9. WOMEN OF THE FAMILY

In this chapter I will continue to take a closer look at the family, this time the female members. I shall also discuss some principles and customs which pertain to women's lives. The marriage system is dealt with in this chapter because marriage, or having to remain unmarried, used to determine the quality of women's life probably more than anything else.

PURITY OF WOMEN

Because the family profession of the Nampūtiris is priesthood, says NNA (p. 26), they are very keen and anxious to beget good progeny. Since the caste of an individual was determined by his or her mother, and purity was transmitted in the blood of women, female purity was considered to be of utmost importance (cf., e.g., Douglas 1966: 125-126). Therefore there were rules which were particularly meant to preserve the purity of women. These examples come from Śaṅkara's rules:

> The Brahmin women must not be seen by other men excepting the husband [nor should the Brahmin women see other men] (AP 45).
>
> They (i.e. the Brahmin women) must not go anywhere outside the house without a maid-servant (AP 46).

Also the Kerala rules according to Gundert (32) confirm that Brahmin women must neither see men other than their husbands, nor be seen by them, and therefore they can never go out without an umbrella to hide them and a Śūdra woman for help. My early 20th century sources likewise tell that Nampūtiri women were rarely seen outside their own houses, and if they were, they wore a covering dress and were escorted by a female Nāyar servant. (Fawcett 1900: 40; Iyer 1909-12, II: 282-283.) The name used for a Nampūtiri female, usually only a married lady behaving in the traditional manner, is Antarjanaṃ, which refers to her being confined indoors. No Nampūtiri women had entry to the temple festivals celebrated on most days of the year. They could go to the temples only to worship gods in the morning. The temple was the centre of entertainment, and being deprived of the privilege of partaking in the feasts was no small matter. (IR; MS.)

If a Nampūtiri woman, in spite of all precautions, had an illicit sexual relationship, a spectacular trial was arranged. This could last for months or years, and various persuasions and modes of torture, like bringing rats and snakes into the

woman's room, were said to have been used to make her confess. If she was found guilty, she was excommunicated. (Cf., e.g., Logan 1951: 122-126; Iyer 1909-12, II: 210-213.) In a matter like this the practice was equally unmerciful towards the male party even if he was a Nampūtiri. Śaṅkara's rules (AP 50) order a twice-born who has had intercourse with the wife of another Brahmin to be expelled from his class. One rule according to Gundert (26) reads as follows:

> The same Brahmins who judged it under their dignity to give their daughters for money, sell them, when convinced of sin by a Brahmin meeting (*yogaṃ*), after having stripped her of armring (*kaivaḷayaṃ*) and the hiding umbrella (*maṟakkuṭa*), for striking their hands (*kai koṭṭi*) and hissing (*āttu*) they cast her out, and with the money got for her (from Mopla) they order a meal of purification. This they do not think to be flesh-sale (*māṃsavikrayadoṣaṃ*).

The next rule in Gundert (27) continues:

> There is a place of refuge for thieves (*kaḷḷan*) and adulteresses (*pulayāṭi*) in Cunicheri (*Kuniśśeri*) Vellappa-nadu (*Veḷḷappanāṭu*), where no king nor law can touch them except [if] they leave it.

About the fate of the culprits one rule in Gundert (55) reads:

> If a Nambutiri commit adultery with a Nambutiri's wife, they are when detected degraded. He becomes a Chokyar (*cākyār*, corruptive of *ślāghyār* 'songster') she a Nangyar (*naṃgyār*, properly *nagna* 'naked' in vulg. language termed *pāṭṭamma* 'sing-mother'). The work of this caste consists in amusing the Br[ahmin]s by theatrical representations (*kūttāṭa*).

The Cākyārs are said to be sons born to Nampūtiri women found guilty of adultery, the sons born to the Nampūtiris after their connection with an adulteress, or the offspring of Brahmin women and Kṣatriya men. The jokes of a Cākyār performer are of the kind which presupposes intimate knowledge of Nampūtiri customs, which is difficult to come by without oneself being close to the Nampūtiris. It is further said that if the boy had been invested with a sacred thread, and studied the Veda, before his illegitimate origin was found out, he became a Cākyār. If he had not yet studied the Veda, he became a Cākyār Nampiyār, who did not wear a sacred thread. The Cākyārs are patrilineal, the Cākyār Nampiyārs matrilineal. (Thurston 1909, II: 8, 10; Iyer 1909-12, II: 128-129; MS.) According to my observation, as mentioned before, Nampiyārs may wear a sacred thread.

The Panjal Nampūtiris do not confess that they have knowledge of one single case of adultery among the Nampūtiri women during the last 50-60 years, and therefore it is not known how they would have been treated in more modern times. Anyway the Indian constitution guarantees equal protection before the law for all citizens.

As early as a hundred years ago, married Nampūtiri women could leave their husband's village. IR tells how his mother used to walk with him 10-12 miles sev-

eral times to visit her original *mana*, Veṅṅallūr Mana in Ongallur, near Pattambi, Palghat district, and this was before he was 12, i.e. before 1916. (IR, I pp. 64-66.) But until the Muslim riot of 1097 M.E. (1922), Nampūtiri women did not travel in trains (IR, I, p. 138).

> When Kallampiḷḷi Dāmōdaran Nampūtiri died in 1099 [1924] *makaraṃ* I went with Kallampiḷḷi Amma there. ...Until then Antarjanaṃs from these parts did not travel in a train, so we went in secret. (IR, I, pp. 148-150.)

Gradually the bus services reached most places. IR travelled in a bus for the first time, from Palai to Kidangoor, in *kanni* 1097 M.E. (1922). (IR, I, p. 140.) Talking about the anniversary of the Nampūtiri Yōgakṣēma Sabha IR writes:

> But in the Anniversary in 1107 (1932) celebrated in Taliparamba in North Malabar some Antarjanaṃs ...participated. In the next year some more Antarjanaṃs participated in the Anniversary in Karalmanna. I participated with my elder brother's daughter Uṇikkāḷi. My wife could not come with me. But we had gone to Trichur and other places in modern dress. (IR, II, pp. 284-286.)

The Nampūtiri women have now got the right to partake in temple festivals except when polluted. They travel a lot by bus or train nowadays, as their urge to see other people and places is strong, as they study and have jobs to tend, and as they often cannot afford to travel in a car. The dance drama performances in the Kēraḷa Kalāmaṇḍalaṃ in Cheruthuruthy are popular entertainment for women. As there is no late enough bus to go there, they walk there in groups, stay the whole night at the performance, and return on an early bus. Even DA travelled far and near in suitable company in the 1980s. Not only did she visit relatives or temples and attend weddings, but she also liked to join the younger people going to see Malayali films in Shoranur but then she was one of the early modern Nampūtiri women.

Despite all this I must point out that it is the rule for all ladies to sit apart as a group on most public occasions such as celebrations and performances. What is more, until very recently some of the women remained conspicuously old-fashioned. As I shall tell in more detail in Chapter 12, I could still see ladies wearing the fully covering attire, and living somewhat in seclusion. They were often accompanied by their servant woman in the 1980s, but in the 1990s that was a rare sight. Such a modern lady as DA withdrew into the house when IR's brother came to visit Panjal, because in her youth she was brought up not to expose herself to the male members of her husband's family. Now she was, however, very conscious of her behaviour, and the others joked about it.

Middle-aged women like U, not to speak of the old, preferred to travel escorted at least by their sons. The younger the ladies were, the more they were seen travelling without an escort in daytime, but in the evenings they were well-guarded. It was not suitable for them to go out with friends, especially with young men, when

Fig. 39. A lady of Vaikkākkara Mana, dressed in the traditional way, on her way to the temple. She is accompanied by her maid servant. Photo MP 1983.

it was dark. Only the boys went out to see friends in the evenings at their regular meeting places. Some elder Nampūtiri men could sometimes be seen in these gatherings, but never women. The latter needed a definite reason and suitable company if they were to be seen out after nightfall. My confession of having had dates with boys before I had met AP was very exciting for the women, and I had to tell about it and show photographs of earlier boy friends in front of every new audience that the women could arrange. For instance, I was dragged to R's school to confirm in front of R's colleagues that what she had told them about me was really true.

FRIENDS

Outside the family, in addition to the *manas* of the *ōtikkāns* and *śiṣyas*, there are other Nampūtiri *manas* with close friendship ties to each other. These are the *manas* of the so called *iṇaṅṅārs*, 'friends', females who help each other in ladies' rituals. Not only Nampūtiris have this network of friends, but also the Ambalavāsis and the Nāyars. (MS; M; Pārukkuṭṭi Vāriyār.)

It is said that within the family a boy's relationships with elder males required distance and respect, and that therefore they could not be friends. Within the matrilineal caste groups a close and relaxed relationship between an uncle and a niece or nephew was said to be possible only when the uncle was a 'family black sheep, and did not amount to anything'. In Nampūtiri kinship terms relative age is also often differentiated in case of female members. Relations between brothers and sisters would not be close either. Emotionally close ties tended to exist among males who had studied or performed sacrifices together, or who lived in neighbouring houses. (Mencher 1963: 59; Mencher & Goldberg 1967: 95-102.) There must no doubt be similar reasons for having close female friends outside the family. I have seen that nowadays there can also be a close and warm unconventional friendship between kin of different ages. There is a relaxed companionship between Rv for example and his aunt R's husband PS, and Rv and his elder sister Ajita.

The *iṇaṅṅār* ties between women of different houses are mutual. For example, the ladies of Koraṭṭikkara Mana and Tōṭṭattu Mana are the traditional *iṇaṅṅārs* of the women of Muṭṭattukkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Mana. The ladies of the latter house, again, are traditional *iṇaṅṅārs* of the other two *manas*. All three *manas* happen to be Sāmaveda houses, but that has not dictated the choices. The women of Koraṭṭikkara Mana have in addition *iṇaṅṅārs* in another village, the ladies of Muṇṭayūr Mana near Attoor village, and that is not a Sāmaveda but a Ṛgveda *mana*. The Pakarāvūr Mana (Sāmaveda), again, has *iṇaṅṅārs* in Ērkkara Mana (Ṛgveda), which is comfortably close to it.

For each *mana* it is common to have two *iṇaṅṅār* houses, because some pollution or other reason in a *mana* may prevent the *iṇaṅṅār's* duties from being performed. Kuṟumūr Mana in Edappally, Ernakulam district, had only one *iṇaṅṅār* house. Two generations backwards from MS it happened that, as there was no married lady in that house whose husband was alive, the bride and groom had to wait for the performance of the ceremony of the bride entering the bridegroom's house (*kuṭi-veppu*) for about fifteen years. All the rituals in connection with the marriage were performed in the bride's house, but she continued to stay there even though she had children with her husband. Only after an *iṇaṅṅār* was available for them (after one Nampūtiri in the *iṇaṅṅār* house married) was the *kuṭi-veppu* ceremony performed and the wife able to move into her husband's house. (MS.)

