, the number of people at the funeral depends on his socio-economic stature. Before the arrival of people, the first bath is given to the deceased, which is usually performed by neighbors. The woman is bathed by the women while the men are bathed by the men, for a small child, women perform the responsibility, in case the child is in his teens, the responsibility befalls on men to perform the bath of the deceased. For this purpose soap, cotton, and an un-cemented spot is selected but now the bath is even given at cemented spots also.

Initially a minor bath is given to the deceased and the deceased's clothes are changed. However, before the funeral major bath is given to the deceased by an expert who is well aware of how to apply 'kafur', how to put the shroud on the deceased and he also knows how to perform the funeral bath in a proper way with all its formalities as per Sunnah of Holy Prophet Hazrat Mohammad (peace be upon him). The

shrouds are usually available in the market, but they are prepared as per the requirement of the deceased person's body. Slight fitting is adjusted by the women in the house or the nearby tailor master. Ten to fifteen years ago people tend to keep shrouds in their homes that were washed in Zam Zam water from Saudi Arabia. But these days after the major bath, Zam Zam water is sprinkled on the dead body and shroud for Blessing of Allah Almighty.

The cot on which the dead body is placed is encircled by nearby female relatives of the deceased including a sister, daughter, wife, mother, or sister-in-law, and the more aggrieved the person is, the more she cries for the deceased. Whether the funeral belongs to a child, a woman, or a man, it is only women who weep inside the homes. Men sit outside and only pray for the departed soul or make arrangements for the funeral and people attending the funeral.

The women whether they are relatives or in the know-how tend to embrace the relatives and console them on their irreparable loss. This is also considered an occasion for the ones who are a close one, as people understand that the one who had not embraced them is least bothered about the deceased.

The heirs of the deceased are not in their senses. Usually a neighbor or relative takes care of the arrangements of the funeral, the grave and sitting arrangements as well as food as per his limitations. No funeral in such localities has ever remained without a shroud or grave. Instead with all due respect relatives,

neighbors, and if all of them are poor they share the cost of the entire formalities of the funeral.

It is the family which decides about the graveyard because looking for a spot in the graveyard in the city has become an arduous task due to shortage of space. Usually one tries to bury his dead in the graveyard where his other relatives are laid to rest. A slip is acquired from Graveyard Committee and the neighbors of the nearby relative dig the grave all by themselves as it bestows lots of Blessings of Allah Almighty. Then the male members of the family lift the funeral from the house and offer the funeral prayers at a specific spot. The funeral is often led by the local Imam of the mosque. A relative also announces at the occasion, if the deceased has some unfinished business or dealing with someone then they seek their forgiveness or they can contact an heir of the deceased for settlement of their matter. Most of the people grant their forgiveness, some people do come forward and speak and usually, people do not ask for repayment of their loans. After the funeral majority of people leave and almost half of them visit the graveyard, which is mostly frequented by nearby relatives. Rosewater and 'kafur' are sprinkled even at the time of the funeral and then after burying the dead body people return home.

Men are present at the funeral while food is distributed among the female guests, while the men eat on their return from the graveyard. Most of the time in these localities, chickpeas or vegetable rice is distributed among the guests.

However, on the second day, chicken rice is prepared and on the third day a proper lunch or dinner is arranged on 'Rasm-e-Qul'. The people who are present at the funeral are informed about the timing of 'Rasm-e-Qul'. If the deceased person is well off then on his 'Rasm-e-Qul', several cauldrons of rice and food are prepared while fruit in huge quantity is brought in and distributed among those present at the 'Rasm-e-Qul'. After the first day of the death, 'Khatm-e-Quran' and recitation of 'Ayat-e-Karima' is considered a good deed. At the home of the deceased person a mat (made up of straws) was laid for guests but now a plastic mat is laid down. Till the first Thursday after the death, people tend to visit the family house and offer their condolences and pray for the departed soul. On Thursday, only those people come who had been invited and every family arranges food for them according to its financial situation.

After one month the last Thursday is commemorated and usually food items for around four to five people is prepared and names of relatives far and near are taken. And as the pocket allows the 'Rasm-e-Chehlum' is commemorated on which food dishes for 100 to 150 people are prepared and this is arranged by the family itself. Usually the expenses till 'Rasm-e-Qul' are born by the family itself and usually they have to take loan for commemorating 'Rasm-e-Chehlum'.

If the weather is good then most of the families get the grave cemented before the 'Rasm-e-Chehlum'. The people who are well off, they get the graves of

the near and dear ones marbled while some of them even get a proper courtyards for their loved ones in the graveyards.

In every family there are heirs for the deceased, but all his assets are distributed with consent. All his business assets, money, and property are distributed with consent. In case the person has died with nobody as his heir, then his property is distributed according to closeness of the relative.

On the third day of the death, food item is prepared and after offering 'fateha' (prayers), the food is sent for the Imam Masjid or a poor neighbor. While on the 'Rasm-e-Chehlum', a new suit, shoes, a handkerchief, a scarf, 'surma' and 'itar' as well as prayer mat along with good quantity of fruit is send to the Imam Masjid who had led the funeral prayers or offered condolence prayers at the 'Rasm-e-Chehlum'.

And in forty days the person who has spent forty to fifty years in a family is ignored. Slowly and gradually, initially the deceased person is remembered every Eid, 'Shab-e-Baraat' and on death anniversary, but after four to five years everybody forgets him.

OUR GAMES

Sports is a symbol of a healthy nation, but in our society like other sectors, there is stark indifference in this field as well. Well-planned cities or towns have playgrounds for their kids, but in slums, there is no concept of a proper playground nor do the kids have proper playing equipment or public parks. Most of the time, a rope is tied to a tree and a swing is prepared and the kids enjoy themselves on such makeshift arrangements. This too happens in homes where there is a large courtyard. Mostly the children also lack swings in their schools in our slums. When such kids visit another big city for a school trip or a playground or a recreational spot then they realize what they lack in their locality. But most of the time the children in our slums grow up by playing in the streets.

Usually, boys in their childhood play with marbles. They get around 100 marbles in Rs10. A small ditch is made in soil and one marble is used to target other marbles. One of the marbles which are quite large in size is called (kencha) and is used by players to target the other smaller ones. The more marbles a player puts into the small ditch, the more prize he claims in form of these marbles. If a child has been successful in targeting the marbles then he takes a second turn and in case of failure, it is the next player's turn. The player who has won the majority of the marbles is declared the winner. Another scheme

of play that is adopted in this game is odd and even. If the players have decided upon the odd system, then if the number of marbles that fell into the ditch is odd then the player who has put the odd numbers wins the games and vice versa.

Another system that is put into practice is that around ten marbles are placed around the ditch and all the players target the marbles on their turn, the better the players with their target hitting wins the game. This game also helps kids learn mathematics although they do not have good educational opportunities.

There are other street games like 'Gilli-Danda', a cricket-like game played traditionally in slums. The 'Gilli-Danda' game is played with two wooden sticks. A 'Gilli' is a small stick with a length of around 3 inches. A 'Danda' is a two feet long stick that is tapered at the ends, which serves as a bat. The sticks can be homemade or can be made with the help of a carpenter. The game is generally played in the streets or any open spaces and ground is not a necessity.

It is a poor man's sport, since it doesn't need expensive equipment. It is played by people of all ages and creed. This can be played as a team sport or as an individual sport.

During team games, players are split into two teams. The team that wins the toss will choose either to bat first or field first.

A circle of around four-meter diameter is drawn on the ground and an oval-shaped hole is dug in the Centre of the circle.

The 3-inch long 'gilli' is placed across the hole. Another variation is placing the 'gilli' in between two stones. The striker then uses the 'Danda' to lob the 'Gilli' up in the air, and then strikes the 'gilli' while it's in the air. If a fielder catches the 'gilli', the striker is ruled out. Should it fall safely, then the distance between the 'gilli' and the Centre of the circle is measured using the 'Danda'. The length of 'Danda' is equal to one run. So the striker scores as many runs as the number of times it takes to cover the distance with the 'Danda'.

A striker is out if he misses hitting the 'gilli' in three successive attempts. In certain parts of India, the points are doubled if the striker succeeds in hitting the 'gilli' in two consecutive attempts.

The first innings continue till all strikers get out and the second innings begins with the chase.

