

## 8. MEN OF THE FAMILY

It is time to take a closer look at the Muṭṭattukkāṭṭu and Nellikkāṭṭu Māmaṅṅu family members, and some principles which define and determine their status and position, or did so in the past. In harmony with the patrilineal system, I will start with the male members. When asking about the family tree, only if I made a special mention were the names of female members also given. The importance of male offspring is obvious in Brahmanical thought in general, as a father who has no son is looked on as abandoned by the gods for the reason alone that if a man dies without male posterity, there is no one on earth and in the heavens to watch over the welfare of his ancestors and himself (cf., e.g., Wilman-Grabowska 1932: 105).

Primarily, I will tell about matters which, to judge from the two autobiographies that I use, are considered important by the Nampūtiris. These matters include rituals, education, and socio-economic and political reforms. The economic situation of the families and the management of the households get a lot of attention, too, but the women are not neglected either. In my study the land, the marriage system, and the position of the women are dealt with more thoroughly in chapters 6 and 9. Before focusing on the two Māmaṅṅu families, some categories of Nampūtiris in general and the different stages in an individual's life will be discussed.

### CATEGORIES OF NAMPŪTIRIS

#### *Grāma and gotra*

According to the legendary history of Malabar, the Nampūtiris came from the north, and were given 64 *grāmas* to live in South Kanara and in what is now Kerala State (Fawcett 1900: 71-72). It has proved difficult to define a Nampūtiri *grāma* in simple terms, but most of them were somewhat localized geographically, although the territory of one *grāma* might overlap that of another. (Mencher 1966c: 185; Mencher & Goldberg 1974: 294). Kolenda (1978: 30) uses this term for the residential unit of a group of patrilineally related men of Vedic Aryans. The term *grāma* originally referred to a group of nomadic herders, then the circle into which such a nomadic group placed its waggons while camping. When the group became sedentary (in later Vedic times), the name came to mean a village. (Rau 1957: 51-54.) NNA (pp. 68-70) expresses what *grāma* means by saying that it is where Nampūtiris lived collectively, the centre of their culture, and that each *grāma* had one important central temple (*grāma-kṣetra*).

Nampūtiris belonging to Śukapuraṃ Grāmaṃ known to have been loyal to the Maharaja of Cochin, and Nampūtiris belonging to Panniyūr Grāmaṃ said to have been loyal to the Zamorin of Calicut, came to assume central importance at an earlier period of uncertain date (Mencher 1966c: 186). NNA (p. 68) mentions Śukapuraṃ, Perumanaṃ and Iriññālakuṭa as the three important *grāmas* that are known today.

Śukapuraṃ near Ponnani, South Malabar, is given by Muṭṭattukkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Mana and Nellikkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Mana as their original *grāma*. The families used to go to Śukapuraṃ temple to worship the deity there whenever something important took place in the family, like an initiation, marriage or a great sacrifice. (MS.) Namboodiripad (1976: 4) says that the presiding deity Dakṣiṇāmūrti in the Śukapuraṃ temple had to be propitiated for acquiring intelligence, so that both before the investiture of the sacred thread and during *brahmacarya* the blessings of this god were indispensable. NNA (pp. 16-18), expressing his gratitude for ritual success in his family, gives credit for it to the grace of Lord Dakṣiṇāmūrti of Śukapuraṃ (as well as the family's forefathers), which shows that the original *grāma* was currently in his awareness.

There is another important notion among the Nampūtiris which they share with the rest of India, namely that of *gotra*. This Sanskrit term has different meanings attached to it, but most commonly it is used to mean an exogamous category within a *jāti*. Members of a *gotra* claim descent from the same legendary sage or deity. Each *gotra* claimed to have certain famous ancestors called *pravara*. A Brahmin is supposed to specify his *gotra* affiliation in his daily devotions in order to memorize it, and its principal use is to regulate marriages. (Karve 1965: 51; Mandelbaum 1970: 145-146.) In other words, a number of lineages belong to a *gotra*, i.e., a clan or sib, a unilineal descent group in which actual descent cannot be traced (Kolenda 1978: 14). Muṭṭattukkāṭṭu and Nellikkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Manas belong to Āṅgīrasa-Bārhaspatya-Bhāradvāja Gōtraṃ.

### Status groups

Each caste includes several statuses, and within the life of each person there are several stages. According to Mencher (1966c: 188), although Nampūtiris were ranked on the basis of their rights and privileges, and, it must be admitted, also their wealth and even occupation, they cannot be classified into different sub-castes, but rather ranked status groups.

The Nampūtiris are divided according to different criteria. *Pūjāris* taking care of the day-to-day rituals as temple officials are considered to have a rather low status. The assertion about rank and temple officials has to be further elaborated upon. It is a different matter that the Nampūtiris without the help of a paid priest conduct the regular *pūja* in their private temples situated in their own compounds.

This does not in the least reduce their high status. MS tells that each temple also has one *tantri*, a respected supervisor who, on special occasions, comes to perform the *pūja*, or give guidance. One person may also be the *tantri* of several temples. He is not considered low in status, rather the opposite.

NNA's family was vested with the responsibility of being the *tantri* in a couple of temples outside the village. The trusteeship of some other temples was in the hands of the disciples (*śiṣyas*) of the family, which circumstance automatically gave respect to Nellikkāṭṭu Māmaṅṅu Mana from their side. Further, according to the *Tantrasamuccaya* (1,5), the most authoritative tantric handbook prevalent in Kerala, the person eligible as a *tantri* should come from an aristocratic family, and be fully learned and devoted to his work, and have rare powers by penance. NNA's paternal uncles were such noble personalities, but after them the family did not have suitable candidates for these tantric responsibilities. (NNA, pp. 160-166.)

The rule of Śaṅkara saying that the twice born, i.e. the Brahmin, should himself utter the ritual formula in all the rites (AP 14), can perhaps be taken as an expression of the self-sufficiency of the Nampūtiri individuals. Only after the period of studentship and the *samāvartana* ritual, which marks its ending, the Nampūtiri male is allowed to utter the mantras himself. Before that, the teacher does it for him. (MS.)

The Nampūtiris are actually called earthly gods in the rule of Śaṅkara (AP 55) which says that they should not utter blessings to each other. In N. Sankunni Wariyar's review (1875) of *Keralācāra* (1866) the rule (55) is said to mean that it is not proper that the Brahmins should make *namaskāraṃ* to another of a different caste. But MS pointed out that when receiving *paśu-dāna* the Nampūtiris perform in gestures but not in words blessings to the donor. According to another rule (AP 56), the Brahmins should not bow down in front of each other. MS says that the Nampūtiris do not prostrate in front of the elders greeting them and touching their feet (*abhivādana*) as the younger Brahmins do in other parts of India. In Wariyar's review it is directly stated (rule 54) that a Brahmin should not worship another Brahmin lying prostrate on the belly. The rule may have been directed against the practice of *abhivādana* perhaps once performed only by the neighbouring Tamil Brahmins, to distinguish the Nampūtiris from them. But in marriages and on some other occasions we have witnessed Nampūtiri children and youngers doing *abhivādana* to their parents and elders and the latter uttering blessings to them in return.

There is some difference in rank drawn between Nampūtiris living in various areas. Those living north of the Kottapuzha river were ranked slightly lower than those living south of this river (Mencher & Goldberg 1967: 99). The reason for this was evidently their matrilineal inheritance system. Incidentally, it is also only north of this river that the popular non-Sanskritic *teyyam* rituals, in which the local Nampūtiris also began to take part later, are performed (cf. Mencher 1970).

A major division among the Nampūtiris is that between the Āḍhyans and Āsyans. The true Āḍhyans are said to be the highest ranking. This rank is marked by adding the honorific suffix *-pad* [-pāṭū] to their caste title; instead of plain Nampūtiri, which is the Āsyant title, the Āḍhyans are called Nampūtirippāṭū. Mencher and Goldberg (1967: 90) also mention semi-Āḍhyans who rank considerably lower. Matrimonial alliances were usually possible only within one division, and the group of the eight most influential Āḍhyant families tended to be endogamous. According to Namboodiripad (1976: 14-17), if a girl from the Āḍhyant group had to be married to a boy from the Āsyant group, it was viewed as a matter of great grief. (About marriage customs, see Chapter 9.)