As the Nampūtiri female first belongs to her father's *mana* and after her marriage to her husband's *mana*, the Nampūtiri woman also gets new *iṇaṅṅārs* when she gets married. As it is the males, then, at least through their houses, who are decisive in the choice of the *iṇaṅṅārs*, one would expect that the males of the two *iṇaṅṅār manas* would have some kind of intimate relationship compared to other *manas*. This, however, need not be the case.

UNMARRIED GIRLS

Pre-puberty

According to Nampūtirippāṭŭ (1963, chapters 3, 12) the partiality with regard to girls could be seen in both Vedic rites and worldly matters. The girls were, for instance, given ornaments of cheaper metal to wear than the boys, and their food was not of the same quality. From early childhood the girls were trained to observe strict discipline. But the girls did not, says Nampūtirippāṭŭ, think they had a right to demand equality with the boys.

The life of young girls in Panjal seems not to have been very restricted before puberty even in earlier times. In fact the bringing up of both sexes seems to have been similar in many respects during their early age. Boys and pre-menstruating girls could play together. They could take part in the temple festivals, all the special more festive ones called *namaskāraṃ*, and all those called *vāraṃ*, except one, the *tiruvōṇaṃ vāraṃ*. There is a story, true or not, cited by IR, which gives a reason for this:

> Once, when the *vāraṃ irikkal* was being performed in *tiruvōṇaṃ vāraṃ*, there was a mistake in the recitation and a girl – belonging to Nellikkāṭṭu Mana – pointed out the mistake. Girls were not allowed to study Veda. It is told that from then onwards *tiruvōṇaṃ vāraṃ* was forbidden for girls. Daily the girl was listening to the chanting of Veda by her father and brothers and she knew much of the Veda. (IR, I, pp. 48-50.)

But as demonstrated in the beginning of this chapter, there was a general feeling that a boy was superior to a girl. A boy and a girl should not fight, but if it happened, the fault was considered to be that of the girl (Nampūtirippāṭŭ 1963, Chapter 12). Still, not all girls accepted this as a fact:

> Before *samāvartana* I had always quarrelled with my sister. She thought that as she is the elder I must obey her. But I thought as I was a boy I have more authority. Hence the quarrel. (IR, II, pp. 162-164.)

The father took sides with the boy:

> I remember one incident which happened before the *upanayana*. One day, as most days, I had a quarrel with my elder sister. When I was defeated I cried. My father came when he heard my cry. My elder sister ran to the kitchen. My Ēṭṭanṟe Amma was there. My father is not allowed to see my Ēṭṭanṟe Amma as she is his brother's wife. So my father called my sister standing outside and told my Valiyēṭṭan Nārāyaṇan to bring her there. He took her to him and my father beat her, and my sister wet her clothes. Later we used to laugh at her about this. (IR, I, p.82.)

After *upanayana* the boys were not supposed to play with or even speak to girls. The sanction was ridicule, other boys would laugh. According to Nampūtirip-

pāṭŭ (1963, Chapter 7), the Nampūtiris did not in general fondle children of either sex or respect their wives or children, in contrast to those who followed the matrilineal system, and especially the Nāyars. Children freely play together nowadays. From what I could observe, practically all Nampūtiri children, both boys and girls, are nowadays treated warmly and patiently, and get a lot of attention from their parents, other relatives and friends. Data-based studies also tell of the absence of parental discrimination in Kerala in providing, for instance, health care to boys and girls (Ramachandran 1995: 25).

Tiraṇṭu-kalyāṇaṃ or the rite of the first menstruation

According to Narendra Nath Bhattacharyya, in south India the rites of the first menstruation were observed with maximum strictness. However, he remarks, modern studies of tribes and castes lack detailed accounts of menstrual rites because they are not only fading away but in many cases have gone completely out of vogue even among the backward tribes and castes. (Bhattacharyya 1980: 21, 29.)

Usually the duration of the menstrual pollution is counted as three days or nights (see Chapter 10). Among some groups the pollution period lasts as long as the actual flow does. In the case of the first menstruation the pollution period is from 3 up to 16 days. Nowadays the purification may even take place on the first day. Fertility symbols, such as coconuts and rice, which also symbolize prosperity, are sometimes placed under or near the girl. They are also consumed in the feast connected with the ritual. There are various rules about what the girl may or may not eat during the pollution. (Bhattacharyya 1980: 21-30.)

Although menstrual rites are not counted as *saṃskāras*, they are referred to in the Brahmanical law-books. Like the rules about the menstruating woman, the menstrual puberty rites also include the idea of impurity, seclusion, remaining unseen by males, a ceremonial bath of purification, and wearing a new or clean cloth after it. The latter features, of course, are general symbols of leaving one status and entering another. Among some people the girl bathes daily, but more commonly she is not allowed to bathe before the day when she is to be declared purified. The idea of impurity leads to the prohibition of touching another person, sometimes even some animals and plants. The girl, like a boy in the *upanayana* ceremony, is often not allowed to see the sky. (Bhattacharyya 1980: 7, 21-30, 42.)

I will describe the Nampūtiri rite of the first menstruation as it was partly acted out and explained to me in Panjal in 1983. There are descriptions of the initiation rites of other south Indian groups, like the Nāyars and Tīyars by E. Kathleen Gough (1955), the Nāyars by Melinda A. Moore (1988), and the Nattāti Nāḍārs of Kanyakumari by Pauline Kolenda (1984), but these groups' alliance systems, which have their influence on the ceremony, are very different from that of the

Nampūtiris. I have not found any description of this rite among the Nampūtiris, so I cannot say whether it differs from the ways in which it is performed in other parts of Kerala or was performed in earlier times. I will, however, compare it with the way the Nāyar ceremony was described by Thurston and by M, as she has a close hereditary relationship with Muṭṭattukkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Mana.

On the day when her first menstruation began, the girl was given clean underwear, but she was not allowed to change her dress again for three days, or take a bath even on the first day. That is in accordance with the ancient texts which include the rule that under a pollution one should not bathe. Before puberty the girl had already started wearing an underwear loincloth (*onnara muṇṭu)*. Nowadays she may wear pants. At this age the girl wore a long skirt (*pāvāṭa*) and a long jacket. Nowadays she may wear a shorter skirt or even shirt and trousers (*śalvār-kamīs*). The ceremony does not give cause for a change of fashion immediately. Only later did the girl add an upper garment, a scarf, on top of the jacket to cover her breasts. But during the ceremony the girl's hair was usually tied up in a grown-up woman's style, which was new to her.

On the first or second day the girl would rub ground henna (*mailāñci*) leaves on her palms to make them red. In India henna is connected with amorous and erotic appeal in addition to its being used for its medicinal properties. It is also said to be auspicious, the red colour being universally connected with blood and life. The girl was taken to the room (*toṭṭiya*) where the women of the house used to stay during their menstruation and for delivery. An *iṇaṅṅār* was sent for to lead the ceremony. She drew on the floor, with rice powder mixed with water, a figure called *aṇiyal*, which simply means adornment. It consists of lines curving slightly at one end and starting from a very small ring. They might, in my opinion, depict growing rice plants. On these lines were added three rectangles or ovals one within the other. The innermost oval was of raw husked rice (*uṇakkal ari*), the middle one of parboiled husked rice (*puḻuṅṅal ari*) and the outermost of raw paddy.

As was told in Chapter 6, only raw rice (*pacc' ari* or *uṇakkal ari*) is used in Vedic rituals, but parboiled rice is used in women's rituals. As married Nampūtiri ladies have a part to play in Vedic rituals as well, and as they prepare ingredients for these, they are quite familiar with raw rice in rituals, but parboiled rice is something which they have to handle every day as housewives when they cook the meals for the family. On top of the figure was spread a double loincloth (*muṇṭu*) that had once been washed by the regular washerman of the family (Veḻuttēṭattu Nāyar). This washing was necessary because the cloth had been woven by a representative of the unclean weaver caste. This was the seat and bed on which the girl had to stay for three days and nights.

On the wall were also drawn some ornaments with rice powder mixed with water. As examples, three figures were drawn depicting a pipal tree, which is a very

sacred tree representing every god, an ornament which can be counted as a marriage ornament (*ceṟu-tāli*), and a tailed bronze mirror (*vāl-k-kaṇṇāṭi*), an auspicious symbol. A ritual lamp (*nila-viḷakkŭ*) was also mentioned as a possible motif.

On the floor near the girl were placed a tray of eight auspicious items (*aṣṭa-maṃgalyaṃ*)[41], a ritual lamp (*nila-viḷakkŭ*) and three rice measures, the *paṟa*, the *iṭaṅṅaḷi* and the *nāḷi*. The *paṟa* contained raw paddy and coconut buds or flowers stuck in it, the *iṭaṅṅaḷi* only raw paddy and the *nāḷi* parboiled husked rice. Holding raw husked rice and a bronze mirror (*vāl-k-kaṇṇāṭi*) in her hands, the girl would walk around the seat three times clockwise, before sitting on it, facing the east. She put the rice and the mirror on the cloth. Meals were served to the girl, but no one was allowed to touch her. Surprisingly, there were no special restrictions concerning the food, nor were there any special dishes which should be served to the girl. Even *pān* could be chewed after lunch although the Śāṅkara-Smṛti (AP 23) states that when polluted betel-chewing is unsuitable (see Chapter 11).

The *iṇaṅṅār* took paddy into her right hand and made circular movements above the lamp and the girl's head and dropped some grains on the girl's head and body. The *iṇaṅṅār* also took a spouted copper pot containing some water, and lighted a wick made of a piece of cotton cloth on the mouth of this *kiṇṭi* and made circular movements with it in front of the girl's face both on the right and the left side. She also touched the coconut buds with the vessel. The ceremony was repeated in the morning and at sunset during the first three days of the ritual.

On the morning of the fourth day four Śūdra Nāyar women washed the girl in the family tank. During her bath the girl wore a cloth which a Maṇṇātti had washed. While the girl was taking her bath the Nāyar women floated a piece of banana trunk with tender coconut leaves, and a wick burning on it (*pontu*). The Maṇṇātti took the girl's dirty clothes to be washed. The Maṇṇāns are, as mentioned in Chapter 5, washermen of a low status, whose women normally wash only for the polluting castes, but also for higher castes when these are under some pollution. The Maṇṇāns are also said to be in requisition at the Nāyar *tiraṇṭu-kalyāṇaṃ* ceremonies, where they are supposed to sing ballads, and bring the sacred dress (*mārṟu*) for the girl's use. (Thurston 1909, VII: 318-319, quoting T. K. Gopal Panikkar in *Malabar and its Folk* 1900.)

It is easy to understand that the highly polluted clothes should be washed by a washerman lower than the Veḷuttēṭattu Nāyar. But the connection between the

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41 The *aṣṭamaṃgalyaṃ*, among the Panjal Nampūtiris, consists of eight auspicious items gathered in a special wooden tray. The items here are: a mirror (*vāl-k-kaṇṇāṭi*), a palm-leaf manuscript, a piece of sandalwood, collyrium (*añjanaṃ*), a towel (*tōrttu-muṇṭu*), raw paddy and raw rice and parboiled rice, placed in cups which are fixed parts of the tray, cut out of the same block of wood. Among urbanized Nampūtiris, I saw something different which they call *aṣṭamaṃgalyaṃ*. It consists of customary Nampūtiri ritual implements placed on a metal tray.