Girls usually play a skipping rope or jumping rope where one or more participants jump over a rope that is swung in a way that it passes under their feet and over their heads.

The players have to jump continuously without touching the rope. As soon as the rope touches a player's feet, she is considered out and the next player takes over the rope and starts skipping. The players can play it individually by skipping the rope.

The girls also play a game 'Chango', in which girls mark four boxes on land and they cross the box without touching the line. In this game, soil-filled shoe polish box is used to play. The shoe polish box is

thrown into the boxes and the player pushes it from one box to the next one. One the shoe polish box is pushed in a sequence of the number of the box and then secondly in reverse order and then on a single leg. Apart from four boxes, this game is also played in six boxes which are like a clay pitcher that is why this game is called 'Ghara Chango'.

There are many games which are played by both girls and boys inside their homes. During rainy days siblings and cousins play in their cots by spreading their fingers. This game is played between four to five players who take separate names for their role play like 'Yasoo', 'Panjoo' 'Haar' 'Kabootar', and 'Doli'. The players recite these names on their fingers and the player whose name comes on the last finger wins the game and leaves is. The game continues until the last player is left and he has to get slapped on his hands by all the winning players. He is given a chance to escape the slapping. Similarly, another indoor game which is played by spreading the fingers is called 'Akar Bakar Bambay Bo' and a poem is sung while playing this game. And in the last phrase which is about a king 'Badshah Wada' befalls on the player he wins it and leaves the game, the game continues and all except one leaves it and accordingly the loser has to receive the punishment of slapping from the winning players and it is also in the hands of the winning player to forgive the loser.

In another game boys and girls play together is played in ring-shaped in which a player says 'Bolmeri

Machli Kitna Paani', first of all, he asks by touching his ankles whether this is the quantity of the water, the player says no, then he touches his knees, then his thighs, then his belly, then shoulders, and then neck the kids from both groups start pulling him towards them and the group which is able to drag him towards their side wins and the game continues with new kid and is repeated the similar way and in the end, the group which has more number of kids wins the overall game.

In another similar game many kids play cop and thief game. A child becomes a thief in a circle and the rest of the group becomes policemen and all of them intertwine their hands and form some sort of chain.

The thief asks that
Should I Break this lock?

All the kids respond that they will summon a policeman and they hold their hands tightly to avert the thief from breaking the chain of hands. He tries to divert their attention by placing his hands on two to three places and when all of a sudden the children's attention diverts he breaks the hand-lock from another place and escapes. Most of the time the fastest runner is made the thief and whoever catches the child is declared the winner.

In another game, two girls by joining their hands and foot play in rounds which is called "Kikli" and recite a poem

*I am a butterfly, I am a butterfly
I have come out of flowers
I drink cold water
The fan is on
A child is sleeping under it
The child's mother is fat
She ate bread
The bread got staled
And child mother got angry
And child mother got angry
The child's father will come
Bring a red toy
The child will play with the toy
And also, console his wife*

During the entire duration of the poem the girls continue revolving in circles and the girl, which falls or leaves the hand of another girl, is considered the loser.

Most of the girls play with dolls and arrange their marriages. In this game, the bride doll is made up of cloth and the doll has long hair while the doll which has small or no hair and is fat by putting additional cloth into the doll is declared as the groom. In shoe boxes, rooms for the dolls are made and their dowry is also prepared by the girls. Then the kids who have the bridegroom doll take the marriage proposal to the group of children who have the bride and many girls are invited to attend this marriage. The children

perform all the ceremonies of marriages on rooftops of their homes. The rest of the girls also bring their favorite dolls to the occasion. Most of the girls stitch red string on the lips of the doll while the eyes of the doll are stitched in black string and the doll which looks most beautiful, a girl can ask her hand for her doll and the girl has to handover the doll with all the accessories to the owner of the bridegroom doll. Most of the time, an ignorant girl rejects the proposal when she does not see fit to give away her doll. While the girls who have come of age play this game carefully and it's seldom they make groom dolls. Most of the time there is one groom doll kept with four to five bride dolls. This is a game to get the girls ready for their own marriages. In most cases, the doll is made by the mother or elder sister] of the girl and also makes them aware as to how this game is played.

When the boys grow up, then instead of playing in street they shift to their rooftops and play two types of games. These games include kite-flying and keeping pigeons. Mostly, these games are played by kids who have money in their pockets. Most of the time, the parents and elders do not allow them to keep pigeons, but when they feel, the child will join the bad company; they allow them to keep the pigeons on their rooftops so that they will remain in front of their eyes. Birdcages and enthusiasts can be found on rooftops.

Sometimes people are fond of keeping pigeons. The pair of male and female pigeons are also kept in old

fruit crates and when they deliver eggs, the eggs are allowed to incubate under separate females and when the chicks hatch; their pairs are remade and separated. It is done because not every female can hatch eggs. For this purpose, a seasoned female pigeon is selected and used for breeding, and the eggs of young females are also kept under them to get a new breed. Some people also have a liking for flying pigeons and they even participate in pigeon flying contests after setting bets with other pigeon fliers. The flying pigeons are both male and females which are lean in size but have long feathers to fly long distances and for a longer duration of time. They are bred with a special diet that includes desi ghee, wheat, pistachios, almonds, and black chickpeas. Then they are prepared for contests through repeated flying lessons and the flying contests are usually held in the spring season. For this purpose, a massive iron grill is erected at top of the third floor of the building and pigeons are put on the grill for flying and when they are tired of flying they sit on the grill, the owners with the help of a bamboo stick steer them to fly again or a new pigeon is put into the air for flying that instigates the tired pigeons to follow their suit. In this sport, every pigeon flyer puts colorful plastic rings into his pigeons' feet as a mark of identification. Sometimes the feathers of the pigeons are also dyed in the same color.

For so-called "high-flying" pigeons, the rules are simple: at dawn, each team of seven or eleven

pigeons take off from their perches, spend the day flying out of sight, and when they return at nightfall, the flight time of each pigeon is added up and an average is calculated. The winner is the one that has the longest average flight time after a total of seven or eleven flights held every two days. And then the winner is given the prize and even the rivals arrange a feast for the winner and the pigeons are also fed lavishly.

Competitors fly pigeons around 5 in the morning after stamping them, and if the pigeon comes back around 4 to 5 in the evening they consider them good.

Rather than being viewed as pets, these birds are champions of endurance who evoke a passionate following across Pakistan. Pigeon followers broadly class the birds into those known for their competitive flying ability, and those prized for their looks. During these contests, fans are enthralled by low and high altitude flying competitions, and races in which opponents attempt to distract each other's' birds. It is a rare pastime that brings together people from different social backgrounds – experts are often illiterate and the owners are rich. A good pigeon can be valued at hundreds of thousands of rupees.

The best champions, capable of flying for more than 12 hours without food or drink in exhausting heat, are showered with luxurious treatment often reserved for humans. The pigeon masters, known as “ustads”, give their birds long massages with a damp towel and special concoctions to boost performance.

However, good families do not allow their youngsters to take up this sport.

Kite flying is another such sport. In our neighborhood kids tend to take up this sport from an early age. They spend around 2 rupees kite and 5 to 10 rupees string to fly the kite. Every child cannot start flying kites instantly and it takes him weeks or even months to master the art of kite flying. The kid who can fly kites high in the sky is considered a good kite flyer. Usually, kite flying kids do no care whether they are spending time in scorching sunlight or they are hungry. They are only focused on flying the kite for hours. During flying they try to compete with fellow kite flyers.

Kite flying and pigeon flying are usually considered manly sports. Now it has become a massive festival called Basant.

Contrary to what is commonly known kite flying and Basant aren't exactly synonymous. Basant is rooted in religious festivities and has its origins in Vasant Panchami. The festival also celebrates the arrival of spring usually in the first week of March, which of course has been traditionally been welcomed in many ways – kite flying is one of them.

Flying kites spread out a wonderful spectacle that should be encouraged, and the breathtaking sights and the person who cuts the most kites is considered the best player. On every roof, there are kite flying groups and there is no shortage of age or experience among them. Even a small child can cut the kite of an

experienced kite flyer. These days dishonesty rules the roost in this sport. Instead of a normal string, contestants use chemical strings which are prepared with chemicals and glass and after using it when they cut the ordinary string of another player then they loudly raise slogans like 'Bo Kaata' to hurt the feelings of their rivals.