Another basic division among the Nampūtiris is that between those who are allowed to study and recite the Veda (Ōttanmār Nampūtiri) and those who are not (Ōtillāṭṭa Nampūtiri). Āḍhyans never officiate in *yāgas*, but they can, as a rule, study and recite the Veda. Mostly in central Kerala there are Āsyant Nampūtiris, who even challenge the claim of the Āḍhyans to a higher rank, on the grounds that the latter do not officiate in *yāgas*. (Mencher & Goldberg 1967: 90; Namboodiripad 1976: 14-15.) In my interviews my host family, being an Āsyant family of higher rank, i.e. Viśiṣṭa Āsyants, made the main division not between Āḍhyans and Āsyants, but between those Nampūtiris who are allowed to study and recite the Veda and those who are not. The members did not talk about true Āḍhyans and semi-Āḍhyans, but sometimes called the latter slightly lower and, if they had no right to study or recite the Veda, even lower Āḍhyans. As a rule, intermarriage between those who were allowed to recite the Veda and those who were not was not possible.

Status could thus be gained by Nampūtiri individuals by performing and having performed Vedic *śrauta* rituals. *Agnyādhāna* denotes the setting up of the three sacred fires of the *śrauta* rituals in place of the householder's single fire, which is established at the marriage ritual. *Agnihotra* is the simplest of the *śrauta* rituals proper, and it has to be performed at sunset and sunrise every day during a Brahmin's lifetime as long as his wife is alive. Those who have taken this burden on their shoulders are called Aṭṭitiri(ppāṭū). A Sōmayājippāṭū is one who in addition has performed a *somayāga* ritual, and Akkittirippāṭū one who in addition has performed an *agnicayana* ritual as a *yajamāna* i.e. sacrificer. In this context *somayāga* denotes the *agniṣṭoma* ('ending with the laud of Agni', sung before the sunset), the simplest form of 'Soma sacrifice' (which is the literal meaning of *somayāga*), although the term *somayāga* originally refers to any of the numerous Soma sacrifices, including the *atirātra* ('lasting overnight') with which the *agnicayana* ritual or 'piling of the Fire altar' is nowadays combined in Kerala. Sōmayājippāṭūs and Akkittirippāṭūs were respected and held in great esteem. (NNA, pp. 16, 156; MS.)

In IR's family, in every generation before him the eldest son used to perform either *agniṣṭoma-somayāga* or in addition *atirātra-agnicayana*. NNA's grandfather, father and NNA himself each performed the *agnicayana* ritual, which is a unique achievement in the recent history of Kerala. After *atirātra*, NNA says, all respected and regarded him as a performer of great rituals (*mahākarmmi*). (NNA, pp. 16-18, 218.)

Performing *śrauta* rituals also entitled one to more straightforward material support. For the Sōmayājippāṭṭis of Śukapuraṃ Grāmaṃ there were two *sabhā-maṭhams*, institutions of learning, with landed properties and temples of their own, one in Shoranur and the other in Kuttanur in Palghat district, both under the same management. The surplus income from these was divided between the members for maintenance of the *agnihotra* sacrifice. After his *atirātra* in 1956, NNA was invited to temples, palaces and rich Nampūtiri houses, and given *dakṣiṇās* and *dānas* (NNA, pp. 156, 218-219.) He was given a milking cow with its calf as a *dāna* by Pūmulḷi Mana.

The agrarian reforms were a great blow to NNA. He felt deep sorrow for the new situation, where Nampūtiris should completely change their lifestyle from priestly to farmer families. His special worry was that, having performed *atirātra* and being wedded to the life of an Agnihotri with all its performances, he would not be able to continue in the same manner. With the death of NNA's wife in 1972, all the *agnihotra* fires were removed from the *vaṭakkani* and the prescribed acts of an Agnihotri ended in a natural way. (NNA, pp. 222-224.)

The Brahmins living south of Alwaye area on the other side of the river Periyar had forgotten their Vedas, and consequently no *yāgas* could be performed there. The Maharaja of Travancore therefore gave lands to Nampūtiris living north of the river. Among those who thus performed *yāgas* on his behalf was Muṭṭattukkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Mana. In their enthusiasm to preserve the Vedic tradition, especially as Western scholars had paid attention to it, some Nampūtiris arranged a *yāga* in Trivandrum in 1981, but in that case orthodoxy was forgotten (MS).

A Nampūtiri household could have two heads. The household management and responsibility in rituals usually belonged to the eldest male, who could be unmarried. The head of the family could, according to Fawcett, even be a female, provided that there was no-one of the other sex. It could happen that a very young Nampūtiri who was able to manage the property well could be accepted as the superior, as happened in Kāṇippayyūr Śāṅkaran Nampūtirippāṭṭi's family in the 1840s. IR's father became the manager of the household at the age of 24, when his father withdrew from all activities, but he became the eldest member of the household at the age of 31 when his father died. When the management of the household went to the senior male, it could happen that a man's son did not succeed directly as his heir. For performing the necessary religious rituals, a married couple was

needed in each Nampūtiri household. The head in domestic matters and rituals which required a couple was normally the eldest living son. (Fawcett 1900: 46; Nampūtirippāṭṭu 1963, Chapter 7; Mencher & Goldberg 1967: 90; IR, I, p. 230.)

The younger brothers could get food, oil for their bath, and if on good terms with their eldest brother, some money for other expenses. The position of the younger brothers, said to be worse than that of dogs (IR, I, pp. 6-8), could be alleviated in a number of ways even in earlier times. First, they could get respect and income by being teachers of the Vedas and performers of rituals, heads of monasteries, or *tantris*. Their economic position could also be bettered by being married to royal princesses, as is the case in Nellikkāṭṭu Māmaṅṅu Mana.

### Stages in the life of Brahmin males

As stated in Chapter 7, there were several Nampūtiri rites of passage or life-cycle rituals. The first rituals for an individual were expected to be performed at conception and later at embryonic stage. Following this would come the ceremony for the new-born baby, the naming of the child (*nāmakaraṇa*), the first feeding of solid food (*annaprāśana*), and the first trimming of the hair (*caula*). The initiation ceremony for a boy (*upanayana*), which meant investing him with the sacred thread and handing him into the care of a teacher as a student of the Veda, marked the end of the boy's carefree childhood.

In the life of an Indian Brahmin, according to classical Hinduism, there are four different stages (*āśramas*), which have different rules and customs (cf., e.g., Olivelle 1993). Early childhood is not included in the system. The four stages of life are the studentship (*brahmacarya*), the life stage of a householder (*gṛhastha āśrama*), the retirement of a hermit (*vānaprastha*), and the renunciation (*samnyāsa*). The first and the last two life stages are in opposition to that of the householder, who is the 'archetypal social being'. (Cf., e.g., Sprockhoff 1979: 377; Gray & Mearns 1989: 14.)

It is said that by birth one is born a Śūdra, but by actions like the initiation, study of the Vedas etc. one becomes a Brahmin (NNA, p. 34). Studentship starts with the initiation (*upanayana*), which is considered the second birth,<sup>34</sup> and ends in a ceremony of home return (*samāvartana*) including a final bath. After this the student (*brahmacārin*) becomes 'one who has taken a bath' (*snātaka*), and is allowed to marry and become a householder (*gṛhastha*). In Kerala, after this ceremony the Brahmin youngsters were also allowed to consort with the women of some other castes (Fawcett 1900: 56).

<sup>34</sup> Hence the name twice-born for a Brahmin who has been initiated. In earlier times, also the Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas were 'twice-born'.





Fig. 35. The *annaprāsana* rite being performed in the Taravāṭṭu in 1983. Photo MP.

There are a few Śaṅkara's rules of religious conduct concerning the period of studentship (AP 24, 25 and 26) which seem quite self-evident. There is also one rule covering the life span of an individual, which also sounds too self-evident to be mentioned at all (AP 28). These rules say that one should perform the 16 domestic rituals at the proper time and as prescribed, that the student should perform the vows and see the studentship to completion, and that the teacher should be given the appropriate gift after the completed study of the Veda. This is the system that all high-caste boys should follow in India. S. V. Iyer (1977: 53) tries to explain why these rules are given as Kerala miscustoms by putting the emphasis on doing the prescribed acts at the prescribed time and in the prescribed manner. This, he says, is not the case in many other places where the time and manner can be changed.