Maṉṉān caste and the so-called sacred dress can be taken as an example of the ambivalence of the sacred and the defiled. The Maṉṉān caste is a low caste, but at the same time it may get a share of the sacred and powerful aspect of the dreaded menstrual blood. It is only the bathing cloth, the cloth worn at the critical transitional moment between the polluted and the clean states, that was washed by a Maṉṉātti. The underwear cloth, which the girl got after the bath, was washed by the regular Veḷuttēṭattu Nāyar, after whose touch the clothes of the Nampūtiris are always regarded as ritually clean without first having to be dipped in water. The girl used to get a brand-new long skirt and jacket, and her eyes used to be made up with *añjanaṃ*, but nowadays *kajjaḷaṃ* is also used. In Kainikkara Mana they have a special silver belt to be worn by the girl on this day.

After the bath a new ornament, again simply called *aṇiyal*, was drawn on the floor with rice powder and water. Placed upright in the middle of this ornament was a grinding stone (*ammi-k-kuḻavi*) which had been smeared with the mixture of rice powder and water. The shape of the stone strongly resembles that of a *śivaliṅga*. At a Tamil shepherd wedding the bride decorates a small grindstone with cloths and ornaments and gives it to the assembled relations who bless her with the hope that she will bring forth many children (Thurston 1906: 73). Both the *liṅga* and the baby have to do with fertility. The ritual lamp *nila-viḷakkŭ* was placed near the drawing.

The *iṇaṅṅār* performed a *nivēdyaṃ* called *taṅṅāḻi*.[42] This ceremony is a sacrifice to Gaṇapati, Śiva and Śrī Pārvatī. The first-mentioned god is usually always addressed first, and the latter two represent an ideal married couple. The *iṇaṅṅār* sat on an *āma-p-palakaṃ*, and the girl on a piece of banana leaf, holding the metal mirror. The *iṇaṅṅār* used ordinary *pūja* implements, which include a pair of small *kiṇṭis* with water in them, the tray on which flowers are placed (*pū-p-pālika*), and a small cup (*ceṟiya carakkŭ* or *candanōṭaṃ*) usually used for sandal paste, but now used for water. The plants are those of the usual ritual bunch (*daśa-puṣpaṃ*, see below). There were three pieces of plantain leaf on which were placed sweet rolls (*aṭa*) to be offered to the three deities. The rest of the fourth day the girl sat on a clean cloth and she also slept on it during the night. After this first time the menstruating girl or woman is supposed to perform the *nivēdyaṃ* on the morning of the fourth day of her menstruation. In these later rituals only jasmines are to be used. In reality many ladies do not perform this ritual any more.

On the morning of the fifth day the girl took a bath unaided by anyone. This time she wore the dress that she was given the previous day. After the bath she

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42 DA, simulating the ritual, spread plants on the grinding stone, poured water from the spouted vessels into a small cup, sprinkled water from it with the help of some herbs onto the ornament and the grinding stone, and spread the plants used as sprinklers on the stone also. The banana leaves got their share of sprinkled water, sometimes directly from the vessels. Some plants were also spread from the top of the stone on the three banana leaves.

went inside wearing the wet clothes and sat down on the floor. A purification ritual (*puṇyāhaṃ*) was performed for her by a Nampūtiri. After this the girl is considered to be *śuddha*, 'clean', but not clean enough to go to the temple and take part in the *pūja* there. This she can do only on the 16th day. The normal menstrual pollution is shorter, only 12 days, in regard to the temple. The rules after the first menstruation are the same concerning all temples.

Several features connected with a Nampūtiri woman and her married life are given as clues in the *tiraṇṭu-kalyāṇaṃ* ceremony. As Kolenda (1984: 107, 114) points out, the celebration of the first menstruation in south India can be seen as a parallel to the first set of wedding ceremonies in north India, and comparisons of weddings may lead us to comparisons of symbolizations of woman.

Purificatory ceremonies are emphasized. Purity is a quality of all Nampūtiris and especially the Nampūtiri women, who are expected to preserve the line pure from other castes and refrain from adultery. Ritual purity is constantly kept in mind in Nampūtiri life. Fertility is also emphasized, as it was vital for a woman to give birth to a male child who would grow to manage the household and to perform, among others, the ancestral rituals. Raw rice and ritual implements can be seen to refer to the Nampūtiri woman's role in the Vedic ceremonies of the house. Par-boiled rice, again, is their staple food, and a Nampūtiri woman, not a servant, cooks the daily meals of the household (see Chapter 11).

The women of the girl's own family and its *iṇaṅṅār*, the regular washerman, and the Maṇṇātti are the persons involved in the ritual. At this stage the groom and his kin are usually not yet even known, although the girl could earlier be married even before her first menstruation. After her first menstruation a girl's childhood freedom was over. Her seclusion began, and she could not go out even on the 16th day, as was the case in more recent times.

In Panjal the *tiraṇṭu-kalyāṇaṃ* ceremony was still performed in the old way in some Nampūtiri families, but in towns it was usually dropped. In Ravipuram one of the last to go through the ceremony was Ajita, MS's youngest daughter, in 1975. At the age of sixteen she was studying elsewhere, but was hurried home, accompanied by her uncle's wife Ammiṇi of Koraṭṭikkara Mana, for the ceremony. After her the ceremony was performed in Ravipuram for another granddaughter, Roshni. These girls could continue their studies as can other girls nowadays, even if the ritual is performed for them.

One can assume that this rite might have at least some common features with the corresponding Nāyar rite, as the Śūdra Nāyar females are in particularly close contact with the Nampūtiri women. That is why it may be interesting to quote what has been written about that ceremony. The *tiraṇṭu-kuḷi* ceremony is practically a public declaration that a girl has reached maturity. It can be expected that menstrual rites would be more important among matrilineal than patrilineal groups, as matters

having to do with men as compared with those having to do with women seem to get more emphasis among the latter.

> When a girl attains puberty, she is seated in a separate room, where a lamp is lit, and a brass pot with a bunch of cocoanut flowers is kept. She has to keep with her a circular plate of brass called *vāl-k-kaṇṇāṭi*, literally a looking-glass with a handle. The event is proclaimed by *korava* (shouts of joy by females). The females of the neighbouring houses, and of the families of friends and relatives, visit her. New cloths are presented to the girl by her near relatives. On the third day the villagers, friends and relatives are treated to a luncheon of rice and milk pudding. Early in the morning on the fourth day, the Maṇṇāns or Vēlans appear. The girl is anointed with oil, and tender leaves of the cocoanut palm are tied round the head and waist. In the company of maidens she is brought out of the room, and the Vēlans sing certain songs. Thence the party move on to the tank, where the girl wears a cloth washed by a Vēlan, and takes a bath. After the bath the Vēlans again sing songs [which according to Iyer 1981, 30, are Purāṇic]. In the afternoon, the girl is taken out by the females invited for the occasion to an ornamental pandal, and the Vēlans, standing at a distance, once more sing. With the usual distribution of *pān-supāri*, sandal and jasmine flowers, the ceremony closes. In the midst of the song, the female guests of the village, the wives of friends and relatives, and most of the members of the family itself, present each a small cloth to the Vēlans. They are also given a small amount of money, rice, betel leaf, etc. The guests are then entertained at a feast. In some places, the girl is taken to a separate house for the bath on the fourth day, whence she returns to her house in procession, accompanied by tom-toms and shouting. In the northern taluks, the Vēlan's song is in the night, and the performance of the ceremony on the fourth day compulsory. In the southern taluks, it is often put off to some convenient day. Before the completion of this song ceremony, the girl is prohibited from going out of the house or entering temples. (Thurston 1909, V: 336-337, citing the *Cochin Census Report 1901*; the spelling of the Malayalam words has been revised here.)

I interviewed M about the ceremony in her family. In this case I did not wish to make a thorough and systematic comparison between the description above and the Nampūtiri *tiraṇṭu-kalyāṇaṃ* ceremony, but I wished to get an idea of what M considers essential in the ritual. That is why I did not ask many questions, but let her tell more or less spontaneously about the matter. The ceremony had been performed for her daughters, but would not be performed for her granddaughter any more. The daughters were born in 1956 and 1959. The family had four *iṇaṅṅārs* in case one or more were polluted.

To begin with, the girl was seated on a small cloth (*tōrttu-muṇṭu*) without letting her take a bath. She was made to hold a metal mirror in her hand. Nobody was allowed to touch her, and her food was brought to her on a banana leaf. Visitors brought delicacies like *appaṃ* and *vaṭa*. Also the Nāyar girl was allowed to chew betel leaf and areca nut (*pān*). The bath on the fourth day did not take place in the temple pond, but some other public tank. Friends and relatives came to the pond. Mother's brother's wife was an important guest. Turmeric was smeared on the girl's face after the first dip. The *iṇaṅṅār* floated a *pontu* in the water. The wet cloth was removed and an underwear loincloth (*onnara muṇṭu*), skirt (*pāvāṭa*) and jacket

which the Maṇṇātti brought, or new ones if they could afford them, were put on the girl. Friends and relatives followed the girl, who was wearing a cloth umbrella, from the pond to the house. The girl's aunt or some others carried small baskets of betel leaf and areca nut on the way home. People waiting in their house gates were given some. When the party entered the girl's home some people waiting in the compound used to throw banana rib pieces on the umbrella.

The mother of the girl had taken her bath earlier, and while the others were at the pond, she was busy preparing for the celebration at home. The girl had had no breakfast, but the festive meal was waiting. Before the meal the girl sat for a while in front of a ritual tray (*aṣṭamaṃgalyaṃ*) and a ritual lamp (*nila-viḷakkŭ*). There were two main guests in the ceremony: a female friend and a male friend (both called *iṇaṅṅār*), both Śūdra Nāyars. The girl was seated between the main guests. The male was on her right and the female on her left, and all faced the east.

The banana leaves were placed in front of the three lengthwise, the tip towards the east. The mother of the girl served the food first to the male friend, then the girl, and last to the female friend. A very small amount of raw rice was served to them. After that, the banana leaves were turned crosswise with the tip to the left seen from the direction of the eater (the normal position) and parboiled rice with curries was served on it. The others joined them for the meal, with parboiled rice and curries served on banana leaves kept in the normal position.

A Rāmāyaṇa book or a manuscript was placed on a *kiṇṭi* with its spout towards the east. If the house did not own any suitable text one was borrowed for the occasion. Holding the metal mirror with both hands, the girl used to make a circle movement twice above the book and the third time she picked up with the handle of the mirror a double page, from which the male *iṇaṅṅār* started to read aloud. It was considered to be a bad omen if the passage, for instance, dealt with war and a good omen if it, for instance, dealt with a wedding.