Some people also use the plastic string and every team has several kites and roles of strings and everybody tries to spend the whole day and night on rooftops where they enjoy food, music, and other activities. The entire neighborhood is in a festive mood on the occasion. Almond milk, sweets, and other delicacies are openly served. Usually, elders do not allow their minor children to participate in these contests fearing something untoward could happen to them. They fear they might fall from rooftops, or they can cut their neck, hands, ears from the chemical strings, or their skin gets burned by staying for an elongated time in the Sun. Kite flying is a sport usually practiced for generations but now it is not considered a dishonest sport and the use of chemical string has made it dangerous and several people have died of it. Therefore the government has imposed a ban on it.

Another sport is played with walnuts. In this sport, kids dig a small hole in the ground and throw few walnuts. Some enter the hole while others target them with the biggest walnuts and whoever hits the bullseye is considered a winner. For this game hardest of the walnuts are used. When in our

neighborhood there were lots of open spaces, even young boys and girls tend to play hide and seek in the open fields which was quite an arduous task.

OUR FOOD

Well off families enjoy food streets or they have at their disposal services of KFC and McDonald. The poor cannot enjoy Iftar Buffets or fry fish. The people in our neighborhood are unable to eat roasted chicken but whatever they eat, they find it delicious. In our community the majority of people work at daily wages or at meager salaries and from their earnings they prepare their monthly budgets. These days the spices, oil, and ghee that are used in cooking vegetables or pulses are quite costly and it is very hard for these people to stockpile them. So they buy their groceries from retailers shop in their street.

Sometime ago when the area lacked 'tandoors' (clay ovens) in every neighborhood, a man used to sell 'naans' (bread loaves) for the breakfast. He used to buy these naans from a nearby tandoor and after adding his profit margin sells them in streets. At that time three to four of such vendors use to sell breakfast delicacies. With the passage of time, a couple of 'tandoors' (clay ovens) were set up in our street and people started buying 'naan' (bread loaves) from them. Then the vendor started selling 'halwapuri' instead of naan. Usually, the children bring out their plates and asked him to give them the 'halwapuri' for free. But now these naan and 'puris' are quite costly and they are sold at shops.

Now even small shops for breakfasts have opened in every street where the owners have kept bread, butter

in a showcase to attract customers. Ten to fifteen years ago farmed chicken was not part of our diet and even people were unaware of such food. Only desi chicken was kept at home and eaten. Their eggs were eaten in breakfast. The chicken was cooked only when it fell sick. In those days it was considered the best food.

In the afternoon vegetable vendors use to come to sell vegetables in our neighborhood in those days and the same practices continue even today. They start their business by getting up early in the day and going to the wholesale market to buy vegetables but as soon as they reach their locality their prices jump up exorbitantly. The only benefit these vegetable vendors provide is for the women folks who are not allowed to venture out of the homes to buy vegetables from them at their doorstep which also saves their time. Usually, a vegetable vendor who is doing business with only one thing tries to sell it at a minimum profit margin because at night he has to clear his cart. He does not care for the profit because he has to buy fresh vegetables for the next day.

Comparatively, the vendor who is dealing in multiple vegetables in small quantity takes full advantage of the situation because he brought these vegetables from the market on higher rates and he also keeps his profit margin high, therefore, he is unable to sell all of his stuff and the next day he mixes up the stale vegetables with fresh ones. He keeps them afresh by sprinkling water on them.

In winters such vendors keep on selling the unsold vegetables for many days whereas in summers the vegetables don't last two to three days.

In vegetables, every vegetable is liked in our neighborhood and everybody cooks them in their own way.

Usually cauliflower, peas, ladyfinger, gourd, capsicum, potatoes, and other vegetables are cooked with meat. Onion, tomatoes, ginger are a basic ingredient in every dish. Some vegetables are cooked with minced meat.

If someone is unable to get good and fresh vegetables from street vendors then it is also available in shops in the neighborhood, but their rates are quite high because apart from his profit, the vegetable shopkeeper has to pay rent, utility bills from his income as well. In earlier days with every vegetable, a small quantity of coriander, tomatoes, and chilies were given free of cost by the vendor, but now it has become a distant dream.

People usually buy pulses from the retail shops in streets in small quantity. Whether it is chickpeas, red beans, other varieties of pulses are cooked in our neighborhood while some are boiled, fried, and cooked.

In most of the families, 'Daal Masr' and red beans are cooked with white rice. Salad is generally served with this dish and if tomatoes and onions are costly then pickle is used in their stead. This is a common dish in every household. Sometime ago pickles could be purchased from retail shops in small quantities for

Rs10 or 20, but some people bought them in large quantities.

Usually, families tend to buy vegetable oil in limited quantities for one-time use only. However, every household stored salt and other spices in small quantities for the entire month's use. Usually, curd is used with cooked food. Sometimes people prepare their own curd in large clay pots and it is left covered overnight and later when the curd is ready it is sold. Every person buys curd as per his requirement and it is eaten with cooked food. Some people prepare a 'chatni' (sauce) from it by adding chilies, mint, and curd in it. Usually, mint 'raita' is prepared for guests while curd 'chatni' is a routine delicacy for daily use.

People use meat, peas, or chickpeas in making pulao. And they don't need another dish for the meal.

Usually we eat bread loaf with any cooked dish and every family prepares the bread as per their way. In earlier times every household had a clay oven to prepare their own bread, which was made in different ways, sometimes yeast was added to the flour while sometimes the flour was kept simple. Sometimes, sugar was added to sweeten the bread while sometimes pearl millet flour is used to prepare bread. Now with the presence of clay ovens in every street, families have abandoned their personal ovens. Now the clay ovens can be found in typical rural families and that too on rooftops because the courtyards in every house have shrunk and the floors are been tiled. Earlier, people used dried cow dung cakes to

prepare bread in these ovens, and now instead of cow dung cakes, fruit crates are used while gas ovens are also quite common.

Usually, people in our neighborhood tend to take their dinner before Maghrib prayers (prayer after sunset) but now people have many activities and remain busy therefore there is no fix time for a nighttime meal. Some people take their dinner early and sleep early and some take their dinner late after working late hours. Now the gas loadshedding has aggravated problems for people and they have altered their cooking routines and whenever the gas is available, they cook the food.

Apart from cooking at home, there are many small-time hotels and stalls outside these localities. These hotels and stalls are set up along roads where the hoteliers and stallholders sell chickpeas, 'haleem', 'siripaya' (cow, goat head, and trotters) 'ojri' (cow or goat's stomach) and 'pakoray' on cheaper rates. Similarly 'samosa chaat', 'channa chaat' and fruit 'chaat' are also available in the market. While sweet potatoes and beetroot spiced up with lemon are also sold in the market.

Nowadays, people have limited their use of fruits because of their cost and mostly sick people can eat them. But if the fruit is slightly rotten or damaged then they can be bought at cheaper rates. Sometimes, vendors sell unripe fruit at a cheaper price and the poor people buy as per their pocket capacity. Usually, people from our neighborhood fail to buy fresh fruits when the season starts because they are quite costly

and some fruits are brought from outside like pomegranates, grapes, strawberries, cherries, 'Chiku', and people tend to see them only in the books of their children.

Nowadays the beef, mutton, and chicken are also quite costly. Usually, mutton is sold at a single shop in the market and only a handful of people can buy it. The poor can only buy a quarter of a kilogram from the shopkeeper and that too to make its soup. Whenever a doctor advises them to take costly medicines then instead of spending a hefty amount on medicines to fulfill their vitamins' needs, they tend to buy mutton as a cheaper alternative.

Usually, they get to eat beef and mutton to the full content of their heart on Eid-ul -Azha. And due to their cost, people have stopped sacrificing goats and sheep on Eid-ul-Azha, now mutton has also become a scarcity for such families. As earlier, I have discussed that in earlier days chicken was only eaten when it fell sick, but now because of poultry farming chicken has become a routine dietary product which sometimes ago was available at a rate cheaper than pulses and people had stopped eating desi chicken and reverted to broiler chicken, but now its rate is also quite high and it seems it is also getting out of the reach of the common man.