MS confirms that among the Nampūtiris these rituals actually had to be performed at the prescribed time and manner, and if the boy, for instance, was more than 12 years old, it was too late to celebrate his *upanayana*. Not all the rituals are performed nowadays, and even NNA could not readily enumerate and quote what exactly are all the 16 domestic rituals referred to in this connection, but he enumerates them, as they are understood in the present tradition, in his memoirs (NNA, pp. 10-12). The boys do not go through a proper Vedic period of studentship any more. In the 1980s the *caula* was usually performed only immediately before the

*upanayana*, if at all, and the *samāvartana*, which for the Sāmavedins used to be performed after five years of studentship, was performed on the day following the *upanayana*, or even on the same day. Nowadays, as was stated earlier, these rituals are usually performed as a formality in the beginning of the wedding ceremony.

The Vedas, according to one of Śaṅkara's rules (AP 27), should not be studied while on the road. This, says S. V. Iyer (1977: 54-55), is not the case elsewhere in India, where the teacher may repeat the mantras and the pupils repeat them after him line by line while they all go along the streets to bathe in the river or the tank before daybreak. MS confirms that in Kerala this is not done, and I think that there the holy texts were kept more closely as the property of the Brahmin males, and because of that not taught and learnt in a public place where other castes and women could hear them.

The householder (*grhastha*) has three main ethical goals: desire and love (*kāma*), wealth and power (*artha*), and righteous duty (*dharma*). In other words, his duty is to marry and beget children, to produce wealth which sustains the family and community, and to give alms which sustain the student, the hermit and the renouncer, and to perform sacrifices which sustain the cosmos. (Gray & Mearns 1989: 14.) Getting married, begetting children, and producing wealth are still what an Indian male is expected to do.

Some of Śaṅkara's rules, however, seem to propagate a disinterested attitude towards worldly values for the Nampūtiris. One rule (AP 7) says that one should avoid wish (*saṃkalpa*) for any fruit of his action when bathing and other such acts, including, as the Malayalam commentary mentions, muttering of mantras. S. V. Iyer (1977: 44) thinks that because the Nampūtiri bathes generally in a pond in his own compound near his house, and this pond cannot be taken as having any particular sanctity, contrary to holy rivers and sacred bathing places (*tīrthas*) where Brahmins in other places in India usually take their bath, it is not felt called for to make a wish about the propitiation and blessings of deities in this connection. I see no reason to suppose that the Nampūtiris consider the pond in their compound anything but holy. Also the mention of other such acts, including muttering the mantras, makes this explanation meaningless.

NNA had heard about this rule, but said that the rule is not followed by Nampūtiri householders, whose duty it is to wish all kind of good results from their acts for the benefit of their households, dependants, poor people, society and their country. This rule, then, is in his opinion meant for world-renouncing saints (NNA, pp. 108-109, and orally). As the rule itself does not mention it, it was probably meant for the householder as well. This rule seems to exclude the possibility of interpreting the Śaṅkara-Smṛti as a means of supporting the economic and social hegemony of the Nampūtiris. In actual fact the purpose of this particular rule may only be to make a difference between the customs of the Tamil Brahmins and the



Nampūtiris. For at the beginning of each ritual act, the Tamil Brahmins expressly state their intent, whereas the Nampūtiris do not include this expression in their ritual practice (AP). Another rule (AP 30) is very close in spirit to this. It says that one should not undertake vows for obtaining specific desires. But again, the reaction of even orthodox Nampūtiris is negative. Vows (*vrata*) aimed at material gains were not avoided even by NNA.

After the life stage of a householder there could be, for those men who wished to live an ideal life, the *āśrama* of the hermit (*vānaprastha*). Manu's Laws (6,1-2) introduce the rules for this life stage in the following way:

1. A twice-born *snātaka*, who has thus lived according to the law in the order of householders, may, taking a firm resolution and keeping his organs in subjection, dwell in the forest, duly (observing the rules given below).
2. When a householder sees his (skin) wrinkled, and (his hair) white, and the sons of his sons, then he may resort to the forest. (Transl. Bühler 1886: 198.)

One did not necessarily have to move to live in the forest. In practice this life stage could mean just giving up one's participation in the household duties, giving the leadership of the household to the next generation, and giving oneself up to meditation and worship. This life stage is not known in the oldest Vedic literature, and the mention of it again disappears by the middle ages. (ŚĀ 4,15 = KU 2,15 and Kāṭhaśruti-Upaniṣad 2,3; Karve 1965: 61; Sprockhoff 1979.)

There are no rules in the Kerala set which regulate customs concerning the hermit, and as is indicated by cases which I describe and analyze in this study, it was not regularly practiced. IR, for instance, remained a householder to the end of his life in the sense that he was in charge of the money and decisions of the household. Only the practical supervision of cultivation of the fields was in the hands of MS before IR's death. However, almost two and a half years after his father's death MS moaned in a letter dated 14th August, 1991 about all the practical decisions that he now had to make:

The roof of our house is leaking. Oh, God! What is to be done! I lament. Rubber Board has a plan to start a tapping training school in Panjal. They ask me to give our *pattāyappura* on rent for two years. They want some repairs to the house and electrification. What should I say? Will there be any problem later? Oh, God! What is to be done! Instead of taking decisions and acting accordingly, I simply sit with a gloomy mind. (You know, until I was sixty my father was here to take decisions.)

NNA, on the contrary, became a kind of hermit in the above described sense, although he could still also be considered a householder. He left the managing of the house and all economic worries to his eldest son Nīlakaṇṭhan, and devoted his life to his regular rituals. (MS.)

The fourth *āśrama* is that of a renouncer. The rule (AP 43) saying that those who live in the life-stage of complete renunciation of the world and its pleasures

must not look at women is, again, almost too obvious to be given as a rule at all. But Gundert (11, 12) has the following points to make about the Kerala renouncers:

If they become Sanyasis, their caste is lost, Cuduma [hair tuft] and Puni nul [sacred thread] are prohibited: women likewise. Staff (*daṇḍa*) waterpot (*kamaṇḍalam*) red coloured cloth (*kāṣāyavastra*) these 3 only are allowed to the Sanyasi. He lives from alms collected on pilgrimage. So in other countries. – But in Ker[ala] Sany[asis] live like kings and may be rich...

Dies one, his body pollutes (*tīṇṭal*). Not so the Sanyasi's body, Br[ahmin]s who touch it may eat after it. They even bring the body before Vishnu's image into the temple, perform oblations, break a ripe coconut on his skull and eat it, then bury him in the templecourt and raise a monument (*tara*).

MS pointed out that in other parts of India too the renouncers are sometimes rich, so there is no big difference in this respect. The younger brother of NNA's grandfather was a great Vedic scholar and he renounced the world and became the chief of the Tekke monastery in Trichur (NNA, p. 18). MS does not know about the breaking and eating of a coconut after the death of a renouncer (*saṃnyāsin*), but he knows that the renouncer in Kerala is usually buried in a sitting position, and salt is sprinkled on him.

After death the next stage for a man is to become a forefather. AP has interpreted the rule (AP 51) concerning the worship of spirits in temples as a prohibition of erecting and worshipping an idol for the spirits of the deceased (*preta*).<sup>35</sup> Fawcett (50) combines the ideas of ancestors and evil spirits. According to MS, Nampūtiri ancestors are neither worshipped in temples nor considered to be evil spirits. Lower divinities like Kuṭṭi-c-Cāttan are considered to be *pretas* by Nāyars and Pulayans (AP orally). As will be remembered, there are in the Kallattū temple in the Taravāṭṭu two stones representing Kuṭṭi-c-Cāttan, but the Nampūtiris do not consider them as spirits of the deceased. So what Śāṅkara probably wants to discourage is the worship in Nampūtiri temples of lower divinities considered to be spirits of the deceased, or maybe even sorcery. Interpreted like this, the rule is followed.