Then followed another prediction ritual. Seven bundles made of items wrapped in pieces of banana leaf heated in the smoldering ember were packed in a *kiṇṭi*. A piece of plantain leaf was tied on the mouth of the vessel as a cover. The bundles contained gold, unhusked and husked raw rice, a *tuḷasi* leaf, black pepper, turmeric and charcoal taken from the stove. The last item symbolized something bad. The girl broke the cover with the handle of the mirror and picked up the first packet for herself, the second for the male and the third for the female main guest. The fourth bundle went to her mother, the fifth to her mother's brother's wife, the sixth and seventh to her brother or uncle or someone else. On the 5th day IR performed a *puṇyāhaṃ* for the girl, but the girl was not present in Ravipuram. Someone else brought the water from the ceremony to her home and it was sprinkled on the polluted place, the clothes and the girl's body.

The three ceremonies that a Nāyar girl went through within a relatively short time, namely the *tāli-keṭṭu-kalyāṇaṃ*, *tiraṇṭu-kuḷi/tiraṇṭu-kalyāṇaṃ* and *saṃbandhaṃ*, should be studied in relation to each other as some writers have done. Their meaning and symbolism have been thoroughly analyzed by Moore (1988). The *tāli-keṭṭu-kalyāṇaṃ* was supposed to be celebrated before puberty, but was sometimes celebrated after the first menstruation. In that case the girl was considered impure until the *tāli* had been tied. The *saṃbandhaṃ* was to follow very soon after puberty had been reached. (Bhattacharyya 1980: 31, 33; Fuller 1976: 100.) I will concentrate only on the *tiraṇṭu-kuḷi/tiraṇṭu-kalyāṇaṃ* ceremony.

My expectation that matrilineal societies would pay more attention to women than men is confirmed by many writers (cf., e.g., Moore 1988: 268). The public procession after the bath and giving of *pān* to neighbours and feasting also support this. Among the Nampūtiris the ceremony seems to pass relatively unnoticed, as befits a women's rite within this group. Contrary to what Moore (1988: 263-264) learnt, there was not a clear emphasis on and celebration of the solidarity of members of the total female gender in the Panjal Nāyar ceremony, as there were two main guests, a male and a female, and the male was fed first. A conspicuous and special episode in the Panjal celebration, in which some male members of the matrilineal family were also included, is the reading of the participants' fortune from certain auguries.

Both the Nampūtiri and the Nāyar ceremony have a strong rite-of-passage quality which the bath and the new clothes indicate. The seclusion in both stresses the girl's vulnerability and need of protection (cf. Moore 1988: 263-264). The fertility symbols, coconut buds and flowers, tender leaves of coconut, and parts of the banana plant, are present as becomes a rite which announces that the girl is mature and ready for proposals. The *aṣṭamaṃgalyaṃ* is present in both ceremonies as well, and according to Gough (1955: 49, 62-63) it is a fertility symbol, but I would tend to agree with Moore (1988: 258) that it represents fortune and well-being. Among the Nampūtiris it is also an item in male birthday celebrations. Both groups also use the bronze mirror, an auspicious symbol, the lamp, which is present in many rituals and maybe also symbolizes the prosperity of the household as Moore (1988: 258) claims. Both Nampūtiris and Nāyars likewise use the services of the Maṇṇān caste, allow the girls to chew *pān*, particularly connected with women and married life, and both also reaffirm social ties exemplified by the *iṇaṅṅār* institution (cf. Moore 1988: 264).

The *pūja* performed on the 4th day by a Nampūtiri lady, and the *puṇyāhaṃ* performed on the fifth day by a Nampūtiri, make the puberty rite of the Nampūtiri girl specifically a Brahmin ceremony. What is surprising in M's description is that the Nāyar servants of Ravipuram also had a *puṇyāhaṃ* ceremony performed for the daughters of their family by the Nampūtiris. This probably demonstrates the close

ties between the family and their servants. The reading from the Rāmāyaṇa in the Nāyar ceremony is probably a substitute for the Vedic texts, which only the Brahmins are allowed to recite.

Education

It has been established, according to George Mathew (1995: 204), that education of girls from early times has been the prime mover of Kerala's social development, and that in Travancore and Cochin the Mahārājas never discriminated between girls and boys as regards elementary education. The Mahārājas may have influenced first and foremost the Kṣatriya and other matrilineal families. The centralized education systems in the 1860s also gave some attention to the education of girls and by 1898 19% of primary-aged girls in Travancore and 14% in Cochin were in school. (Jeffrey 1992: 55.) These figures are high compared to other parts of India, but, as was stated in Chapter 2, the fact remains that in the early 20th century the girls were still largely left outside the education system.

There was a noteworthy aspect in the new educational winds of the early 20th century. As was explained earlier, the nationalist movement of India did not wish to reject Western modernity altogether, but it was selective in what it wanted to adopt. The dichotomy was extended to several analogous pairs: Western/Eastern, outer/inner, the world/the home, men/women, the outer world being men's and the home women's social space. This movement was not against the education of the middle-class women, but their role was planned to be different not only from that of the previous generations and the lower classes, but also from Western women. The Indian women, in spite of their education, were to retain their spiritual purity and feminine virtues in a new and legitimate subordination. They were expected to retain the spiritual qualities of self-sacrifice, benevolence, devotion, and religiosity. Their education was supposed to give them such bourgeois virtues as orderliness, thrift, cleanliness, and the ability to run the household according to the new conditions set by the outside world. (Chatterjee 1989: 623-629.)

According to L. K. Anantha Krishna Iyer (1909-12, II: 288), the Nampūtiri women were kept in utter ignorance. Although IR does not give such a desperate picture from the beginning of the 20th century, Namboodiripad (1976: 30) says that there was not even a semblance of change in the educational system of girls before the 1930s. As mentioned earlier, IR's education started after he was four, when a clerk in the temple taught both him and his sister who was two years his senior. His sister had started writing on palm leaf while IR had only started to learn compound letters (IR, I, pp. 70-72). In Vaikkākkara Mana DA was taught to read by her own mother. They were reading the Mahābhārata, the Rāmāyaṇa and the Bhāgavata-Purāṇa. All girls also learnt at home how to take care of the household and to

participate in and perform rituals. But it seems that the Nampūtiri girls could only get some very basic teaching before 1930 in Panjal, and yet they were privileged compared to the local Nāyar girls, who could not learn to read and write. Even today some elder female servants cannot write their own names.

When the Panjal school was inaugurated in 1930, Mūttiriṅṅōtŭ Bhavatrātan Nampūtirippāṭŭ spoke on the occasion. He said that up till then only boys had studied, but he called the girls to come also and play there and mingle freely with the boys. IR supposed that his choice of words was too liberal and audacious, as no girls came to study when the school began to work in the *iṭavaṃ* month (May-June). The headmaster was a *tampurān* from Pūññār Palace. He lived in the Taṟavāṭŭ. (IR, II, p. 274.) A separate class for four girls was conducted in the *pattāyappura* of Muṭṭattukkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Mana. These girls were considered students of the school. Paḻayannūr Mīnākṣi Amma, famous as a singer in dramas, was later appointed as music teacher in the school. Because of the presence of a lady teacher and an opportunity to study music, girls also began to attend the school. (IR, II, p. 276; III, p. 27.)

The schooling of a Nampūtiri girl usually came to a sudden end when she menstruated for the first time. After that she was not even allowed to attend the temple festivals, or visit the *manas* of her paternal or maternal relatives, but had to remain at home to wait for a marriage offer, and this she often had to wait for to the end of her days (cf. also Nampūtirippāṭŭ 1963, Chapter 12). The Ravipuram members were still resentful at the fate of IR's cousin-brother Nārāyaṇan's daughter. Her father, known to have been 'a little insane' (IR, I, p. 208), had refused to let his daughter continue to the 8th standard outside the village, as at that time, in 1116 M.E. (1941), there was not yet an 8th standard class in the Panjal school. She went to IR's younger brother Puruṣōttaman, known to have been 'gentle, wise and one of the great persons in the family'. The girl cried until Puruṣōttaman softened and got her admitted to the school at Trichur.

That same year the girl attained puberty. Her rite of the first menstruation was performed secretly in Cherpu, near Trichur, in IR's younger brother Subrahmaṇyan's house. Her father was furious when he heard about this two months later. When the girl's elder brother Nārāyaṇan, the science teacher in Trichur, heard that his father was coming to Trichur, he quickly took his sister back to Panjal village. Later the father pulled his son's hair, questioned him about the daughter, and called the son a fool for letting the scandal take place. Such revolutionary acts were to stop! That was the end of the girl's studies. (MS; Uṉṉi.)

U went to school from 12 to 14 in her own village in Malappuram district. At 15 she was shut indoors until she was married on her 17th birthday. Some other girls in IR's family, or girls married to the family, who are approximately the same age as U or belong to her generation, were educated further. All of MS's sisters had

an opportunity to go to Cheruthuruthy high school or Chelakkara Christian Convent high school as did MS's daughters. Śrīdēvi has a pre-degree, but is a housewife, Ramaṇi has a diploma in electronics engineering, but is a housewife, R is a primary school teacher, and Sudha has completed the 10th standard at school, but is a housewife. Priyadatta of Kaippañcēṟi Mana, IR's son Nīlakaṇṭhan's wife, became a headmistress, and Ammiṇi of Koraṭṭikkara Mana, Harinārāyaṇan's wife, became a high school teacher. (MS.)

In Kerala, a 1988 survey says that not a single girl student drops out of school between the 1st standard and the 5th standard in primary school (Mathew 1995: 203). Among the younger generation of Nampūtiri women it is the rule that they also get higher education. They have most commonly become elementary or high school teachers, but there is also a clerk and an engineer in the family. The girls have generally passed their examinations and got jobs that they have been trained for at least as well as the boys. On the other hand, some young women who have been married to the Muṭṭattukkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu family, like Uṇṇi's and Rv's wives, are housewives, but Rm's wife Dēvi continued teaching the use of computers in an English medium high school at Tiruvilvamala, her native place, until her pregnancy started in 1998.

MARRIAGE

Discussing the traditional kinship and marriage systems of the Nampūtiris Mencher and Goldberg (1967: 87) give some characteristics which are unusual for a Dravidian group: an extreme emphasis on patrilineality and primogeniture, large dowries with a high incidence of exchange marriages, an absence of distinct affinal terms for male speakers, the total amalgamation of the female with her husband so that she uses the same terms for his relatives as he, the prohibition of cross-cousin marriage, the absence of positive marriage rules, and a duality of organization. With the last mentioned characteristic the authors refer to the fact that apart from the internal marriage and kinship system, the social structure included a symbiotic relationship with matrilineal families following a different set of rules.

Logan (1951: 155) and Fawcett (1900: 47) give an exception to the general rule of inheritance also among the Nampūtiris. Seventeen Brahmin descent groups in North Malabar followed the matrilineal (*marumakkattāyaṃ*) system of inheritance, and as a consequence of this other Nampūtiris neither married nor dined with them. Mencher and Goldberg (1967: 99) specify the matter: Nampūtiris north of the Kottapuzha river did not give their daughters in marriage to houses south of it, although the opposite did occasionally occur.