These days, people love to eat fish but women in our neighborhood are unable to cook it properly. Some women who have migrated from India and are called Urdu speaking know how to cook fish. Whereas the

trend of eating fish in up markets is also getting popular. Men usually eat fish in the company of their friends at such restaurants, but children tend to wait for this delicacy. Now eggs are available at every grocery shop thanks to poultry farming.

Earlier, these localities had lots of buffalo sheds and people tend to fulfill their requirement of milk from them but a few years ago all the buffalo sheds were shifted from the city and now the milkmen bring milk from their dens which are located on the outskirts of the city on their motorcycles but there is no guarantee that this milk is pure.

It is a common adage whether water has been mixed in the milk or not milk is definitely added into the water. When a milkman leaves his home with 10 liters of milk, he usually asks for water to drink and discreetly adds it into the milk after selling a liter or two of the milk to the household and eventually after selling ten liters of milk, he takes back a good quantity of milk to his home as well.

These days families have reverted to packaged tetra pack milk. It is usually a tea whitener or made up of chemicals and people question that this is not milk. However, on media channels, their importance is shown to attract potential customers, which is available in different quantities. People usually use this milk in preparing their tea and some say that tea is a harmful thing and putting such milk into tea makes it more harmful, but now tea has become a customary food item of our daily lives. We tend to

serve our guests with tea whether we like them or not. Breakfast is considered to be incomplete without tea and it is taken irrespective of time bondage. Green tea is mostly used for digestive purposes while the majority of families have abandoned its use.

EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

People with rich background or resources have devised all the plans for the future of their children since the time their child is in mother's womb, as to where he/she will get Montessori education from, which school or college will suit him/her and in which university will their child get higher education from.

But usually in our world, neither we have a system of model schools or an educational system and nor a properly defined set of curriculum. The situation in the slums of Pakistan is quite vague where the government has not established proper educational facilities. In a few instances, primary, elementary and high schools are established in these slums at quite a distance where children do get education by sitting on jute rugs under the trees. Similar is the situation for the girls' schools. Due to such a situation, around 60 to 80 girls have to get their education in a single classroom. Due to the lack of resources allocated by the government, usually around six girls have to share a bench which usually is for three girls. It leads to a situation where parents or social activists have to collect funds either for extra furniture or building new rooms for the children in the schools of their respective areas. Another tradition prevalent in such schools where schools do not have resources to pay their teachers is that they collect small donations from the students and hire teachers on contract and pay them salaries from that amount for many years. This

system does neither yield a good future for the teachers nor for the children. In our backward society, boys and girls usually get education to the primary standard. Around 50 percent of children drop out of school while some leave the studies at elementary levels and only lucky enough pass the matriculation exams. Boys usually due to their outdoor activities like sports and recreational activities are able to clear their matriculation standards that too after reaching 20-years of age and also with lower grades. Usually, girls take a good interest in education, by reaching the elementary standard they reach puberty and after that, they are not allowed to venture out of home that helps them stay at home and study and it helps them easily clear their matriculation exams.

Apart from the government educational system, we have a private education system at street level, but that is not too efficient. Usually, people who cannot either get their children enrolled in government schools or their homes are quite at far distance from these educational institutions, get their children enrolled at these local private schools thinking their mode of education is English medium. Most of the time the signboard of any such school put on display by their respective administrations attracts the parents as in Urdu 'English medium' is written on them while almost half of the syllabus taught in them is in Urdu. Only English and Science books are in English and they too teach A for Apple, C for Cat and d for Dog and it is common observance that kids in our culture

get old by playing with cats and dogs and they are not envisioned or taught that C also stands for Car and D for Doctor or E for Engineer. However, these schools have a major role in imparting education in poor neighborhoods and are playing a pivotal role in improving the literacy rate of the country. Although children studying in such educational intuitions pass their elementary or secondary school examinations, the overall situation of the owners of such schools always remains pathetic. They run the school like a retailer's shop where sometimes one thing is non-existent and sometimes another and the owner has to play the roles of a principal to the peon all by himself. He even has to sell snacks in the canteen to run the business. Such people seldom get profit from the meager fee of Rs50 to 100 from the students. They get the profit by selling stationery to the students only. The only difference between government-run educational institutions and private schools is that there is co-education in the later till primary or elementary levels. In some posh localities, even a co-education system exists till secondary school certificate level. Sometimes problems arise in such educational institutions due to co-education, however, it seldom happens and such education is a good confidence booster for girls. Such kids also get better marks in board examinations due to getting more time for studies and better attention from teachers. Due to a large number of schools the competition level is quite high, however, the standard of education is also

getting better but such schools do face numerous problems. First of all, they do not have any assistance from the government because the government in order to reap maximum benefit from such institutions supplies basic utilities like electricity, water, and gas on commercial rates besides charging hefty taxes. Therefore, some schools which are teaching the students of elementary and secondary levels only register their institutions to primary levels to save money on taxes. Apart from the curriculum, private schools do pay lots of attention to extra-curricular activities. The kids from such schools actively participate in contests like Na'at recitation, poetry, declamation, painting, and photography, whereas children do perform in musicals, dance, and acting skits during annual day functions of the school.

Majority of children from such neighborhoods do not go beyond matriculation and the major reason is finance. The majority of them either have to start a job to support their families or girls are married off at an early age. However, some lucky girls are able to reach the college level.

Whether it is a girl or a boy, it is always hard for them to select the subject at an intermediate level. The majority of kids gets low marks in matriculation examinations and has to submit separate admission forms in different colleges to come in the merit lists. They usually get admissions to a college where there is less competition. Now the number of colleges is quite high thanks to a Member of the National

Assembly who has set up several degree colleges in different localities.

Although these educational institutions have buildings they lack furniture, experienced faculty, and laboratories. Secondly, these colleges lack space, and most of the time the lecturers have to deliver their lectures under the trees. The birds perched on top of them sometimes excrete their waste on the heads of students or the lecturer himself. But to get education students have to go through all these troubles.

There is seldom a case when a child from these neighborhoods get admission in medical or higher technical degrees. In the 1990s in almost entire localities, one could easily find a single graduate and that too in simple arts subjects. Those days in rural areas most of the students doing their matriculation were taught Islamiat or agriculture and there was no concept of imparting science education in such schools therefore, nobody ever dreamed of going to a medical college.

But these days computer education is becoming quite common in private institutions and even computer training centers have also sprouted up in such localities, but even there the students are taught about MS Word or MS Windows only. Here a student is taught computers in three months at a fee of Rs3000 only.

Sometimes students from such localities get admission in polytechnic institutions where a three-

year diploma is conducted at hefty amounts. But the main problem is that the students get their diplomas without any practical education. But in some instances, the students get practical experience along with their diplomas.

The girls only have the option of FA or BA and that too in Islamiat, Psychology and Education. There is seldom a case that a female student from these localities goes for political science as a subject. What to say of Economics as most boys are afraid of it and if someone is lucky enough he will do I.Com or B.Com and that too with the objective of getting a job. Nobody knows what it really is. That's why students from such localities are unable to get internships in major banks what to say of a job because they lack actual and in-depth knowledge.

Majority of girls are able to complete PTC or CT course through Allama Iqbal Open University after matriculation because they are mostly inclined towards joining the education sector. Now girls are even doing MEd and BEd. Usually, boys don't go for higher studies and there is one in millions who go for the law after his graduation and become an advocate and that is because his parents are either supporting him or he is doing a job himself to support his studies and bearing his expenses.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The children who are weak in schools tend to learn some skills and those who are unable to even do that is put in a madrassah. For this purpose there are lots of separate 'madaris' for girls and boys in our localities where children are provided education of the Holy Quran as per recitation, translation, learning by heart and correct pronunciation. And the basic reason behind it is with regard to his relatives and descendants, there is evidence concerning his parents that they will be clothed with garments which far surpass everything to be found in this world, and that will only be because they took care of and taught their child the Holy Quran. Even if they themselves were ignorant, ALLAH will honor them because of their child. Apart from this benefit, another concept is to keep the people or relatives to stop saying their child is useless and they want to portray that instead of worldly education their child is getting religious education and apart from reaping benefits of the religious education the eternal life of his family will be good. Apart from 'madaris', religious education is imparted in mosques, where every child has to recite Holy Quran whether he is studying in formal schools or not. For such a child it is hard to understand the meaning of the Holy Quran and if he does not understand how will be he able to follow the true teachings of the Holy Quran in letter and spirit. However, girls are taught the Holy Quran either in

their own homes or send to a lady in a nearby home where they get religious education twice a day once before going to school and secondly after returning from it. The boys have to visit a mosque to get religious education. In our neighborhoods, the people on a self-help basis make arrangements for getting their kids to get religious education and because of lack of resources our children can't imagine of getting education in nearby cities what to say of dreaming to visit abroad for studies.