#### *Death observances*<sup>36</sup>

Śāṅkara-Smṛti (AP 38) says that one should perform for one's parents the *sapiṇḍī-karaṇa* ceremony (which was meant to unite the dead person with his ancestors) at the end of the year following their death and (AP 39) that fasting (*dīkṣa*) must be done until that time. According to S. V. Iyer (1977: 52) the ancient law texts lay

<sup>35</sup> In Wariyar's review of the *keralācāra* it is stated that within the walls of a pagoda, idols should not be consecrated, nor temples endowed to the ghosts of ancestors who have died violent (or accidental) deaths (Wariyar 1875, rule 50).

<sup>36</sup> Death observances are further treated in connection with food habits, personal appearance and intimate pollution.

down one year after death as the principal time for the *sapiṇḍī-karaṇa* ceremony. An option was to perform it on the 12th day. Whereas the shorter time was according to him adopted elsewhere, the longer was preferred in Kerala. Fawcett writes that a Nampūtiri who had no male issue let his hair grow for a year after the death of his wife. If there was a son or sons, the only or eldest son should perform the ceremonies connected with the funeral of his mother, and his father, too. In this case it was this son who remained unshaven. (Fawcett 1900: 53.)

MS confirmed that earlier the *dikṣa* for one's parents lasted one year, but recently the offering of rice cakes (*piṇḍa*) has been performed on the 11th day and the *sapiṇḍī-karaṇa* ceremony, in which the dead person is made into such a departed relative as can share the rice cakes, on the 12th day. Even in this respect the Nampūtiris have become more like Brahmins in other parts of India. It should be mentioned that the Ravipuram Śūdra Nāyar maid M could not take part in any religious celebration, for instance the very popular Murukan cult, for a complete year after her mother's death in 1984. M had pollution for 16 days, during which she could not work in Ravipuram.

IR tells that he observed the *dikṣa* for his mother and father in a 'pure' way for one year although some others were not so strict about the rules. This meant that he only had two meals a day. Neither did he eat or drink anything between these two meals, not even water, nor did he eat any green chillies, white sugar or milk. On three days in a month (the day preceding the *māsaṃ* performance, a monthly ancestor ceremony during the *dikṣa*, and the two *ēkādaśis*, the eleventh lunar days of the half-month) only the early meal was allowed. (IR, I, pp. 174-176.)

But this is not all. IR writes:

*Dikṣa* for mother was performed without any trouble. But during *dikṣa* for my father I had reason to be unhappy. I could not have company of my wife, just two months after marriage. At that time the husband met his wife only in the night. During *dikṣa* that too is forbidden. So for one year we could not see each other. (IR, II, pp. 258-260.)

IR does not mention remaining unshaven, but he probably took it for granted. MS after IR's death remained unshaven for a complete year. Fasting and other observances, on the other hand, are very rare for a full year any more (MS). Because of changing times and circumstances, NNA could not perform the daily *dikṣa* for his mother in the same elaborate and costly way as it had been performed previously for all other family members who had passed away. As he says, only a daily *piṇḍa* offering instead of a memorial meal for the ancestors (*śrāddha*) was performed. (NNA, p. 178.)

During the *dikṣa* lasting one year, IR could not leave Panjal because he had to perform some daily rituals. If he had started going to school outside his village, as he had planned, he would have had to interrupt his studies when his mother died.

He did perform worship of deities (*namaskāraṃ*) daily chanting the Veda and he says that he completed the praises for gods (*bhajana*). There was no restriction concerning studying or teaching during the *dikṣa*, except as long as the death pollution (see Chapter 10) lasted, and IR also says that he began to study the Upaniṣad (i.e. the Jaiminīya-Upaniṣad-Brāhmaṇa) during the *dikṣa* for his mother. (IR, I, pp. 140-142; II, pp. 140, 182-184, 192; MS.)

Among the Nampūtiris, in addition to the pollution observances, the mother's family is also taken into account in case of the *śrāddha*. Śāṅkara-Smṛti (AP 36) says that one should perform the memorial *śrāddha* ceremony for one's paternal grandfather and the *śrāddha* for one's maternal grandfather, as well as the *śrāddhas* of their spouses. MS confirmed that in principle this is so and the rule still followed. In no case is the ceremony performed for father's or grandfather's possible other wives. From another rule (AP 41) it is seen that the *śrāddha* was first the duty of the son, even if he had been adopted into another family. Outside Kerala the *śrāddhas* of the second anterior generation are not performed (Iyer 1977: 52-53). MS confirmed that the duty goes to the grandson, son's or daughter's son, only when the deceased's son is dead. In the case of maternal grandparents, the grandson or sons assist their mother. He further said that among the Āsyans in the case of grandparents, only the eldest of the brothers will perform the ceremony, but among the Āḍhyans all the brothers.

Two further rules (AP 37, 40) say that one should perform the *śrāddha* ceremony on each new-moon day mentioning many names of ancestors in accordance with the rules, and that the ceremony is to be performed in accordance with the asterism of the day of the death. S. V. Iyer comments that it is strange that the Nampūtiris are to reckon it on the basis of the stars, as everywhere else it is performed according to the lunar day (*tithi*), and that in other parts of India it is performed with a mere gift of money, whereas in Kerala with fire offering (*homa*) and feeding (Iyer 1977: 52-53). The choice of the stars among the Kerala Nampūtiris is, after all, logical, as they celebrate their birth days according to the calendrical asterism (*nakṣatra*), i.e. their birth star, and death is looked upon as a birth into the next world. MS said that although most Nampūtiris perform the *śrāddha* according to the *nakṣatra*, some Nampūtiris nowadays follow the general Indian way. He confirmed that the ceremony used to be performed every new-moon day formerly, but not any more. He also agreed that the *śrāddha* includes *homa* as well as feeding of another Brahmin who has been invited as the food guest.

IR had not given any advice about his burial. When he died in 1989, his body was burned in his own compound, as the rule of Śāṅkara (AP 42) prescribes. It took place on the same day that he passed away, beside the path leading up to the *pattāyappura*, to the northwest of the main building. The Nampūtiri houses situated on the northern side of the paddy fields, except Nellikkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Mana, have

no convenient place on the southern side for the cremation. After four or five days, however, some pieces of IR's bones were collected in a clay pot and buried at the foot of the jackfruit tree growing near the southeastern corner of the main building. The other remains of the body, at the spot where it was burned, were simply levelled with the ground and a banana was planted on the spot. It was the custom to give the fruits of such a banana plant to the Nāyāṭi caste, but lately they have been sold. The pollution lasted for ten days. (MS.)

DA's *tāli* was burnt on the pyre of her husband. The *ceru-tāli* which she was wearing when IR was alive, was given to the married ladies of the family to wear. The *tāli* is of course the main marriage ornament, but the *ceru-tāli* is connected with the wedding as well, and that is why a widow is not supposed to wear either (cf. Chapter 12). DA was not present at her husband's cremation, but was sitting inside the house, as is the custom among the Nampūtiris as well as many other Indian groups. (MS.)

As told in Chapter 5, a Cīṭikan used to perform the putting of a sesame seed (*tilaṃ*) in the hands of male relatives who were making an oblation on the tenth day of the funeral ceremony. He also used to make the bamboo bier for the dead body. In IR's funeral the bier was made by a Nāyar, and the *tilaṃ* was put in the hands of the relatives by a Nampūtiri, who is not of the same family as the deceased. (MS.)

In December 1994, NNA's brother Aṣṭamūrti, married to a princess, died, and the collecting of his bones (*sañcaya*) was done on the 7th day at Tripunithura, where the Cochin palace is situated and where he had been cremated on the day of his death. Only his brothers took part in both of these ceremonies. The 7th day is not a norm, but a day with an inauspicious asterism is to be avoided. The *piṇḍa* and the *sapiṇḍī-karaṇa* were both performed on the 12th day, as this is the way that is prescribed for the Kṣatriyas. There were both the Jaiminīya rituals performed by the deceased's brothers, as Nellikkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Mana belongs to that Vedic school, and the Āśvalāyana rituals, performed by the deceased's son and daughters, as the Cochin royal family belongs to that school. This seems to show that while the offspring of a Nampūtiri male and a Kṣatriya female becomes a Kṣatriya, the Brahmin spouse of a Kṣatriya woman becomes partly a Kṣatriya himself.