According to Logan (1951: 154), among the vast majority of the inhabitants of Malabar a father can stand in no recognized legal relation to his own children and

his property does not descend to his offspring. This does not only refer to the matrilineal groups, among the Nampūtiris and especially others, but also to the patrilineal Nampūtiri groups. No legal relationship existed between a Nampūtiri father and his children from the unions with women of lower castes.

According to Fawcett, three chief rules are observed in Nampūtiri marriages: the parties of the marriage must not be of the same *gotra*, they must not be related to each other through father or mother, and the bridegroom must be the eldest son of his family. Fawcett continues that the marriage may actually be between any two *gotras* and the name only is considered. If the eldest son should die, the next would marry. (Fawcett 1900: 46, 60.)

Nampūtiri rules of marriage, then, are in contrast to those in other parts of south India, and other groups in Kerala, in being more exclusive than inclusive. This means that they state whom one cannot marry, whereas they do not specify any preferred person to marry. This Mencher and Goldberg (1967: 99) relate to the emphasis on hierarchy and the marginal position of marriage in ordering social relations between Nampūtiris. According to the same authors (1967: 101-103), total system models cannot be used to analyse the Nampūtiri kinship and marriage system, but it is necessary to utilise analytical categories in combination. The traditional impartibility of land, they say, is critical, and the dividing of both land and lineage can lead to a situation which resembles other parts of India.

Within the caste

MS says that Nampūtiris may marry even within the same *gotra*, but only the *pravaras*, the common ancestors, matter. The *gotra* of Muṭṭattukkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Mana is Āṅgirasa-Bārhaspatya-Bhāradvāja Gōtraṃ. While DA's original *mana* Vaikkākkara Mana also belongs to Āṅgirasa Gōtraṃ, these two do not have the same ancestors, only the founding sage is the same.

As to the extreme emphasis on patrilineality, some features, e.g. one rule in the Śāṅkara-Smṛti, it seems to me, somewhat weaken this extremity. As remembered from Chapter 8, the rule (AP 36) orders a Nampūtiri to 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. As will be seen in Chapter 10, death pollution is also observed in the case of maternal relatives, and, while the first son was given the name of the paternal grandfather, the second son was named after his maternal grandfather (NNA, p. 24).

Another feature that one could expect to go with strict patrilineality (and which I have observed to take place in India) is the prohibition of the wife from having frequent contact with her parents' family. While we were in Kerala, we witnessed

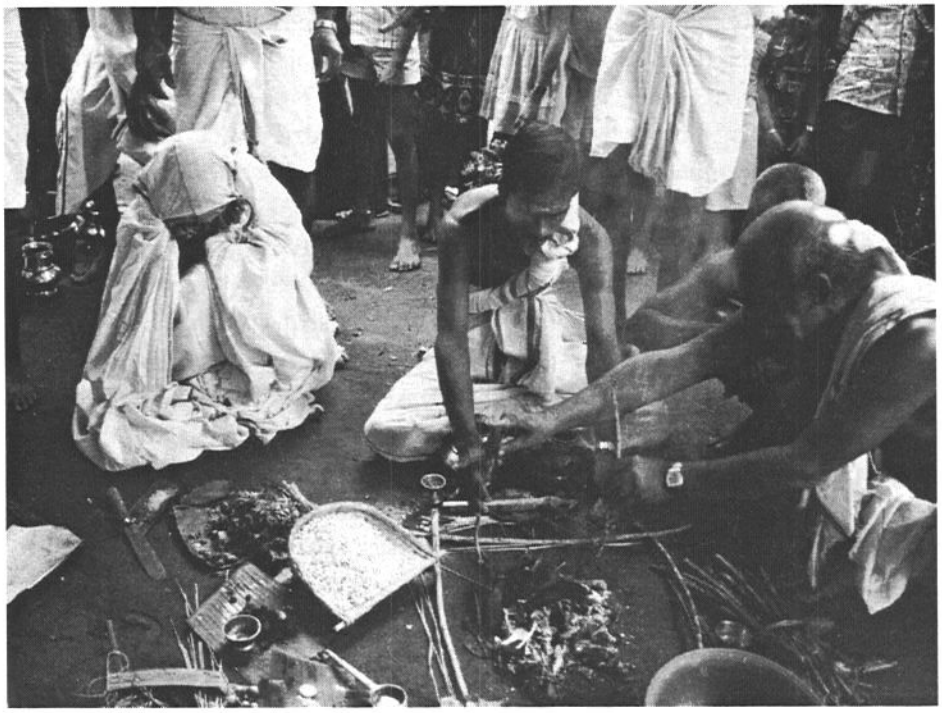

Fig. 40. Nampūtiri bridegroom wearing the ritual type of *uttarīyaṃ*, and his bride wearing the *mantra-k-kōṭi*. Photo MP 1983.

IR's and MS's daughters with their husbands and children constantly coming to visit Ravipuram during their holidays. This can be a modern development, but as told above, as a young boy IR accompanied his mother several times to her parental home. In general, as far as I could observe, IR's was a close and affectionate family, affinal relatives included. The bond between the first-born male child of one's daughter was established soon after his birth as the maternal grandparents came to see him and gave their gift of money to him (Nampūtirippāṭŭ 1963, Chapter 4). The fact that, among the vast majority of the inhabitants of Malabar, the matrilineal system is followed (cf., e.g., Logan 1951: 153-155), is probably the reason for this bilineal leaning.

Otherwise patrilineality is emphasized in many ways. Birth pollution, for instance, is not observed by the mother's original *mana*. The strong unbreakable tie between a son and his parents is stressed in the rule of Śaṅkara (AP 41), which says that even if someone has become the adoptive son of someone else, he should still perform the *śrāddha* ceremony for his own natural parents as well. This is against Manu's Laws (9,142) as it is generally interpreted, and stresses the strict-

ness of patrilineality. MS confirms that the rule is followed. If there was no male member to produce progeny, a man from another family might be brought into the family through marriage to a daughter, through whom the property was handed on. The man became a member of the family that he had joined. (Fawcett 1900: 47.)

The kinship terminology stresses patrilineality as described by Mencher. Younger persons usually call their elder blood relations by their kinship terms seen from the point of view of the speaker. Thus, for instance, Rv and Rm called IR and DA Muttaśśan and Ammamma respectively. Rm calls his elder brother Raviēṭṭan. The wife, indeed, calls her husband's relatives by terms of consanguinity. (MS.) Thus, for instance, both U and MS called IR Acchan and DA Amma. There is also an absence of distinct affinal terms for male speakers. The Nampūtiris used to call their wife's relatives by name, but nowadays they too have started calling them by terms of consanguinity like father, mother, sister and brother.

Intermarriage between Āḍhyan and Āsyan Nampūtiris, rare in earlier days, is practiced now. But in IR's family that had taken place also four generations before him. An Āḍhyan lady from Māttūr Mana was then in question. IR's great-grandfather and younger brother also married from high Āḍhyan *manas* (both from Vaṭakkāñcēri Mana) and his granddaughter Sāvitri was married to one (Ārrupurattŭ Mana). IR's daughter R was married to a slightly lower Āḍhyan *mana* (Parattipuṟa Mana), and IR's nephew Rāman's to an even lower Āḍhyan *mana* (Kālaṭi Mana), i.e. one which has no right to study or recite the Veda. The daughter of NNA's eldest son was likewise married to a wealthy *mana* with no right to recite the Veda. Uṇṇi married Jayaśrī from the high Āḍhyan Killimaṃgalaṃ Mana. When a Nampūtiri marries a woman of a lower status group, the wife and her children seem to attain the status of the husband.

Cross-cousin marriage was and is not the custom among the Nampūtiris, contrary to other southern Brahmins. Instead of the unilateral exogamous patri-clan orientation for marriage, the Nampūtiris have preserved the old north Indian system of bilateral family orientation (Karve 1965: 55). First cousins on both father's and mother's side are not allowed to marry each other. As Mencher and Goldberg (1967: 97) say, if there was a girl of suitable age in the mother's house and lineage, a man could marry her if he did not observe pollution for her.

NNA takes up two problems in the marriage system. One was that many Nampūtiri women remained unmarried as only the eldest brother would marry from his own community. One partial solution to the problem was for the man to take several wives. According to Namboodiripad (1976: 23), the majority of married Nampūtiris had two or three wives, but having more than three wives was nominally forbidden. Four wives seems to be the maximum number mentioned in the literature. The other problem was the high dowries, which was sometimes solved by exchange marriage between two families. (NNA, p. 22.)

Within the Nampūtiri caste, according to Namboodiripad (1976: 16-17), ideological factors have played a more important role than economic ones in the marriage system. A girl would rather be married to a poor representative of a higher subdivision than a rich representative of a lower. Still, marriages with *illaṃs* of close rank, socially, economically and in terms of religious prerogatives, were preferred. (Mencher & Goldberg 1967: 97.) Although Nampūtiris definitely pay attention to economic matters in arranging marriages, it is still of the utmost importance that a Nampūtiri girl should be married to a Nampūtiri male, even if his economic situation is not good or his occupation not highly esteemed. In other words, girls are still rather married to a poor Nampūtiri than a rich or bright representative of a lower caste.

In earlier times, the Nampūtiris must have formed a more uniform class than today. Namboodiripad (1976: 17), it is true, tells how sisters in the same family could be married to families ranging from rich to poor. Nowadays sisters can marry men with occupations that have very different social prestige. Some of IR's granddaughters have become wealthy, some others have not. Of three sisters, the eldest is married to a farmer, the second to a bus conductor, and the third to a factory proprietor. The situation of the joint family as a whole may, however, influence the life of a woman even more than the husband's occupation.

Most Nampūtiris formed patrilineal joint families. In order to maintain their family property undivided they, as a rule, allowed (and demanded) only the eldest son to marry a girl of the same caste. Also Śaṅkara says that only the eldest among the brothers should become a householder (AP 60). A rule in Kerala customs according to Gundert (3) confirms the practice, but also refers to its extension:

> If a Br[ahmin] has 5 or 6 sons, one only marries (*veḷkka*). If he has no seed, the next in age marries etc. for if all should marry, family property (*taṟavāṭṭŭ mutal*) would become divided, and the tribe sink into poverty.

In fact, IR suggests that the custom may not have been followed in earlier days. He asks how it is possible that Māmaṇṇu Mana partitioned into ten if only the eldest son married. And why do many *manas* have pollution for some other *manas* if they are not of the same family? The number of family members might have increased and only then the Nampūtiris would have adopted the custom. (IR, I, pp. 42-44; II, p. 22.)

Those Nampūtiris who were against the old system started to campaign for the right of all Nampūtiris to marry within their own caste. As mentioned earlier, they opposed taking a second wife while the first was still living and they stressed the right for a Nampūtiri to marry even if his elder brother was unmarried. They were also expressly worried about the fate of unmarried Nampūtiri women. (MS.) A considerable number of Nampūtiri women probably remained unmarried in for-

mer times, and had to live the extremely restricted life of such a lady. But it was not only this world she had to worry about. A rule in Kerala customs according to Gundert (7) states:

> If a Br[ahmin] virgin dies unmarried (for want of money, or of a woer), the Br[ahmin]s have to give money to one, that he may bind the marriage string round the neck of the dead and regard her as his wife, else she will not be happy in the other world.