TECHNICAL OR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Most of the children in our neighborhood drop out of schools and the basic reason behind it is either strict behavior of their teachers or lack of attention from their parents while some are put to work at a tailor master's shop, motor mechanic or some other technical workshop to learn the skills which they eventually, learn in the due passage of time. Each of them learns his respective skills and is even paid a fixed amount in the range between Rs10 to 50 as per his age and expertise level. Apart from working on the workshop and learning skills of the trade, the young boy is also tasked to pick up groceries from the market, pick the children of his workshop's owner from school and drop them at his house and pay the utility bills in the bank, providing the owner of the workshop a free helper. All of these works are considered to be part and parcel of his skill learning process.

There is another skill called truck art where children after spending years become masters. Driving is another skill and in order to learn it, the child has to first, join the driver as a conductor, and eventually, he learns the art of driving. While some youngsters when they are in 9th and 10th standards start working with a doctor as a compounder and learn how to inject syringes, IV drips, tie first aid bandages, stitching wounds, check blood pressure and temperature of patients.

As these days use of mobile is quite regular and some children who are weak in studies and they don't

see any future they start learning mobile repairs work while some start learning skills of repairing computers and electronics.

On the other hand, girls only have the option of learning skills of stitching suits and embroidery. If they are in schools they are taught home economics in which they can learn how to cook, sewing clothes and how to up bring children. And if the girl is not going to school then she is sent to a neighbor's home or a relative's home for learning embroidery, stitching work.

OUR SAYINGS

In our cities, many people have migrated from rural areas and settled in nearby cities to earn a living.

These people have been adopting an urban environment for forty to fifty years and from their language to dress and food everything has changed. They forget the environment of their hometowns and if they can't forget, at least they change. Over time, their children inevitably change their environment. But one thing they always remember from generation to generation is the various sayings of their homeland, such as the ones they often speak in their vernacular in anger, jokes or to remind their ancestors and that is when we learn about their home towns. For example, I would like to mention some proverbs.

“Har kaday Aawo” Come anytime or welcome

It is a welcome note among Hindko speaking families whenever someone arrives to attend a marriage ceremony or a happy occasion. While in Pashtun families they say **‘Pakhair Raghlai’** which also means welcome.

“Naach Na Janay Aangan Terha”

This phrase is used to refer to a person who refuses to accept his/her incapability/fault/mistakes but blames others for the situation.

“Maa Naa Sui Massi Sui”

It means if your mother is not alive and your aunt helps you in time of need then she plays the role of your mother's sister. It means that your aunt has felt the same pain your mother went through while giving birth to you.

“Hai Marray Muqadar We Kithay Wekhde so”

Usually, women tend to say this while cursing their fate feeling their fate has not done justice to them.

“Maawan Thandiyan Chaawan”

Whenever someone's mother dies or someone is away from his or her mother then they say that Mother is a blessing.

“Yarran Naal Baharan”

This saying is about the importance of friends. Whenever a person is in a dire situation and if he is accompanied by friends then he can handle any difficult situation easily.

“De La Gddel Na Warzici Gholi Kilai Tgng De Raha”

This is a Pashtu saying which is used to refer to a person who refuses to accept his/her incapability/fault/mistakes but blames others for the situation.

“Kilay Tewada Ho Jai Te Dand Nai Ginri De Deharai Ginrri Day Honday Ne”

It means when someone is cheating you with his mischievousness or cleverness and you are well aware of his cheekiness then there is no need to tell him of his mischievousness. But this saying explains everything to him that you are well aware of what he is trying to do.

“A Paray Sir Te Payiaee Tad Pata Chalda Kikitnay Wihan Da So Honda Hai”

Usually when someone else is doing the earning people don't care about the expenses, especially when parents or head of a family is present and is earning then children don't care. But when they become head of a family and start earning then they know how a 100 rupee note is earned and how many Rs20 notes comprise an Rs100 note. Similarly, Pashtun in their Pahstu saying also explains the same matter **“Serna Sona Jorri Gi.”**

In our society, we usually say that now you have learned how money is made and when we used to

earn you were only wasting it, and now when you are earning you are keeping count of every single penny.

“Sir De Saain Naal Badshahi Hondi Aye”

This saying is about a married woman that till her husband is alive she has authority in the whole family and every decision is taken with her consent and when her husband dies nobody listens to her.

“Khuri Pichay Mat Hondi Hai”

This saying is about young girls and their mothers use to say this to them to make them do the work properly otherwise their husbands will say that the woman lacks sense and instead of using the mind, they use their feet.

“Kuti Ungli Tena Heen Mutarda”

Whenever someone portrays himself to have become something and starts ignoring others then to mock them it is said that you are taking his side while he does not give any importance to us.

“Kangha Paranda Lay Kay Teesray Din Morr Aasin”

This saying is also said to make young girls understand their daily chores. The mothers usually

ask their daughters to learn as much as they can before their marriage otherwise they will end up back at their home and her in-laws will say she is of no use.

“Jaisa Des Waisa Bhai Jesi Maan Waisi Dhi”

It means children are a true reflection of their parents. Especially daughters are a true reflection of their mothers and if a mother is clever then one can imagine his daughter is also clever.

“Adhi Raataan Ad Than Dinain Nikliya Wich Wehrai”

This saying is usually uttered when someone fails to finish the given task in time. Usually, women say this while clarifying that they tried their level best to finish the task on time but they were late in taking the decision.

“Waylay Di Namaz Te Kawalay Diyaan Takraan”

This saying is about the importance of time. Whenever a person does not finish his task in time and does it at a later time then the task loses its efficacy. If a person needs help and someone ignores him at that specific moment and tries to help him at a later stage then that help is useless for him.

“Apna Marray Tey Chhawains Attay”

This saying is the importance of relatives. Usually, when a daughter is married within a family then she is told that her husband is her relative and whenever he will misbehave with her, he will not abandon taking care of her.

“Too Kay Zid Karnaaain Meray Daday Potra Te Naheen Naa”

This saying is usually said when a brother or friend is insisting too much. Usually, a paternal cousin is called the grandson of a person's grandfather. He is adamant because he feels that he has to get his share of the property from you.

There is also a saying:

“Teri Meray Naal Keri Saanjhi Ae”

It means we don't have something in common to share and what sort of joint property we have to split that you are adamant with me.

“Amlay Da Khada Te Bazurgaan Da Akhiya Baad Wich Sawad Denda Hai”

We usually eat 'amla' pickle and it does not give good taste instantly like mango or carrots pickle. It's good for the stomach and works after some time when someone eats it and burps he feels quite content with it and feels the taste of the amla pickle once again.

Whenever elders advise on basis of their experiences then youth do not understand it, but when the right time comes and youth benefit personally from that advice then they learn about its importance.

“Neem Hakeem Khatra Jaan, Neem Mulla te Khatra Iman”

Usually, this saying is said when a person is inexperienced then his advice is also not correct and could be dangerous for you too.

“Bhains Kea Gay Been Bajana”

When you are trying to make someone realize a thing and he does not understand a word of it then it is said that it is useless to say something in front of him. Similarly, when someone is unable to comprehend the true meaning of your saying then it is said:

“Doray Agay Garran Te Andhay Agay Nacraan”

It means that it is hard to make this person understand because a blind person cannot see dance and deaf cannot listen to music then it is useless to say something to a fool.

“Shah Jaarin Te Rah Jaarin”

Or

“Angar Jaarin Te Lohar Jaarin”

These two sayings have the same meanings which are usually said when someone is given advice and he does not follow it then a person in anger says when you are following your own heart then you will be responsible for the consequences.

“Khaway Tabray Soday Kabray”

This saying is said about a person who is doing something wrong. It is said to make that person realize that although he is benefiting from his wrongdoings and although his family will benefit from it at the moment but he will have to pay the price of his wrongdoings hereafter.