A rule of Śaṅkara (AP 44) says that when a *saṃnyāsin* has died one should not perform a *śrāddha* ceremony mentioning his name. This is confirmed by MS. In Nellikkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Mana a particular *pūja* is still performed in which neither the name of the renouncer for whom it is performed nor his *nakṣatra* is mentioned. In Muṭṭattukkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Mana they do not continue to perform *pūjas* for the renouncers of the family.

## SIX GENERATIONS

This chapter tells about individuals in a chronological order. In discussing the elder generations only the line according to which IR's descent is counted comes to the fore.

### Ancestors

In their historical overview Franke and Chasin (1989: 48) say about education in Kerala:

Before British colonial annexation of the Malabar coast in 1792, the region that became the state of Kerala in 1956 had a functioning system of traditional village schools. These schools catered only to the upper castes and were focused on Brahmanic scriptures known as *vedas*, which the male priests learned by rote. In addition, Hindu philosophy, logic, mathematics, *ayurvedic* (traditional Hindu) medicine, and architecture were taught to some of the highest-caste Brahmin and privileged (high-caste) Nair males.

Even C. K. Kareem (1976: 553) talks about village school masters, and, according to Nampūtirippāṭṭi (1963, Chapter 6), there were some rare writing schools and centres of teaching by local teachers, *Eluttaccans*. MS points out that there was not a systematic network of village schools, but that in some villages there were individuals who gave elementary education to a few pupils in their homes. Nampūtiri children were sometimes taught reading and writing Malayalam by *Ambalavāsis*. Nampūtirippāṭṭi further says that when a child of some rich person was taught, poor children were sent to him too, and the *gurudakṣiṇā* was according to the ability of their families to pay.

The Vedas were taught in villages by family elders or traditional private teachers of particular *manas*. These private teachers either taught boys in their own houses or they stayed in the *manas* of the pupils. The Ṛgveda, however, could also be studied in one of the two special schools for this purpose in Kerala: the *Tirunāvāyi Maṭhaṃ* near Kottakkal, and the *Vaṭakkē Maṭhaṃ* in Trichur (cf. Staal 1961: 40; 1983, I: 174). Only Nampūtiri boys were allowed to learn the Veda. *Āyurvedic* Nampūtiri physician families also had private pupils in their homes as did members of the *Maṅṅān* caste. The latter mainly taught members of their own families. For further education there were some centres maintained by royal families or some rich Nampūtiri, *Nāyar* or *Ambalavāsi* houses, where upper class boys were taught Sanskrit literature, astrology etc. Kodungallur and Tripunithura palaces were such famous centres. For instance, IR's father went to study Sanskrit at the Palace of Tripunithura under the Maharaja of Cochin for eight years. (IR, I, pp. 24, 28; MS.)

The genealogical memory of the Nampūtiris is not very long. IR could give information about his family five generations back, but he also says that only events



which happened after the march of Tipu Sultan's army 960-965 M.E. (1785-90) are really known. He could quote the names and birth, death and marriage years of many members four generations before him, and the names of the *manas* with which marriages were arranged. The performance years of *agniṣṭoma-somayāga* and *atirātra-agnicayana* rituals in the family were also known to him, and the rituals seemed to be of great importance in its history. IR's great-grandfather Rāman, 960-1030 M.E. (1785-1855), was the last one to perform *atirātra* in IR's line, in 1019 M.E. (1844), thus getting the title Akkittirippāṭṭi (IR, I, pp. 2, 18). IR's father Subrahmaṇyan performed *agniṣṭoma* in 1086 M.E. (1911), and became a Sōmayājippāṭṭi (IR, I, p. 18; II, p. 40).

Rāman had two wives, and the son of the second wife, IR's grandfather Puruṣōttaman, 1010-1075 M.E. (1835-1900), built the family mansion, called today the Taravāṭṭi, in 1038 M.E. (1863). He also consecrated the Kallattū temple in the Taravāṭṭi for performing a daily *pūja* for the members of a branch of the family which had lost its last member some years earlier. (IR, I, pp. 2, 8-10, 22.)

Muṭṭattukkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Mana is the teacher (*purōhitan* or *ōtikān*) of most of the Nampūtiri *manas* belonging to Sāmaveda in Kerala. These are situated mainly in three places: Panjal, Kidangoor (Kottayam district, Travancore), and Mookkuthala (Malappuram district, Malabar). All Sāmavedins in Kidangoor and Mookkuthala are said to be *śiṣyas* of Muṭṭattukkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Mana. (IR, I, p. 4.) Nellikkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Mana has its teachers and disciples reciprocally in one of the five Sāmavedin *manas* in Panjal, namely Perumañṇāṭṭu Mana. It also serves as the *purōhitan* for two other families outside the village, namely Vaṭakkāñcēri Valiya Mana and Muṇṭāya Mana. (NNA, pp. 10, 78.)

Teachers were also vested with the responsibility and authority to perform all the *śrauta* and *smārta* rituals of all the members of the disciple family (NNA, p. 10). Especially the younger Muṭṭattukkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Mana brothers, who did not have to manage the household, were teaching the boys of these disciple houses and directing the rituals of their families. Either the teachers were staying in Kidangoor or Mookkuthala, or the pupils came to Panjal. (IR, I, pp. 4-6.)

The job as teachers and performers of rituals for their *śiṣya* families was a great blessing to the younger brothers, as they were otherwise dependent on their eldest brother economically, and under his authority. As teachers they were highly respected, and better off than when they had to depend on their own *mana*. According to IR (I, p. 8.) the *dakṣiṇā* for *śrāddha* and other rituals was their main income. During the march of Tipu Sultan's army to Malabar and Cochin the family had got shelter in Kidangoor (IR, I, p. 46). As has been mentioned earlier, several men of important houses in Panjal used to have alliances with the royal princesses. There were some younger brothers, then, who were better off. The spouses of royal princesses even had personal allowances. (NNA; MS.)

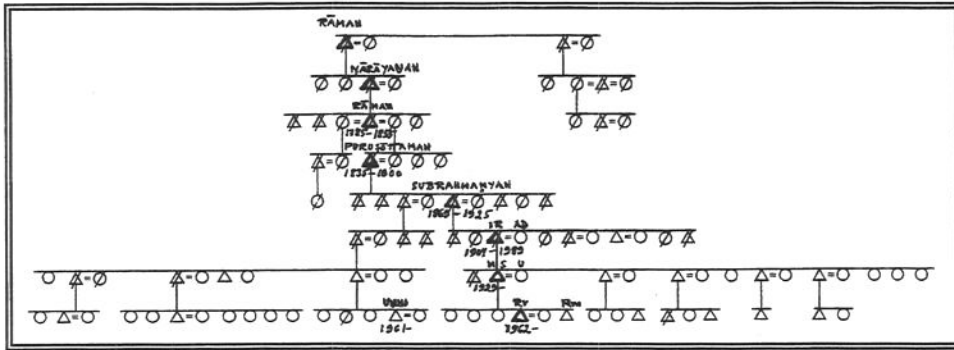


Fig. 36. Eight generations of the Muṭṭatukkāṭṭu Māmaṅṅu Mana. The descendants of IR's younger brothers (as well as those of all female members) are left out. Those who had passed away by the early 1990s are marked dead. IR's male line is marked in bold.

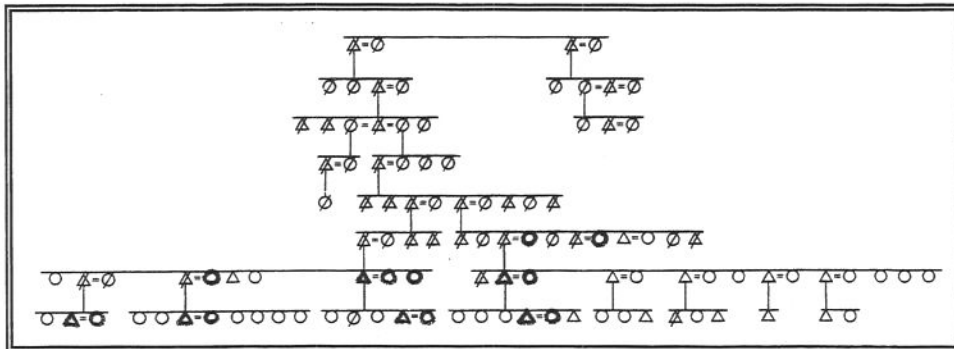


Fig. 37. The kin group. Those who were living permanently in Panjal in the early 1990s are marked in bold.