To see how in actual fact the marriage settlements of Muṭṭattukkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Mana were made in three successive generations I will use the information in IR's memoirs and that given by him orally for the purpose. IR's great-grandfather Rāman had two wives, and the son of the second wife, IR's grandfather Puruṣōttaman, was not the eldest son. But because his half-brother, son of their father's first wife, did not have offspring after many years of marriage, and because the latter's wife protested against her husband marrying again, it was felt that Puruṣōttaman had to marry. He was reluctant, but after his father, together with the ancestors of Kallattŭ Māmaṇṇu Mana, the descent group which had lost its last member some years earlier, came to him in a dream and persuaded him to marry, he agreed. In 1034 M.E. (1859) he married a girl whose mother was originally from Panjal. (IR, I, pp. 2-10.)

The couple had six sons and one daughter. The two eldest sons and the only daughter died as infants. Another branch of the family was counted as having died out, since the only son, the above-mentioned Iṭṭi Vāsu Aphan Jr., did not marry a Nampūtiri but a Piṣāraśyār of the Ambalavāsi subcaste from Ārr̲ūr Piṣāraṃ, and only the daughters had Nampūtiri issue. (IR, I, pp. 10-12.) The eldest of the sons who reached adulthood died before he was thirty, when his two sons were still very young. IR's grandfather and grandmother could not perform the necessary domestic rituals, because the grandfather refused even to see the grandmother after the family quarrel described earlier in connection with ancestors. That is why IR's father was asked to marry. (IR, I, pp. 28-30.)

Although IR, like his father and grandfather, was not the eldest son, he too married a Nampūtiri girl. This time the reason for the exceptional arrangement was the following: IR's sister needed to be married, and an exchange marriage was planned for financial reasons. In an exchange marriage two families agreed to marry one girl each to one boy in the other family, so that there was no need to pay dowry in either case. NNA's and her sister's marriages were exchange marriages with a daughter and a son of Pātirippiḷḷi Mana (NNA, p. 88). The parties in this case were young, but the culmination of this practice, says NNA (p. 22), was that an old man of sixty-five or seventy married a girl of eighteen or twenty, in exchange for his daughter.

> My younger sister had some skin disease on her leg. So it would have been difficult to arrange her marriage except as an exchange marriage. (IR, II, p. 162.)
>
> Nīlakaṇṭhan Nampūtiri was willing to marry my sister. But he also had a sister and someone from our family had to marry her. (IR, II, p. 246.)

IR's cousin-brother, who was considered the eldest son of the family, volunteered to marry a second time. As he was, however, no longer young and was said to be somewhat insane at times, it was not easy to find a bride for him, and IR was chosen instead. This case can already be seen as a deviation from the marriage rule, not just an extension of it, because the reason for the arrangement was not that the eldest son had no seed, but that a sister needed to be married. In addition, the eldest son was no more suitable for a second marriage. So the exchange marriage was celebrated in 1100 M.E. (1925). IR was 21 and his bride DA 14 at the time of the marriage. The family was in general against this arrangement and even treated the young bride unkindly. (IR, I, p. 208; III, p. 1.) Times were changing rapidly, and as a consequence, IR's younger brothers were also allowed to marry.

As the reason for primogeniture was to keep the Nampūtiri houses undivided, we should see whether the exceptions caused any pressure for partition. This framing of a question is only theoretical as the houses were not partitioned in those days. In the first case the lack of offspring was the reason, so that the marriage did not bring any rivals for the existing members to inherit the family property. The eldest son who was issueless could continue as the head of the household, and the married one as the head in domestic rituals. In the second case the family lacked a married couple for performing the necessary rituals. In this case, although in theory IR's grandfather could have acted as the head both in financial and ritual matters, he did neither. When IR's father married, it caused no need for a partition.

In the third case there was another married couple alive, who had sons, so that there was no need to arrange an additional marriage for the sake of the family. It is clear that the reform movements had influenced the thinking of the Nampūtiris to the extent that the dilemma of a girl was given serious attention, and soon IR's younger brothers were also allowed to marry. These changes made the Taṟavāṭŭ crowded and, as we know, partitions followed in 1941 and 1952-53.

Outside the caste

As will be remembered, the younger brothers as a rule could not have a wife or wives of their own cast, only wives/mistresses from the matrilineal groups, princesses of the Kṣatriya *varṇa*, or women of the Ambalavāsi or the Nāyar caste. Gundert has the following rule (4):

> The remaining brothers must not marry, but may enjoy women from the Cshattria tribe down to the Sudra for these women have not to live as housewives (*kulastrimārggaṃ*), but may follow their inclinations (*parastrimārggaṃ*).

As has become clear before, not all the eldest sons married a woman of their own cast. Iṭṭi Vāsu Aphan Jr. who, although the eldest son, married a Piṣāraśyār, not a Nampūtiri girl, was born in 1046 M.E. (1871) and died in 1118 M.E. (1943) (IR, I, p. 12). But the couple did not live together. The husband lived in the Taṟavāṭŭ, and the wife in her house in Attoor. (IR.) NNA's four younger brothers each married a princess.

Nampūtiris had only sexual rights over their lower caste mistresses, and very few economic obligations, which were of a ritual character rather than meant as real support. In such relationships, the Nampūtiri father had neither rights over nor obligations towards his children. He might not eat in the house of his mistress, and, after taking a bath in the morning, might not touch her nor her children. (Gough 1955: 48.) The relationship was recognized socially as a marriage by the matrilineal castes. Whether this was so from the point of view of the Nampūtiris is disputed, and it has been said that it was a socially acceptable concubinage. The relationship could be broken not only by the man, but unilaterally by the woman. (Fuller 1976: 110ff.; Ramachandran 1995: 65.) Kerala customs according to Gundert include the following rule (5):

> With the Cula-Stri-Margam sons inherit (*makkattāyaṃ*) with the Para-Stri-Margam nephews (*marumakkattāyaṃ*). In Ker[ala] Br[ahmin]s have mostly the first order of inheritance, some (in the North) follow the latter.

Male members of the matrilineal families had rights in the family property only during their lifetimes, so that when they died, land was inherited by their sisters, sisters' children and by other members of the family's female bloodline (Ramachandran 1995: 63-64).

E. Kathleen Gough (1959: 31-32) regards the Nāyar unions as a form of marriage, because they involved the concept of legally established paternity, and because mating was not promiscuous. The question, in my opinion, is best clarified by the notions of the primary and the secondary marriage and the different rules followed in them. As pointed out by Dumont (1972: 157-164), a status or hierarchical distinction must be applied between primary or principal marriage on the one hand and other unions on the other. Strict patrilineality and caste endogamy was followed by most Nampūtiris in their principal marriage or marriages, but not in their other unions.

According to Manu (3,12-13), for the first marriage of twice-born men wives of equal status are recommended, but for those Brahmins who proceed to marry again, women of their own *varṇa* or the other three lower *varṇas* are the most

approved. Manu later (3,17) condemns not only marriage but even sexual relations with Śūdras (Dumont 1972: 170). Manu may also refer to the primary marriage when he says here that a Brahmin who takes a Śūdra wife to his bed will sink into hell and, if he begets a child by her, will lose the rank of Brahmin. According to Marriott, polygyny and concubinage are typical of landed groups, which mostly follow so called maximal *varṇa* strategies. In this respect the Nampūtiris, then, emphasize their being landowners, not Brahmins, who normally follow optimal *varṇa* strategies. (Cf. Marriott 1976: 125.)

Anyway, the Nāyar marriage system could not be equated with prostitution, but had social legitimacy and respectability, and when a Kerala rule according to Gundert (58) calls the houses of Kṣatriya, Vaiśya and Śūdra *varṇas* Brahmin brothels, the author is probably moralizing on his own account. Gundert's source, as will be remembered, goes back to the time before 1860, and the demands for reform by the Kerala people themselves started just after that time.

The Nāyar women had a reputation for being completely liberated. Although these women could not only have several relationships, but could even brake a sexual relationship, had a crucial role in making household decisions, and had more influence over their lives than most other Indian women, they were, however, not autonomous. They were actually ruled by their brothers, and especially by their mother's brothers, instead of their husbands. And between 1880 and 1920 these women became more conformist or Sanscritized, and many of them never had a second husband. (Jeffrey 1992: 9; Ramachandran 1995: 67; Damodaran 1995: 4-5.)

The Nāyar Service Society, established in Travancore in 1914, urged the Nāyar women to stop letting themselves be exploited as concubines by Nampūtiris (Fuller 1976: 75). However, as late as around 1925, the *śiṣyas* of Muṭṭattukkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Mana living in Kidangoor had a plan for IR's marriage in an Ambalavāsi or Kṣatriya family. According to MS, he was supposed to become a visiting husband according to the custom of earlier times in the case of younger brothers, and the family of the *śiṣyas* hoped to have him living in their house and being available for them as a teacher. But practical reasons prevented the plans from materializing.

Fuller thinks that there was a functional connection between the Nāyars' military organization and their kinship and marriage system. Although he warns against exaggerating the effects of demobilization, as the soldiers could spend a lot of time with their partners even earlier, he suggests that the disbanding of the armies may have been an important initial factor promoting the collapse of the old kinship and marriage system. During the 19th century, partition of Nāyar *taṟavāṭŭ* property also increased in Central Kerala. (Fuller 1976: 123-125.)

The family pattern and economic practice of the British rulers, in which a man could leave his money to his wife and children instead of giving it to his sisters and her children, was gradually applied to the matrilineal groups as well. During this

period Nampūtiris too set up independent households with their non-Brahmin wives and children. NNA's paternal uncle, who had married from a Vāriyār family, was an example of a Nampūtiri who was actually living with his family (NNA, p. 180). Such men could not, however, take the members of their nuclear family to visit their ancestral home. Their ties with their *taṟavāṭŭ* were more or less cut, and they also felt that they were not full members of their wife's family. (Karve 1965: 298-300.) Recently, on the plea of the Paliyam Declaration, some non-Nampūtiri spouses have become Nampūtiris. This conversion reflects the worry that the son of a Nampūtiri would not be allowed to perform his father's funeral rites. (M. G. Radhakrishnan 1999: 26-27.)

In 1994, AP saw that the son and daughters of one of NNA's brothers, Aṣṭamūrti, who had married a princess, were allowed to enter Nellikkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Mana on the day of their deceased father's *sapiṇḍī-karaṇa* ritual. These relatives must be counted as Kṣatriyas after their mother. Another Kṣatriya woman, the daughter of NNA's brother Rāman, who had also married a princess, first married a Nampūtiri. She left her husband and married a Muslim. After becoming a widow, she married another Muslim. Rāman performed a ritual, which declared that her daughter had gone out of the family, when she had left and gone with a Muslim. The daughter later filed a court case demanding allowance to her sons who are members of the family. (MS.)