“Naa Moonh Na Matha Jin Pahahron Latha”

This saying is about an ugly person. When in a fit of anger you say to the person you are talking to that neither he is beautiful nor he can do anything well.

“Jis Ghar Beri Howay Watay Te Aanday Ne”

When people visit someone home where an unmarried girl is present and they ask about the purpose of their arrival, then they are told that someone else had also come to seek the hand of their girl in marriage and it said that in a house where a girl lives people come to seek her hand in marriage.

When someone is casting evil spirits from someone this idiom is said

“Nazar Bhunan Apnay Parayan Di, Bhootan Di, Mamay, Chachaay Di ,Mohallay Walay Di”

This is said thrice

“Nikyan Poton Wadhay Bhoot Chally”

Usually, when kids are trying to trick elders then the elders who know what the children are up to say that now you are kidding with them.

“Kino Parat Haramiaein”

When a person is doing lots of bad things then people try to stop him from his mischievousness by saying that now you have crossed all the limits.

“Naha Tay Dho Tay Howay Reh Gaya Haan”

This saying is usually said when a person has made good arrangements for a program but all of a sudden it is canceled. In our villages, women take lesser baths due to their routine works. As they cut grass from meadows for their cattle, cutting wood from the forest, and bring water from wells, take care of their animals, and cook food. These tasks give them little time to take care of themselves. And whenever there is a marriage

or a ceremony in the village then the women or girls start getting their act together and make preparations for the big day by daily taking out time to wash their face, hands, and feet and take hours to clean themselves at the bank of the water canal or well. It takes quite a time to clean the dust of several months and usually when the time of marriage ceremony comes around someone in the village dies and the celebrations are canceled and the girl is married off silently and the guests are told not to attend the ceremony in respect of the deceased person then such women say that despite taking bath they could not attend the marriage ceremony.

“Laton Ke Bhoot Baton Se Naheen Mantay”

This saying belongs to the Urdu language but in Hindko language, it is spoken when a person is not understanding with affection then he is scolded to make him understand what a person wants to say to him.

“Sir Salamat Howay Te jooti Yandaakaal Naheen Honda”

Usually, it is said that when a person is unable to get a job or is not getting married then he is consoled that he is alive then he will not have a deficiency of jobs or marriage proposals.

“Matlab Hoya Poora Naheen The Majh Ne Satya Bora”

It is usually said when in winters buffaloes are covered with a jute sack to keep it warm and the routine continues for a couple of winter months and as soon as the weather changes the buffalo drops it meaning that it is now useless to her similarly when someone has achieved his goals and he abruptly leaves you or a person who has benefitted him in time of need. Another saying in this context says

“Matlab Ke Waqt Gadhay Ko Bhi Baap Banana Parta Hai”

Usually, people do not pay heed to foolish or poor persons. But when someone needs such persons then they will not hesitate to sit in the feet of such poor or foolish persons and the poor person will utter a famous saying

“Keh Tera Koi Khota Kichaar Vich Phasya Hoya Si”

He too understands the situation that why he has come to him. After uttering this saying, he says what is the issue? And when the person in need narrates his ordeal then he said: “MaazwayaMatlab Ki BaatKaro” (Maazwaya is a Pashtu word) It means to come to the point.

“Jad Chan Charhsi Te Dunya Dekhsi”

It is usually said when work is done discreetly or efforts are made to hide something, but it could not happen that the moon has started shining and nobody knows about it. There is another saying

“Oh Din Dubba Jadon Ghorī Charhī Kubba”

When a person is trying to do something but he is unable to do it then he says that the work is way beyond his limitations.

“Ki Ungli Pichay din Chupana Haain”

When someone tries to hide a huge matter whether it is positive or negative from society then such words are said that how could you hide the Sun behind your fingers.

“Nit Diharay Rah Howay Tey Salwar Pehlay Naheen Landay”

This saying is uttered when someone is trying to show too much eagerness to finish something then he is told that there is lots of time and why are you trying doing this in a hurry.

“Sheikh Chilli walay Khwab Dekhne Do”

It is usually said when someone is daydreaming and making plans that if he will do this thing it will lead to this situation etc. When a person is hoping to start a

business or get a job and is unable to do so then it is said. Sheikh Chilli was a fictional character who always day dreamed which never materialized.

“Manonki Kami Thookon se Poori Naheeh Hoti”

When a person faces a huge loss and someone tries to help him with a meager amount then this saying is uttered which means that your peanuts cannot compensate for my massive loss.

“Wah Piya Pata Chalda Hai ya Rah Piya Pata Chalda Hai”

It is usually said when someone is time tested and we can understand if this person will go on a journey with us and in time of need how will he respond.

“Ik Anaar the So Bimaar”

It is generally said when a thing is small in quantity but there are many people in need of it whether it is a matter of a girl as many families have sent proposals for her or there are many applications for a single job then it is said that many people are after one thing.

“Anaa Wanday Rewriyaan the Murr Murr Apnyaan Noon”

This is usually said when a person is given a responsibility then instead of doing justice to his task,

he continues nepotism and facilitates his relatives or friends again and again.

“Yah Rozi Ya Naseeb”

When someone is going away from us then a question is asked from him that when will we meet again so he said when the time for us to dine together will come we will meet.

“Jehray Gajday ne Oh Wasday Naheen”

It means the thunderclouds don't produce rain. In English, we would say something like “the bark is worse than the bite.” It means if a person is saying something way beyond his capacity then he is capable of doing it because a person who can act will never say that he will do it.

LOVE MARRIAGES

Love marriage is a term, generally used to describe a marriage that was driven solely by the couple, as opposed to arranged marriages. Youngsters from well-off families often meet each other in clubs or 'sheesha' bars where they express their interests in each other while some youngsters also have fun at universities.

Love marriage is quite common in our society; many youngsters start their love stories, which even go beyond the levels of Shireen Farhad and Laila Majnu. Whenever a boy loves a girl there is lots of intensity and passion in his love and they become the talk of the town very soon. With time, every love affair has a different ending. Around two decades ago love affairs were quite common in poor neighborhoods, but everything was done discreetly. Usually, the love affairs started from rooftops where girls and boys started liking each other. Most of them also wrote letters to each other in which they wrote couplets like

This letter is written in my blood

Don't think of me as your brother, I am your lover

The lovers usually write such letters with their blood by slashing their hands to show the immense love they have for their beloved girls. While the girl also wrote the initials of her lover's name with henna on their hands and whenever someone asked she pretended that it was the initial of her friend's name. They also wrote letters to each other and use novel

ideas by tying the paper with a stone and throwing it on the rooftops of each other's houses, but the problem arose when either, the mother or an aunt got hold of the letter and the situation complicated for the youngsters and they were thrashed for such acts. If a name was found to be written on the letter then some elder's from the girl's family visited his home and the boy was warned to stay away from the girl. As soon as the girl's family learned of the love affair, she is not allowed to go out of home and is even forced to drop out of school. The family faces humiliation from the neighbors and relatives. But this seclusion allows the girl to dream more about the boy but sometimes strictness from the family puts hurdles in way of her love and she forgets her love, while the boy's family apologizes to the girl's family ensuring that they will get their house in order. The girl is married as soon as possible. In some cases, if the boy's family is influential and the boy is stubborn and can force his family to do whatever he wants then there is no abrupt end to the love affair and it concludes in the tying of the nuptial knot between the two love birds. However, only 20 percent of such lovers could achieve success while the rest of them failed in their affairs.

In case if the love birds had reached another level where after exchanging love letters they had met in parks or some other places, they could have imagined two options either to elope or try to convince their parents about their love by attempting suicide. But in

most cases, girls are married while the boys fall into the trap of drug addiction. Instead, if the boy was only killing time with the girl and in case his love remained unsuccessful, he forgets her and starts following another girl. But the married girl had to face problems for her love affair and it becomes quite hard for her to accept her new relation, but eventually, after the birth of two kids, she starts loving her husband, but sometimes such relations end in divorce and she becomes secluded in her family after separation from her husband.