Even before his elder half-brother and paternal uncle died, IR's grandfather was, contrary to custom, managing the family affairs. He had a soft heart and could not deny people his help. That is how he got the family into debt. To prevent him from getting the family into more trouble, the management was taken over from him, again contrary to custom, by the two eldest of his sons. The second of them was IR's father Subrahmaṅyan, 1044-1100 M.E. (1869-1925). The mother helped her sons make sure that the father would not be able to regain the management. IR's grandfather never forgave his wife and the elder of the sons for this. (IR, I, pp. 18-24.)

The eldest of the brothers continued to manage the house, and the youngest sons went to Kidangoor and Mookkuthala respectively to teach the disciples. After



Fig. 38. IR and DA with some of their children and their families on the day of a grandson's *upanayana*. Vaikkākkara Citran Nampūtiri Junior and his mother in the background. Photo MP 1983.

the death of his elder brother and after his marriage IR's father continued to study and teach the Veda and Sanskrit as his favourite tasks. That was possible because he had a good wife who did most of the practical work connected with the managing routine. (IR, I, p. 32.)

### IR and his generation

IR (1904-1989) was the second son and third child of his parents, and he had three younger brothers and two younger sisters. His eldest brother died at the age of ten, youngest brother one, and youngest sister five. (IR, I, pp. 42, 68-70.)

About his early childhood IR tells that hide-and-peek and *mutal oṭuka* were the main children's games. The latter is a game of tag, still played in MS's childhood, where the children ran from one wall to the other trying to avoid the *mutala* 'crocodile' from catching them. On feast days these games took place in the temple,

otherwise in the homes. NNA mentions handball and, during the rainy season, boating in the fields and canals as children's pastimes. Even before IR was three he went to the temple feasts, but a boy's normal daily visits to the village temple to worship the guardian deity began earlier. (IR I, pp. 62-64; II, p. 48; NNA, p. 44.)

In Muṭṭattukkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu, Vaikkākkara and Nellikkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Manas all boys and girls started visiting the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa temple and the Kāṭṭil Kāvū on their first birthday and worshipping their family deity (*para-dēvata*) Bhagavatī<sup>37</sup> and other deities there. Boys went on doing this usually without any break until they were 13 years old, and the girls until their first menstruation. The servants carried the young babies to the temple, where they were carried to the idol by the Vāriyār ladies. After worship they were carried back to the servants who took them home. Only after that could they have their breakfast. They got a beating if they were found to eat before that. The basic knowledge of the ancient mythology IR got from the women of his family, his mother and his uncle's wife widowed at the age of 22. (IR, I, pp. 62-64, 88-90; II, p. 46; NNA, pp. 28-30; MS.)

At noon we will come to my Ēṭṭanre Amma to hear stories. We were as much interested in the stories as in our plays. She had such an attractive style. (IR, I, p. 66.)

IR's more serious education started after he was four. A clerk in the temple, Vāriyār by sub-caste, taught him writing for a short time. His *upanayana* was performed, because the day was not astrologically favourable for his father, by his paternal uncle in 1086 M.E. (1911). Thus IR was 7 years old when he became a student of the Veda, whose life was very disciplined. During holidays the boys used to go to open fields and have physical contests in boxing etc., but mainly the training consisted in learning the Vedas. IR's teachers were his father and Iṭṭi Vāsu Aphan Jr., a paternal uncle who, though three generations further advanced than IR, was of the same age group as his father. If IR was slow in learning he got a beating from his father. For Sāmavedins the *brahmacarya* period lasted 5 years. IR's *samāvartana* took place in 1916 when he was 12. After that his schooling continued by studying different rituals in addition to studying Sanskrit. As for mathematics, IR claims to have been instructed by a Nampūtiri for only one day. (IR, I, pp. 70-76, 94-98; II, pp. 96-98, 202-206.)

In the year of IR's *samāvartana* in 1091 M.E. (1916) an organization of Nampūtiri youngsters, Nampūtiri Bāla Vidyā Pōṣiṇi Sabha, had started to function in Panjal. This organization had moral strength as its aim. The youngsters were expected to take a bath before sunrise, and avoid playing cards, smoking, chewing pan etc. All members should study the Sanskrit language and literature under a Tamil Brahmin teacher decreed by the temple trust in 1093 M.E. (1918) at the request of

<sup>37</sup> The family deity of Korattikkara, Māttūr, Perumanniāṭṭu and Tōṭṭattu Manas as well as Uṇṇi's mother's original *mana* Cēkūr Mana in Pattambi, Palghat district, is Vēṭṭaikkaran.

the organization. A modern aspect was that they were encouraged to read newspapers. In the assemblies everybody was expected to speak, and the conduct of the members was evaluated. The organization continued functioning until the end of 1099 M.E. (1924). (IR, I, pp. 154-156, 202; NNA, p. 60.)

There is a Vedic festival called *trisandha*, which lasts for several months. The purpose of the festival is to raise the standard of Vedic knowledge, and to ensure that the reciting remains faultless. Those festivals are sometimes still arranged. NNA and IR took part in such a festival actively for the first time in 1920. The festival was arranged in the neighbouring village Attoor. In appreciation of their Vedic knowledge, both NNA and IR were presented with a golden ring each. At that time the boys were 15 and 16 years old respectively. (NNA, p. 84.)

The wider reform movement, the Nampūtiri Welfare Association (Nampūtiri Yogakṣema Sabha) founded in 1909, divided the Nampūtiris into two camps, the reformists and the orthodox. The reformists questioned the authority of the elders. One whom this association initiated into public life was E. M. S. Namboodiripad, the future communist leader, who was first passionately involved in social reform, and later in the Gandhian nationalist movement. Namboodiripad became the prime minister of Kerala for the first time in 1957. (Jeffrey 1992: 109, 127; Turlach 1970: 155; Gopinathan 1998.) As will be remembered, the nationalist movement in India divided the domain of culture into two spheres, the material and the spiritual. In the material domain the West was superior, and it was necessary to learn from it, but in the spiritual domain the East was superior, and that had to be protected and strengthened. So generally Indian men wanted to incorporate the Western way of organizing material life. Not so the orthodox Nampūtiris.

As most of the young men in Panjal were followers of the Nampūtiri Yogakṣema Sabha, orthodox Nampūtiris were not willing to perform large *śrauta* rituals there. 'How can we perform a *yāga* in Lanka?',<sup>38</sup> they asked. The progressive, however, did not boycott religious rituals. What they did oppose was taking a second wife while the first was still living. They stressed modern education and the study of English for girls too, and the right for a Nampūtiri to marry even if his elder brother was unmarried. (IR, III, pp. 9, 17.) In IR's view, then, the organization cared much more for the welfare of girls and women than was, according to E. M. S. Namboodiripad, the case in the early stages of the movement (see Chapter 2).

IR thinks that he was 18 when he heard the name of Gandhi mentioned for the first time. This happened when he visited the Tripunithura palace in Cochin. On that trip he also saw electric light, an electric fan, and a car for the first time in his life. He functioned as the secretary of the Thalapilli Nampūtiri Yogakṣema Sabha from

<sup>38</sup> In the Rāmāyaṇa, Lanka denotes the realm of the demon Rāvaṇa.

1096 M.E. (1921) for about fifteen years, and was a member of the working committee for twenty-five years. On the other hand, he acted in Vedic rites of passage, e.g. as the priest in marriages since 1098 M.E. (1923), and came to do so in more than sixty marriages during his lifetime. IR's eldest cousin-brother Nārāyaṇan did perform *agniṣṭoma*, but in Mookkuthala, not in Panjal, which was considered Lanka by the very orthodox Ērkkara Rāman Nampūtiri, who was his brother-in-law. IR himself only assisted as an officiating priest in these rituals when they were performed by other Nampūtiris. (IR, I, pp. 110-114, 134-136; MS.)