My informants told of odd cases of Nampūtiri girls too marrying outside their caste. In Nellikkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Mana NNA's younger brother's daughter married a Nāyar. The families are on good terms, but the couple cannot visit the house or participate in any big celebrations, which are felt to be humiliating matters by the couple and younger modern Nampūtiris. Kīḻe Naripparṟa Śaṅkararājan Nampūtiri, a young Nampūtiri family friend, who has visited Northern Europe several times, expressly said that he was shocked by the discrimination.

The extramarital relationships with women of another caste had become a matter of scorn in the 1980s. The Nampūtiris talked very slightingly about an elderly Panjal Nampūtiri who was known to have slept with a considerable number of Nāyar women, and an elderly Nāyar woman who was reputed to have been receiving paying customers in her younger days. Earlier the Nampūtiris had no economic duties towards their Nāyar wives/mistresses, whose households took care of them so that there was no need to have paying lovers. A couple of Nampūtiris told me that they had used the services of prostitutes in towns and cities. But in Hinduism abstinence, not lavish sexual indulgence, has been considered the best behaviour. It also has to do with the belief of a sacred quality inherent in semen. (Cf., e.g., Douglas 1966: 125-126.)

The Nampūtiri ideology endorsed distance between social groups for a long time. On the other hand, the modern attitude of the Nampūtiris, in which they make

the old system of close relationships between the Nampūtiri men and women of other high castes sound illegitimate, reveals a tendency to strengthen the boundary between the castes which in earlier times lived in very close contact with each other. At the same time, legislation and actual practice make inter-caste marriages among other Indian groups rather common.

MS thinks that the Nampūtiris stressed the need to marry Nampūtiri girls only, because earlier the latter had suffered from discrimination. Casual cases of a Nampūtiri having married even a Muslim, or, after moving abroad, a foreign woman, are cited by MS as a proof of boundaries between Nampūtiris and other castes having definitely weakened. Nowadays, he says, even Nampūtiri girls can marry other castes. His opinion that the boundary between the Nampūtiris and the Nāyars was earlier stricter than nowadays shows that the innumerable sexual liaisons between Nampūtiri men and Nāyar women are not considered by him serious marriages. A handful of modern exceptional cases of marriages between Nampūtiris and other castes, on the other hand, are seen as a token of a true weakening of the boundaries. My experience is that the boundaries are even nowadays very strong.

Age of marriage

I have compiled, with the help of MS and Uṇṇi, a list of the marriage ages of Muṭṭattukkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Mana members.[43] The earliest entry is IR. The name of the bridegroom is given first irrespective of whether it is the bride or the groom who belongs to this *mana*. The membership is indicated with an asterisk.

AD	Men	Marriage age	M.E.	Women	Marriage age
1925	IR*	21	1100	DA	14
	Nīlakaṇṭhan	25	1100	Sāvitri*	18
1927	Vallabhan	40	1102	Śrīdēvi*	18
1929	Rāman*	17	1104	Līla	14
1933	Puruṣōttaman*	24	1108	Uṇṇyēma	17
1940	Subrahmaṇyan*	29	1115	Umādēvi	17
1941	Subrahmaṇyan	28	1116	Uṇikkāḷi*	19
1942	Vāsudēvan*	26	1117	Śrīdēvi	17
1948	Kṛṣṇan	23	1123	Pārvvati*	20
1952	Nīlakaṇṭhan*	24	1127	Gauri	19
	MS*	23	1127	U	17
	Paramēśvaran	24	1127	Sāvitri*	17
1953	Śaṅkaran	25	1128	Śrīdēvi*	19
1956	Nīlakaṇṭhan*	24	1131	Priyadatta	21
	Nārāyaṇan	25	1131	Śrīdēvi*	18

43 By 1999 some further marriages have taken place in the family, but they are not included in my lists.

1961	Ravi*	26	1136	Sarōjini	20
1962	Nārāyaṇan (Sadanam)*	24	1137	Rādha	17
	Vāsudēvan	28	1137	Indira*	16
1963	Nārāyaṇan	25	1138	Śrīdēvi*	19
1967	Śaṅkaranārāyaṇan	28	1142	Indira*	21
1968	Kṛṣṇan*	27	1143	Valsala	17
	Harinārāyaṇan*	24	1143	Ammiṇi	22
	Satyamūrti	27	1143	Ramaṇi*	21
	PS	25	1143	R*	19
1969	Nārāyaṇan*	32	1144	Sāvitri	22
1972	Vāsudēvan	28	1147	Suma*	18
	Vijayan*	30	1147	Kalyāṇi	29
1973	Gaṇapati	25	1148	Sudha*	20
	Nārāyaṇan	28	1148	Indira*	19
1974	Ravīndran*	27	1149	Naḷini	23
1975	Mōhanan	28	1150	Sāvitri*	19
	Jayadēvan	22	1150	Śānta*	19
1978	Surēndran*	27	1153	Sāvitri	24
1979	Satīśan	30	1154	Ajita*	19
	Viṣṇupōṟṟi	29	1154	Jayaśrī*	21
	Vāsudēvan	40	1154	Sāvitri* (second wife)	28
1982	Dāmōdaran	32	1157	Pārvvati*	30
	Nārāyaṇan*	32	1157	Śrīdēvi	30
1983	Jātavēdan	30	1158	Sujāta*	23
1986	Śaṅkaran	27	1161	Lata*	21
	Viśvanāthan	32	1161	Līla*	30
1988	Kēśavan	33		Śailaja*	28
	Subrahmaṇyan*	36		Gīta	25
1989	Uṇṇi*	28	1164	Jayaśrī	22
	Viśākh	27		Prasanna*	22
1992	Rv*	30	1167	Sāvitri	22
1993	Muraḷi	32	1169	Prīta*	24
1994	Mōhanakṛṣṇan*	27		Prīta	22
	Ravi	25		Bindu*	22
	Vīnu*	25		Bindu	21
1996	Pradīp*	24	1171	Sajita	20
	Vīnu	23		Priya*	22
	Rm*	31	1172	Dēvi	27

It is often written that Nampūtiri girls were never married before puberty. As a rule they were not, but the Nampūtiris told me that sometimes it had happened. IR tells about a girl who was married to Perumaṅṅāṭṭu Mana at the age of 12 in 1869 (IR, I, p. 26). Comparatively early marriages have taken place also in his own family. IR's uncle's wife, called by him Ēṭṭanṟe Amma, was married at the age of 13 in 1871, IR's mother at 16 in 1894, DA at 14 in 1925, as was Līla in 1929. To clarify the picture of the marriage ages of the different Muṭṭattukkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Mana members or their spouses since 1925 I have compiled another list:

Male	Marriage age	Female
-	14	2
-	15	-
-	16	1
1	17	7
-	18	4
-	19	9
-	20	4
1	21	6
1	22	8
3	23	2
7	24	2
8	25	1
2	26	-
7	27	1
7	28	2
2	29	1
4	30	3
1	31	-
5	32	-
1	33	-
1	34-39	-
2	40	-

While under ancient Hindu Law no age limits for a Hindu marriage were prescribed, the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, in keeping with the minimum age laid down by the Child Marriage Restraint Act, prescribes the minimum age for marriage as 18 years in the case of females and 21 years in the case of males (Jhabvala 1996: 149-150, 158). The marriage age for males has never been below this in the family since 1929. Three females were married younger than 18, against the Act, in the 1960s, but never since.

The marriage age of females of this family, in the light and scope of my material, then, ranges from 13 to 30, that of the males from 17 to 40. The commonest age for females to be married, during the time that I have recorded, has been 19, for males 27 and 28. This is almost the same as the average age of marriage in Panjal for all castes in recent years, 19 for women and 27 for men (Franke 1993: 61). However, a closer look at my material shows that the females in the family have been married at a considerably higher age than the average during the last decades.

There is no case of a girl being married in the family younger than 16 since 1929. The first case of a girl being married when she was over 19 was in 1948, and over 22 as recently as in 1972. The latest case of a teenager to have married is from 1979, so that the commonest marriage age that was recorded in the family for females, i.e. 19, has become history. In the 1970s and 1980s there were six exceptionally late marriages for women, but in the last ten years the commonest marriage age of women has come down to 22.

The advantages and disadvantages of candidates are carefully balanced by those who arrange the marriages. To the question why some women had to wait so long before they were married, I was given the following reasons. They may not have been educated, good-looking, or wealthy. As time passed, the women acquired another disadvantage, age. That is why they would not get a young husband, when a woman has to be younger than her husband. One can wonder why the marriage age has gone down again. One reason may be that when the total number of children has gone down in families, the parents are better able to pay the dowries, as there can never be many more daughters than sons in such a family.

In both cases when a male has married at 40 it has been his second marriage. Vallabhan married Rāman's sister while his first wife was still living. The first marriage, however, was not really counted, as she was an Ambalavāsi. (DA; Uṇṇi.) Vāsudēvan, when he married Sāvitri, was a widower with two children. Anyway, he was considered a good match for Sāvitri, because he had a pleasing character and he was working in a well-reputed company, and Sāvitri later also got a son of her own. I asked why a male member of the family, who had already reached the age of 35, was still single. The explanation was that he was a lazy fellow with not much income. The reason for the late marriage of Pārvvati with Dāmōdaran and Nārāyaṇan with Śrīdēvi in 1982 was the poor economic situation of the families. Pārvvati's and Nārāyaṇan's father had five daughters to marry away, and so an exchange marriage was eventually a rescue.

IR's younger brother Subrahmaṇyan's son Vijayan's marriage with Kalyāṇi is a case of high marriage age and small age difference, the male 30 and the female 29 at the time of the marriage. This is connected with circumstances where both men and women are highly educated and actually intend to use their education for their future careers.

Dowry

According to Śaṅkara's rules (AP 29) one should not sell one's daughter into marriage for money. Kerala rules according to Gundert (6) say that, since it would look like selling their daughters if parents asked money for giving their daughters into marriage, Brahmins have to give their virgins freely. Instead, the Nampūtiris usually have to pay heavy dowries to the bridegroom's family.

In the Dowry Prohibition Act passed in 1961, it became an offence to give or agree to give any property or valuable security by one party to the marriage to the other party or by the parents of either party to marriage or to any other person at, before or after the marriage as consideration for marriage (substituted later with the words 'in connection with the marriage') of the said parties. Giving or demanding dowry is punishable with imprisonment, fine or both. Under the original Act the

punishment for these offences was six months' imprisonment or a fine which could not be above INR 5000. In the Amending Act of 1986 the minimum punishment was raised to five years imprisonment with fine which shall not be less than INR 15,000. Governmental legislation has not stopped this custom as it cannot be effectively implemented, and there is a negligible number of cases reported under the Act. Further there are gaps in the Act. It bans dowry, but it does not ban the giving and taking of 'gifts'. (Teja 1993: 23-25, 90; Diwan 1994: 53.)

According to some empirical studies on the matter, attitudes towards dowry are changing, but these are not reflected in practice. Further it has been stated that the actual cost of dowry depends upon the education of the bridegroom or the social and economic position of the family, whereas the girl's beauty and education are minor considerations. Dowries are usual among castes of good social standing. Among lower castes bride-wealth is more common. (Teja 1993: 23-24.) I will now proceed to discuss the dowries paid to or by Muṭṭattukkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Mana. The following list will look at the development of the dowries in the studied family prior to the time when the dowry became an offence.