In case the love birds had got a chance to engage in sexual relations and it results in pregnancies out of wedlock then either the girl visits a doctor or a nurse for an abortion, but if the time has reached beyond their hands then the baby is allowed to be born, but is killed and thrown in dustbins or a drain. Such news often circulates in the locality when young kids come and tell their families that police and locals were gathered at a garbage collection point or a drain where they found the body of a baby which is often a boy.

But now with better understandings of the situation and availability of contraceptives, chances of feticide are becoming less common and now even the parents are respecting the choice of their children. Now it has become a common practice that if a boy likes a girl outside his clan then his parents take his proposal to the girl's family and now the case of feticides are becoming more uncommon and one only

becomes aware of them after they are reported in media and now even media is playing a positive role by portraying child born out of wedlock as innocent. Now we can watch the news which shows that society is accepting such children.

A boy usually flirts with many girls and writes letters to a number of them and even there are instances of a girl who is quite popular in the neighborhood as she has befriended many boys simultaneously and every boy is well aware of her flirts. They take turns in meeting each other in nearby fields and then share their side of the story with each other. Such youngsters also write couplets to each other in their letters which say:

Moonlight is because of the moon

The love is only for one person and not for thousands
Apart from love affairs these marriages seldom succeed. Most of the time, cousins tend to visit each other's' homes and the parents also like them to marry and sometimes they also start liking each other and if they do not have understanding then too, boys tell their parents that they want to marry the daughter of his paternal uncle or aunt or maternal uncle or aunt. Similarly, the girls also have an ideal within their neighborhood, and whoever befits it starts liking him. It has never been the case that youngsters from our localities can start love affairs or marry in posh localities. They only have the limits to either befriend a girl or boy in their neighborhood and that too of their level or a little bit lower status.

Whenever there is liberty in families, the girls tend to meet their cousins and neighbors and they succeed in love affairs or you can say they have sexual relations with each other. Whenever there is friendship with a boy of the far-flung area then there is no chance of meeting him and then in such instances, they seldom repeat Indian film dialogues in expressing their failure in the love affair.

Usually, some boys only befriend girls for sexual favors and when they succeed in their evil designs and the girls get pregnant, they abandon them. In such cases there is little chance of love and when such a boy succeeds they say promises are made to be broken.

But the youth of today, don't get entrapped in such activities. Apart from studies they love watching television and now mobile phones have got their attention and their love affairs also develop through SMS. Most of the telecommunication companies offer packages which attract such kids as they are quite cheap and youngsters can talk with each other without any financial trouble. In past, there was seldom a PTCL number in a neighborhood and the girls usually talk to their lovers portraying as if they were talking to their cousins, but someone from the family usually listens to their talk on the second telephone set in another room exposing them badly. But now mobile phones have made the life of youth easy. Letters were usually considered as half a meeting but now they can talk to each other to the full

content of their hearts and they often fix dating place and time on the mobile phone.

UNSUCCESSFUL LOVE AFFAIRS

Whenever a boy failed in his love then initially he tried to persuade the girl with gifts and if the girl forgave her then their love affair resumed, but if it failed then the boy tried another trick of visiting a spiritual healer to have an amulet from him for solving his problem. Usually, such spiritual healers have signboards that say that their amulets can help two lovebirds reunite. The boy tries everything he can and gives hefty amounts and gifts to the spiritual healer and gets an amulet which he ties around his arm. Now he starts visiting the street of his lover and by chance if they meet he tries to mix that amulet in a drink (discreetly) and ask his lover to drink it so that she can befriend him again. Sometimes when the boy follows a girl and there seems to be no end to it, then the girl often gets persuaded and resumes her love affair. Now, this is proof for the boy to become a permanent disciple of the spiritual healer that it was only his amulet which helped in persuading the girl to resume their affair and even he tells his fellows about the spirituality of the spiritual healer. Some girls too follow the same suit. They also get amulets from spiritual healers to marry the man of their choice and get it through her lover and gives it to her parents (discreetly) mixed in drinks so that they should agree to their marriage. Sometimes the girls and boys also take help from influential family members for persuading their parents which is quite a successful trick because it is

seldom that their parents refuse influential family members.

OUR KIOSKS OR PUSHCARTS VENDORS

In our neighborhood when people are unable to do a proper business they start selling different items through pushcarts or set up stalls along the roads to earn their livelihoods. Most of the time they do the fruit and vegetable business. Even now people in these localities could be seen selling fruits and vegetables by carrying a basket on their shoulders which are tied to a rope or a stick. It is often noticed that the rates of fruits and vegetables sold by such vendors in streets are comparatively low to the one sold by vendors in markets as they sell it on almost double rates and most of the fruits, which they sell are of good quality and comprises strawberries, leechi, grapes, and oranges. In our neighborhood, the vendors usually sell vegetables, bananas, oranges, mangoes, or even berries. In winters, Pashtun vendors take their business to up markets and sell dry fruits, which include Almond Nut, Apricot dried, Cashew nut, Chestnut, Dates Dried, Groundnuts Fig, Pistachio Nut and Walnuts. They charge hefty amounts from their customers in these markets. And after selling their products at higher rates they try to slip away from the spot to avoid their customers if they return to turn the things back after getting aware that they were fleeced. Sometimes, these vendors sell china made toys and electronics goods in these up markets but their rates are very high, but the customers who are well aware of the market rates

make the perfect bargain. It is seldom that these vendors make fool of customers by selling an Rs10 item on Rs100. Sometimes these vendors also sell bedcovers, clothes, and utensils in our neighborhood. Some sell new products while some do the bargaining business of giving plastic or silver utensils in exchange for old clothes.

Similarly, some scrap dealers also visit our localities and take scrap that is in the shape of broken utensils, plastic bottles, iron, copper, shoes, and stale bread and newspapers in exchange for money. Several years ago it was women vendors who visited our neighborhood to sell their merchandise under the barter system in which they exchanged old things with clay cups, dry dates, and bangles. Only some of them took money in exchange for their merchandise. Usually, these women were residents of central Punjab and were part of a 'jhugi' (shanty tent homes) culture and most of them were quite chubby and dark in complexion. Most of the day, they used to visit the localities and sell their merchandise. Some young female vendors accompanied by a child visited our neighborhood, but these days they don't visit our localities anymore. Maybe it the ratio of women going to markets themselves that have led to a reduction in the female vendors visit our neighborhoods. However, specific kinds of vendors who use to barter old things in exchange for 'pateesa' (a sweetmeat) visited these neighborhoods frequently. Now they even use loudspeakers to attract their potential customers.

If we talk about the vendors in markets, the vendors sell buttons, needles, and other such items through baskets while the vendors at Sabzi Mandi who don't have a proper pushcart sell their products through baskets. They are free of paying any kind of rent or utility bills but they do have to pay a fixed amount of around Rs300 to Rs1,000 to the shopkeeper or Municipal Corporation Rawalpindi. Such vendors also sell sweet potatoes, sweetmeat, and fish. Such vendors also sell undergarments for both male and female customers. The vendors in markets also sell a 'channa chat' plate in 5 to 10 rupees. However, this is a common practice that every vendor takes the quantity of merchandise he can carry and tries to sell his products by the time night falls. Sometimes, people can see laborers wandering in the markets with empty baskets. They work as porters and assist people in shifting the products they have purchased from the market to their cars, markets, or bus stops.

SCUFFLES AND THEIR SETTLEMENT

In our neighborhoods, the houses are quite adjacent to each other and apart from being getting helping hands in a time of need, sometimes scuffles break out among the neighbors. These scuffles create lots of problems and different means are adopted to settle them. But until the matter is settled both parties have to go through lots of agony and financial loss, which in some instances could bankrupt a family. Most of the fights are the result of petty issues between kids. Kids, usually, start a fight and whenever an elder from one family scolds or slaps the kid from the other family there is every chance of a fight between the two families. It's the women who take the lead in picking up the fight when they find that their kids have been hard done by someone else. It eventually drags men into the fight too and when the matter gets out of the hands of both parties, it is reported to the police station. Both parties register cross FIRs against each other. Sometimes police itself try to settle the issue between the families by taking the money from both sides and sometimes the matter is resolved in 'jirga' or through an influential person in the area.