As can be seen, the education of Nampūtiri boys like IR was still quite traditional. The fight for modern education, however, was soon victorious. In 1094 M.E. (1919) a school which would give the Nampūtiris a modern education was started in Trichur. English was one of the subjects. IR got as far as passing the preliminary tuition class, but he never joined the school and never learnt English. For although IR was progressive, he became active in social and political matters only after his parents had passed away. IR says that 90% of the students of the school had come there without the sanction of their elders. As a kind of punishment after this escapade IR was sent to Mookkuthala. (IR, II, pp. 130-134; III, p. 5.) According to Namboodiripad (1976: 30), the reason why progressive Nampūtiris wished their caste members to learn English in Malabar was that they considered it necessary to have their own lobby in the government and legislative circles to be able to counteract the tenancy movement.

IR's brother Subrahmanyān, six years younger than he, became a high-school science teacher in Cherpu, and was fluent in English. First he got his Vedic schooling and primary education at home, and went to high school in Trichur. He took a degree at Annamalai University, Tamil Nadu, being the first boy from Panjal to take a university degree. Subrahmanyān was a Marxist.

The education committee, with IR as secretary, built under his management a small school in Panjal north of the central temple. The school was founded in 1105 M.E. (1930). A new building was constructed in 1108-09 M.E. (1933-34), likewise under IR's supervision. (IR, I, p. 214.) The school was first managed by a Nampūtiri committee, but later by the temple board. The school was opened to all castes in 1945, but lower castes were slow to send their children to study. The government took over the management in 1975. Gradually, nearly all children, including Muslims and Christians, started attending the same classes. The Muslim and Christian children could get instruction in their own religions outside the school.

Although NNA had a completely traditional Nampūtiri education himself and lived in the orthodox style, he says that he understood the fast-changing demands of the world and decided that his younger brothers and sisters should have a modern



education. Six of his younger brothers were given school education in addition to Vedic teaching, and two of them were sent to college as well. (NNA, pp. 132, 164.)

Otherwise there were features in their lifestyle reminiscent of the past. NNA's four younger brothers were staying in the palace of Tripunithura, married to Kṣatriya women. After the dethroning of the Maharaja of Cochin, the palace property was partitioned, and each member of the royal family got a plot of land and a house of their own. Rāman's wife got a palace in Cheruthuruthy, the other brothers' wives got palaces in Tripunithura. But only the royal members continued to have an allowance, not their spouses. That is why these four younger brothers of NNA demanded that their father arrange the partition of the family property, which took place in 1949. The partition spoiled relations between the father and NNA's younger brothers, until all members pooled their strength for NNA's *atirātra* in 1955. (NNA, pp. 170, 208-210; MS.)

About IR's socio-political activities it can further be mentioned that he was even a Taluk committee member of the Indian National Congress. He writes:

I was busy with household affairs and social activities, and it was not easy to have both Vedic and modern studies. Really, in that rush to modernity, Veda was ignored. (IR, III, p. 35.)

In the 1940s IR's political activities diminished, as did gradually those of the reform movement the Nampūtiri Yogakṣema Sabha. This was because practically all its objectives were achieved.<sup>39</sup> IR's energy was directed again more towards traditional Vedic activities.

In reality, IR's going back to the traditional Vedic studies was part of his modernity. Having been deprived of the way to modernity through learning English, he found another channel. That channel was opened by Western scholars interested in the Vedic tradition. Dr. Arnold Bake (1899-1963), a Dutch musicologist, who travelled widely in south India in search of Vedic recitations and other kinds of musical traditions, succeeded in recording Nampūtiri *sāmans* in 1938. Bake was in all likelihood the first European to record Nampūtiri *Sāmaveda*, which was chanted for him by IR. (Staal 1961: 21, 74; Jairazbhoy 1991: 34, 36.) When the Dutch-American scholar Frits Staal came to study the Vedic tradition of Kerala in 1957, IR was already well prepared to be his main informant. The traditionalists, of course, were not willing to co-operate.

<sup>39</sup> The Nampūtiri Yogakṣema Sabha was revived around 1980, because Nampūtiris have not got enough opportunities to get jobs, and because the land reforms have created new problems. It is, however, not very active, and is not functioning in Panjal. (MS.)

### IR's children and their generation

Rāman and Vāsudēvan, the two eldest sons of IR's elder cousin-brother, continued to manage the Taravāpū household, but their next brother Nārāyaṇan, 14 years younger than IR, became a teacher in mathematics in a high school in Trichur. He got his B.Sc. degree in a branch of the Madras University in Ernakulam. He also got training in the Veda, unlike his younger brother Nīlakaṇṭhan, who became a post-master with a good knowledge of English. Nārāyaṇan is a Marxist, and even after he retired from his science teacher's job, was an esteemed advisor for villagers in political matters. (MS.)

NNA taught all his sons relevant parts of the Veda, but they did not take much interest in retaining this knowledge, preferring to pursue a modern education. As NNA's eldest son did not perform Vedic *śrauta* rituals, at NNA's initiative, his son-in-law's, and at the same time his eldest daughter's, *agnyādhāna* and *somayāga* were formally conducted some twenty-five years later than NNA himself performed the *somayāga* in 1941. (NNA, pp. 136, 164-168.)

In Nellikkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Mana, NNA's second son was the first to go for employment after getting a modern education, M.A. degree at Trivandrum University. The third and fourth sons graduated as well, and got employment accordingly. NNA (pp. 216-218) comments somewhat heavy-heartedly that for centuries his family had been most orthodox and lived in the old Brahmanic style, but in spite of the Vedic education, the old family traditions and *dharmic* values could not be fully retained.

All of IR's children have gone to the primary school in Panjal. The *upanayana* of MS was performed in a traditional way. Even all the special observances or vows were performed according to tradition, but he studied Veda for only three or four months. None of the younger brothers observed any *vratas* or studied the Veda during the couple of years between their *upanayana* and *samāvartana*.

There was no high school in Panjal or Cheruthuruthy when it was time for the two eldest sons to attend one. Until independence there were only English-medium high schools in Kerala, and the eldest of IR's children have become fluent in English through these. MS went to Cherpu for the sake of education for one year at the age of twelve, and to Chelakkara for two years. He got his final education at the Madras School of Arts. The second son Nīlakaṇṭhan went to Cherpu for three years. All of the younger brothers have been able to get their high school education in Cheruthuruthy. (MS.)

IR's sons from the eldest to the youngest have the following degrees or occupations: high school drawing teacher, chief chemist, assistant administrative officer, civil engineer, and B.Sc., senior assistant in the Kerala Electricity Board. The post-master's position in Panjal has since the early 1950s belonged to members of

Muṭṭattukkāṭṭu Māmaṅṅu Mana, male or female. For instance, Nilakanṭhan of Putiya-pura, and, for a short time, MS have been among the holders of this post. IR's nephews, Subrahmaṅyan's sons, have become scientists and medical doctors and two of them have even been working in England. (MS; Uṇṇi.)

MS is not only a lover of visual arts, but he is also an amateur playwright whose plays have won prizes in all-Kerala competitions. He has talent in acting as well. He is a kind of cosmopolitan, who is well versed also in Western literature. MS is soft and loving as a husband, father, father-in-law, and grandfather. After holding a teacher's job in Ernakulam in 1957, MS returned home and, in addition to his postmaster's and village school drawing teacher's jobs, acted as his father's assistant in many domestic duties, such as supervising the cultivation of the fields. He abhorred these duties, as in practical matters he is slow and helpless, and cannot even pack his own suitcase.

When AP and I needed an interpreter and helper in our work with IR, MS was the obvious candidate that IR ordered for the job. We thought that MS, an excellent independent informant as well, was given a share of the remuneration for his work, but learnt afterwards that he was not. When later we were wiser and gave him his honorarium without an intermediary, he confided in us that it made it possible for him for the first time in his life to have a bank account of his own. MS's brothers may be characterized as more successful as householders if measured by prosperity.

It is to be noted that the Nampūtiris do not generally avoid contact with the West any more. A clear example is MS, who was immensely eager to visit Europe, and who, after returning, enjoyed the position of 'a Helsinki-returned superman'. He praised the high standard of Northern European art, scholarship, and life in general to the crowds that came to listen to his account of his trip. Illustrative of MS's nature is his reaction to my devoted outpouring over our latest pet, a dog called Kuṭṭi. He wrote (letter postmarked 29th September 1997): 'Abhivādyam̄ to Kuṭṭi!' This respectful address to a dog from a Nampūtiri is a hilarious example of MS's flexibility and sense of humour.