Youth from the area usually befriend girls of their neighbors and whenever the family of the girl finds about it, they pick up a fight with the boy's family and when the matter goes out of hand the boy also fights back or tries to establish a stronger relationship with the girl which forces the girl's family to take legal

action against the boy. Sometimes the cases result in a Haddood Case and eventually, the boy is jailed. Sometimes ago the father or brother of the girl used to kill such a boy saying the boy tried to rob their home in the dark of night and in self-defense they killed him. If the family of the boy is strong then the girl's family members are jailed but if the boy's family is economically weak then every effort is made to settle the matter through a 'jirga'.

Settlement of loan disputes is another issue common in these localities, whenever sometimes has borrowed some money from a guy and is unable to pay it on time, and then the demand from the lender also leads to scuffles between the two parties. Usually, it happens that the amount taken as a loan is much smaller in comparison to the amount paid to the police as a bribe. Sometimes, ago women were not taken to courts, not even in the family courts. Only male members of the family were allowed to visit courts and police stations. But now women have become empowered to the extent that they report the matter to the police if someone has wronged them. Sometimes they do it at the instigation of their husbands or brothers or fathers because they don't have time to make frequent visits to police stations or courts and secondly, the police take prompt action on a woman's complaint. Due to eastern culture, the policemen do pay some respect to womenfolk. However, as far as the matter of local 'jirgas' is concerned, women cannot visit them with their men. If the women are

directly involved in a monetary dispute then they are allowed to stay in the 'jirga' at a secluded spot that is well covered and they can only talk to the head of the 'jirga' when they are required. They have to accept all the decisions the male members of their family have agreed to in the 'jirga'.

When police register FIRs in scuffle cases, they too ask the scuffling parties to settle the matter at the 'jirga' level. However, it also remains the fact that to extract money from both scuffling parties, they include several strict clauses of law against them and arrest men from both sides. The police usually threaten to send the men from both sides to jail and demand money if the sides don't want this to happen. They usually succeed in their trick. However, they (police) support the stronger party the most.

No matter what the reason for the scuffles in our localities is, sometimes, the matter aggravates so much that even a small petty issue leads to murders and the families have to remain entangled in legal procedures for several years. One family says that the other one killed their boy or someone from the other side tried to look at their daughter. Both sides pick up a fight and if unfortunately, someone from one side dies in the fight then the other side tries its level best to take revenge and kill someone from the other side to settle the score. And if they can't do so they try that every person from their rivals is jailed. If someone kidnaps a girl from one family they try to kidnap women from the other side and if they can't do so

they register such a case against the boy of the family that his entire family has no other option but to remain entangled in legal matters for several years.

And if someone is unable to take revenge from his rival right away then they wait for their turn either by killing one member of the rival family. If the boy from the rival family has eloped with their girl and they have married and have kids, they try to kill all of them to satisfy their revenge. Mostly such thing happens in families who have migrated to cities from tribal areas. Usually, if a girl elopes with a boy then her family members trace her out and bring her back and after settling the matter in 'jirga' they secretly marry her off to a cousin.

Most of the time disputes between families are settled through payment of fine instead of taking up the matter to police stations or courts, as is the case with Pashtun tribes where in case of a scuffle, the party which is blamed for starting the fight is directed by Jirga to pay a fine in shape of a feast in honor of the aggrieved party and also tend a public apology to them.

Some groups affiliated with political parties or those indulged in the drug dealing business tease their opponents and initiate legal proceedings against their rivals by jumping into someone else's fight. To achieve their vested interest they use someone else's quarrel and entangle their rivals in a legal battle. Sometimes the quarreling parties use the bargaining chip to make a deal and settle the issue like a political

rival will ask his opponent not to contest an election against him if he wants to get out of the mess. But sometimes the rival too is a stubborn person and refuses to toe his rivals' line and reciprocate in his manner and when police take action against him, he even attacks them. The gunfight continues for several hours for which the warring parties need a huge cache of weapons and that's why such people are always equipped with heavy weapons whether legal or illegal, feeling they need it at any time. They are even equipped with Klashnikovs and in their fights sometimes bystanders and innocent citizens who are watching the fight from their rooftops get killed and in such instances nobody dares to register an FIR against such mafias.

Police also hesitate to take action against such persons as they have settled a monthly with the law enforcement people. They also use their approach in higher circles or by paying some money to the families of those killed in their firing through a Jirga. Some families are famous for settling disputes, such people are quite active in political circles and for generations, they are indulged in such work. People tend to go to their homes for settling their disputes as they feel that instead of indulging in legal matters going to the house of a Raja or Chaudhry of his area will help settle the dispute no matter if their decision is against them. However, with a rise in literacy ratio, there is a decline in crime ratio but the ratio of scuffles has not dropped down. To bring the ratio down,

people will have to control their anger and if it is not done so then quarrels will continue and police will continue minting money from quarreling parties and people will be enslaved by such Chaudhris and Rajas for the rest of their lives.

LABOR/ LABORERS

Around 50 percent of the population of our neighborhood tends to earn their bread and butter through labor. 25 years ago this ratio could have been even higher. There are lots of types of labor. The majority of laborers tend to lift heavy items. In the nearby vicinity of our neighborhood, there are many wholesale markets like Gandam Mandi, Ghala Mandi, Sabzi Mandi, Fruit Mandi, and Narankari Bazaar. Whereas the flour, pulses and sugar mills which were at quite a distance in past have now come within the limits of the city due to rising population and expanding city and even people have settled along with them. These spots are good for illiterate people in our neighborhood. Most of them do the work of lifting heavy sacks and load or unload them on large vehicles. They easily earn Rs100 from this task.

Secondly, there are laborers of the next level, and they have personal carts for loading and transporting heavy goods from one place to another and they earn better than their ordinary laborer peers. Every cart has a crew of around 3 to four people and if they earn around Rs800 per task then they can hardly earn around Rs200 apiece besides paying the installments of the cart and spending some money on its repairs.

Another kind of laborers are those who have empty baskets with them and they are hired by women who visit markets and put their stuff in these baskets and the laborers tend to drop their stuff to their cars or bus

or wagon stops. Such types of laborers are in abundance and people hire them at very cheap rates. On the other hand, people can see a large number of people sitting along a road, an intersection, or bazaars someone having digging tools in front of him while another has paintbrushes and paint buckets in front of them. They are all daily wagers and they charge around Rs200 to 300 and help the masons in the construction of homes and buildings. Sometimes, these people are hired by contractors or builders who squeeze them by putting them to work for extended hours and that too on meager wages in which they have to take their meals from too. Although this is not a fruitful business for them but after getting attached with a contractor, they are free from fear of waiting for work for many days and they prefer to work regularly no matter if the money is less. Some with water boring contractors while some work in the road construction business.

Painters always settle their daily wages and charge 200 to 300 rupees for painting a room. The laborers do not get a contract because everybody wants a mason to do the work. The masons only tend to have specific tools including a trowel, a hammer, a chisel, brushes, and a square. Only a handful of laborers become masons and that too after working hard and paying attention to the work. And after making a name for themselves they tend to get small contracts. Usually, laborers tend to work for around 20 years before they can classify as masons. The digging work

is mostly done by Afghan or Pashtun laborers and after a couple of years, they start taking up small contracts. They charge per square feet and the owners are not obliged to give them meals during their work. They prefer contracts because the daily wage is a fixed amount while in the contract they earn more. The laborers tend to do the labor keeping in mind their meals, they eat first and then think about their families. Some laborers also help drivers of local transport, long route buses, and wagons. There is a daily wage laborer called, conductor, and he is kept on daily wage for years and when he learns how to drive the vehicle he is given a fixed pay of around Rs5000 to 6000 per month.

Shopkeepers also hire labor on a daily wage basis and after working for many months and playing the role of a personal assistant the laborer reaches the level of a salaried person. Similarly, the laborers work in mills as well. They spend half their life in labor to become a permanent laborer.

They can't even dream of becoming the owner of a mill. In my childhood, my friends and those who I taught afterward were also children of laborers and I was paid my tuition fee in installments. At that time their fathers were young and they could pull huge weights on carts. Now those children have become youngsters and they too are working as laborers in mills, or some have got better options like driving or become tailors but their fathers are still lifting goods despite their old age although its quantity has come

down drastically. Sometimes, the owners give them rotten fruit, vegetables, and even spoiled grains. They tie these goods into their 'chaddar' (shawl) which has been torn from several places and give these things to their wives who cook them.

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OUR PUBLICATIONS