### **IR's grandchildren and their generation**

The boys of the generation of IR's grandchildren still had their *upanayana* performed mostly in their childhood. We witnessed IR performing the initiation of his grandson in 1983. The *upanayana* and the *samāvartana* took place on successive days, so that there was no proper period of Vedic study between the two. The younger brother's *upanayana* was not performed at the proper time any more, but would, undoubtedly, be part of his marriage ceremony.

Rv and Rm, the sons of MS, have had their high school education in Panjal village itself in the same building where the primary school functions. Rv supported

Marxist ideology at the end of the 1970s, but that did not last long. In the 1980s their parents hoped that the two brothers would try to get a bus conductor's job in the government bus company. They failed, and my feeling is that they did not even seriously try because the job was hard and the salary was not good. Rv and Rm hoped to get permanent jobs with a reasonable income in Kerala, and the prospect of eventually getting a pension there.

Rv also dreamed of making quick profits in some business transactions, like buying and selling land, or running some profitable business in the village. Due to scarcity of capital, he could only start a small plastic bottle workshop in the old barnhouse. The beginning was slow and tedious because of all the required formalities. He employed a young man to help, and tried to work himself for some time. The small industry became a nuisance, and since 1994 it was for sale. Rv complained that he could not run the company as employees demanded high salaries when there was plenty of construction work available too. He himself did not want to work for such a low profit either. In 1997 the factory equipment had been sold and the family planned to turn the old barnhouse into a lodging for visitors.

Rv has been an excellent help to us and other foreign scholars in their fieldwork as a diplomatic mediator and expert of local custom, but correspondence with him has not been a success. He has done the job of a temple priest or a *pūjāri* in another village in Kerala in 1996, in Mysore in 1997, and in Faridabad, near New Delhi and Bombay in 1998-99 (MS; Uṇṇi). The skills needed in the work of a *pūjāri* Rv has learned in his village from his grandfather and other Nampūtiris. Rv and Rm always have a safe place and home to return to from their various short job periods. MS has the main building for his family, and this can be shared by the two sons and their families as well.

After trying to get a job in Kerala, Rm waited in Bombay for a job in Saudi Arabia in 1992, as he considered the situation to be too gloomy in India. This was in vain, and he had to return to the village. In 1994 Rm eventually got a job in Saudi Arabia. The nature of his work there was only reluctantly discussed, because it was manual. In September 1996 Rm came back to get married in his village in December. Soon after the wedding, in February 1997, he returned to Saudi Arabia with the plan of staying another two and a half years. In summer 1998 he returned for a four-month holiday. He used part of his earnings for renovating Ravipuram. His stay abroad can be characterized as fairly successful, which cannot be said of another grandson of IR's, who, after working in Malesia, returned with heavy losses in 1998.

Some of the generation of IR's grandchildren have become teachers, clerks, engineers etc., after attending college. Uṇṇi, one of our excellent informants and helpers, is an enterprising and flexible individual, with multiple economic activities. He worked several years as a camera repairer in Cochin in Bionix, an elderly Nam-

pūtiri's company, as well as at another enterprise in Trichur, in which he was a co-owner. When Bionix closed down in 1997, Uṇṇi started another shop in Cochin with his partner Jhon Fredricks, who was in charge of it, and Uṇṇi continued to look after the shop in Trichur alone. Earlier he started a rubber plantation, which already yielded a good profit in 1996. Uṇṇi also had a lucrative side-business photographing and later videofilming Nampūtiri weddings, which became his main occupation in 1998. He constantly used his money to renovate his home Putiyapura. He also invested in a motorcycle. Uṇṇi has participated in arranging rituals and events of performing arts with his wife's relatives in Killimangalam, events which some foreigners paid for. He was also involved with the work of a temporary Sāmaveda recording centre at Killimangalam in 1997.

Vaikkākkara Citran Nampūtiri (junior), whom we also have to thank for excellent help, is an enterprising individual too. He got a job as a pharmaceutical agent for a company in the 1980s, and was later promoted to district manager. He also started growing rubber trees in the family compound in the 1990s, although he lived in Ernakulam with his wife and children.

So far there are few manual workers employed by others among IR's children or grandchildren, or their spouses. Rm has to do manual work in Saudi Arabia, and Rv, it is true, also did some manual work in addition to managing his enterprise. The bus conductor's job in the state bus company is generally considered to be a desirable and stable job, which some of the young men consider. But tilling the lands is still not done by the Nampūtiris, and other manual work in the real sense of the term is not common either.

## PROFITS AND LOSSES

As a group, all Nampūtiris can be said to have suffered in the reforms, because they have lost, at least in part, their economic, political, and even religious status, which was not called into question earlier. The difficulties that many Nampūtiris face today after they lost their privileged position make some of them complain about the politico-economic situation in Kerala. Some family members, however, have adopted a leftist ideology, which means that they approve of the reform. E. M. S. Namboodiripad from South Malabar, IR's coeval, who joined the Communist Party in 1938, and later became Prime Minister of Kerala, served as a model for many.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Kerala communism is rather socialism than communism. The land-to-the-tiller policy means private ownership of the means of production. Earlier those who call themselves communists might have considered that as a transitory stage, but nowadays it is difficult to find a person who openly supports the idea of, for instance, collective farms.

While the old system still operated, the eldest son would have become the head in domestic matters and rituals or even the whole management of the household property, which was often considerable. Nowadays, that is no more the case. The property, smaller than previously, is divided between all the sons, while the daughters are considered to have their share through their dowries. As regards the cutting down of landed property (cf. Chapter 6), it is first and foremost the eldest male member of the family who lost a fortune.

Younger brothers, in general, cannot be said to have suffered in economic matters compared to the time when the traditional system operated. As they usually did not have property or income, they could not lose in this field. Those who were married to royal princesses, like some members of Nellikāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Mana, and those who had a relatively good position as teachers and performers of rituals in other Sāmaveda families, like some members of Muṭṭattukkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Mana, did not have a similarly hard fate. The younger brothers, too, used to have a chance for sexual relationships, even in their young days. Nowadays, those who are not able to find a good employment may have to wait much longer than they would like to before their family is able to arrange their marriage, and there are no extra-marital sexual partners as part of the system for them in the village any more.

Kerala has invested especially in primary education, and literacy has risen dramatically in the 20th century. But caste inequality still remains particularly in higher level education. In 1987 some 32,000 scheduled caste and scheduled tribe students got government scholarships for higher education as well, but, for instance, in Panjal very few individuals of the lower castes pass the Secondary School Leaving Certificate. (Franke 1993: 226-231.) The former landlords have been able to reduce the losses from the land reform through higher education and professional jobs.

Modern development seems to have made the younger brothers winners in the sense that they have more choices and freedom in life through the possibility of moving around, getting modern schooling, and earning considerable personal property. They also have a chance to get married and have children who belong to their nuclear family. The eldest brother, of course, has also got more freedom to move around and choose his education and jobs than before. Some of the sons have had good jobs, and can expect good pensions as well. After becoming pensioned, at least some of them return to their paternal village, and get as their inherited share a place to live and have a regular income from outside the village. Those who have not been successful in studies and getting a modern profitable employment can be said to have suffered losses.

Family members may help in a number of ways: share costs, be sources of good ideas, have contacts with the outside world. But living will probably continue to be meagre for many Nampūtiris, while some others, especially those who have looked for jobs outside the village, will prosper. A modern source of irregular in-



come for some in the family have been the foreign scholars and artists interested in the Kerala tradition including its performing arts, and the opportunities they have provided since the 1930s. Being a Nampūtiri and mastering the traditional culture has been a direct asset to an individual and his whole family in this situation. Being a good assistant and organizer in various tasks has likewise profited even those who have only little or no knowledge of the Vedic tradition.

The Nampūtiris thus have had an advantage over the low castes in having the means to give their children a good education and prepare them for professional employment as teachers, administrators etc. But the government policy of having a lower caste quota in universities and public jobs, combined with the serious unemployment in Kerala since 1961 (cf., e.g., Franke 1993: 160), will probably deprive many a Nambidiri youngster of a good profession. In Kerala, laws relating to government services and government-run universities have been written to pointedly discriminate against Brahmins (Kolenda 1978: 119).