AD	M.E.	Muṭṭattukkāṭṭu member	Bride or groom	Dowry INR
1925	1100	IR	AD	Exchange m.
		Sāvitri	Nīlakaṇṭhan	Exchange m.
1927	1102	Śrīdēvi	Vallabhan	Exchange m.
1929	1104	Rāman	Līla	Exchange m.
1933	1108	Puruṣōttaman	Uṇṇyēma	5 000
1940	1115	Subrahmaṇyan	Umādēvi	3 000
1941	1116	Uṇikkāḷi	Subrahmaṇyan	1 000
1942	1117	Vāsudēvan	Śrīdēvi	2 400
1948	1123	Pārvvati	Kṛṣṇan	3 000
1952	1127	Nīlakaṇṭhan	Gauri	4 000
		MS	U	4 750
		Sāvitri	Paramēśvaran	4 750
1953	1128	Śrīdēvi	Śaṅkaran	3 000
1956	1131	Nīlakaṇṭhan	Priyadatta	5 000
		Śrīdēvi	Nārāyaṇan	5 000

The dowry custom among the Nampūtiris is still very much alive. Among other castes in Panjal the dowry custom is not nearly as common as it is among the Nampūtiris (Franke 1993:62). No reduction in the amount paid (up to INR 50,000 have recently been paid) can be seen, but there are cases of marriages arranged by the parents where no dowry has been paid. Contrary to the statement above, the beauty of the girls and their education have obviously played a part. Especially when the economic position of the bridegroom's family has been stable, the demanding of dowry has not been necessary. On the other hand, there are cases of

large dowries payed where the education or economic position of the bridegroom has not been good.

To avoid the dowries, exchange marriages were resorted to in several cases. They did not have to take place at the same time. The agreement between Muṭṭattukkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Mana and Ceṟumukkŭ Mana concerning the marriage of Śrīdēvi and Vallabhan and Rāman and Līla was made at the time of the marriage of the former pair. The families had to wait for two years before the second couple was married because the groom-to-be was only 15 and the bride-to-be only 12 at the time of the agreement. Exchange marriages have become rare. The only recent case was discussed in connection with the relatively high marriage age above.

Muṭṭattukkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Mana has married away 24 males and 29 females during the time covered by my study. The marriages in which no dowry was paid have somewhat balanced the unfavourable situation caused by the fact that the males normally increase and the females decrease the family property. On the other hand, the family is so scattered nowadays that it is not relevant to study its economy as a unit. Generally it is the father in charge of the family finances who gets the dowry and uses it according to the family's needs. The young couple does not usually demand the dowry directly for their own use even if they move to live in a different locality. In some cases among my informants, the father of either the husband or the wife goes on helping the younger generation for years, but in other cases the sons help their parents if they are in financial difficulty. (Uṇṇi.)

Nowadays, all members of a family inherit an equal share of the family property, daughters and widows included. However, married daughters are given no part as their dowries are considered to be their share of the family property.

Love marriage

Although the girls are still relatively well guarded, with the possibility of moving around young people manage to meet the opposite sex, for instance, in family gatherings, educational institutions and public places, and even secretly by daytime in gardens and other secluded places. They can at least have eye contact and exchange a few words. This is how they can fall in love, and express their own wishes about their future spouses.

Among IR's children there seem to be three cases of a so-called love marriage. The term is used by the Nampūtiris of marriages in which the suggestion to initiate negotiations for the marriage has been made by the male partner himself, often with the consent of the female partner, not by the relatives of the couple. IR's sons Ravi and Harinārāyaṇan both found a Nampūtiri girl in their own village. It was in no way an easy task to express their wish to marry a girl of their own choice to their father, but IR proved to be understanding in these cases as in many other matters,

and agreed. But even today referring to these cases causes some uneasiness in the family. I was told that R's marriage to PS was also a love marriage, but she never confessed it to me.

Love marriage does not mean that there would be no need for dowry. The family still regulates the process in other ways, too, negotiates with the parents of the candidate and lets the astrologer fix the date of the wedding. In arranged marriages the partner is chosen according to the astrologers's advice not only in very orthodox families like that of NNA, but also modern families the members of which may have a scientific education, like that of IR's son Nīlakaṇṭhan. The astrologer is not asked to compare the horoscopes of the couple in love marriages, because in them the choice has been made in advance.

The marriage of IR's younger brother Subrahmaṇyan's son Vijayan with Kalyāṇi is a modern case of love marriage. Both have been in England for higher studies. Vijayan became a Professor at the Indian Institute of Science, and Kalyāṇi Assistant Director at the Hindustan Aeronautic Laboratory in Bangalore. The avoidance of arranged marriage in such cases is not the rule, but an additional Western feature, as is the fact that no dowry was paid. Modernity continued in the family in the next generation. Subrahmaṇyan's grandson's wife went to the United States, and when asked to return home, demanded divorce.

Amongst the next generation for instance Vaikkākkara Citran's marriage is a love marriage. In 1991 Rv also announced his will to marry a Nampūtiri girl of his own choice. The families agreed, but the wedding had to wait because the girl's elder sister was not married, and both parties were trying to find a suitable groom for her. As they did not succeed in this for some time, they agreed to celebrate the marriage in September 1992, as the young couple had been in love for a year already. In the 1990s love marriages have become rather frequent, but usually take place within the caste. The norm is still that the parents take the initiative. Magazines publish column after column of announcements where parents look for suitable brides for their sons. Although education is often considered an asset, the qualities demanded of the future wife sometimes include her not being too well educated and Westernized, and being ready to look after the household of her future husband. In this respect Rv's own choice fulfils the demands. Sāvitri has studied some music, but is in no way eager to have a career.

Non-Vedic marriage ceremonies

Āyini-y-ūṇŭ

On the day preceding the wedding the bride takes a bath in her paternal home and goes to the temple to pray for a good married life. A meal is served in front of a ritual lamp in both the groom's and bride's house at the same time (which an

astrologer has fixed). After the meal, henna is applied to the bride's palms. The Nampūtiris call this meal *āyini-y-ūṇŭ*. (Women of Kallampiḷḷi Mana orally in 1983.) In Gundert's dictionary (1872: 85a) the explanation for this word is given as 'meal given to bridegroom by bride's mother on marriage day'. The word thus has a different significance here.

Kuṭi-veppu

Originally marriages took place in the bride's home, because before marriage the girl could not leave her home. When the bride came to the groom's house for the first time, which usually took place in a couple of weeks time from the wedding, on an auspicious day for the purpose,[44] the *kuṭi-veppu* ceremony was celebrated. Nowadays the Nampūtiri marriage usually takes place in the groom's house, and there is no need to celebrate in two different places. The *kuṭi-veppu* has thus become part of the wedding itself, and it follows immediately after the Vedic part of the ceremony.

When the bride and groom walk hand in hand towards the house, somebody may shout (though this inciting is not essential): *ārappu viḷikka* 'it is time for *ārappu* shout (*ārappuviḷi*)!' Whether this is said or not, the leader, one Nampūtiri, will start shouting, and the others will reply in chorus. The words of one complete cycle of the *ārappuviḷi* go as follows, and this entire sequence is to be repeated at least three times:

ārappuvē------ā (leader)
puvē (puī) (chorus)
ā (leader)
puvē (chorus)
ā (leader)
puvē (chorus)

This rhyme also used to be shouted when a boy was born, and in the old-fashioned wedding it was used when the groom entered the bride's house, and after the wedding ceremony. When a girl was born, there was some beating on the door, also called *ārappŭ*. The word *ārappŭ* is translated 'shouting (on happy occasions)'. In the above rhyme, the leader first shouts it with the emphatic particle -(*v*)*ē*; the plain *ā* that follows may stand for *āra-*, i.e. the first part of the word which is then completed by the chorus. South of Trichur the women give a shrill shout (*korava/kurava*) without any words, tremulating their hands against their lips, instead of the men's rhyme. I witnessed both kinds of *kuṭi-veppu*. In the latter case (in which the wedding took place in Tichur) the bride was from the south.

Little girls and some Nāyar women carry plates with rice, flowers and burning wicks. The bridegroom enters the house and the door is shut behind him. Then the

44 For particular purposes there are auspicious days, which can be found in the almanac for each year.

bride enters the house kicking the door open with her right foot. After that some turmeric is put on the bride's forehead or parting as her hair is being parted by her mother-in-law. Thereafter a ceremony is performed in the *naṭumuṟṟaṃ*. An *iṇaṅṅār* follows the bride carrying an *aṣṭamaṃgalyaṃ*. Fawcett (1900: 65) refers to a ceremony to be performed on the fourth day of the marriage, in which the bride plants a jasmine cutting by way of symbolizing help to her husband in the performance of his religious duties. According to Uṇṇi again, the bride wears a flower from the jasmine plant for her husband's long life and prosperity.

The bride sits on a *palakaṃ*, on which, as well as on the floor, is drawn an ornamental figure (*aṇiyal*) with rice powder and water. The bride keeps a *vāl-k-kaṇṇāṭi* in her hands. Puffed rice and a *nila-viḷakkŭ* are placed in front of the bride and some round cakes (*appaṃ*) are put in a flat round metal vessel (*uruḷi*). These delicacies are later rushed after by young boys. Red flowers are placed in a big rice measure (*paṟa*). Sandalwood sticks burn on the table, where betel leaves are available for the ladies. The bride walks around the *naṭumuṟṟaṃ*. Other ladies follow her, one carrying the *aṣṭamaṃgalyaṃ*, another the *nila-viḷakkŭ*. The bride and groom sit together later in the *pūja* room, where they are given milk and small bananas.

WIVES

Co-wives

If the Nampūtiri wife of the eldest son had no issue, or if the Nampūtiri had a sister to be given in marriage, or if he was in urgent need of money, he could marry again. Polygyny was seen as a solution to the problem of too many girls remaining unmarried. That the first wife was often against having a co-wife is testified to by my informants. IR tells of his grandfather's halfbrother's wife Akkittattu Makaḷ, who locked herself into a room and did not take any food in protest against the plans of the family for finding a second wife for her husband, she being childless. On the second day the woman's father-in-law promised that her husband would not marry again. It is remarkable that the protest was successful, but IR admits that this was a very rare incident in those days. (IR, I, p. 2; NNA, p. 22.)

Sometimes the second marriage took place soon after the first. NNA's father married a second time a few years after his first marriage, and that was very common in those days (NNA, p. 20). IR's younger sister Sāvitri had that 'bitter experience'. Within a year after her marriage her husband Nīlakaṇṭhan Sōmayājippāṭŭ married again to get some money. It was to get her married that IR had married her husband's sister.

> Maybe I would have been able to make his second marriage impossible. But then I would have been considered just as a criminal. (IR, II, p. 166.)

Fig. 41. IR's sister (in the middle) with her husband (DA's brother) and her co-wife. Photo MS 1954.

IR writes again:

> If there are more than one wife, naturally there will be conflict. In some cases it will be open, in some cases it will be fine outside, all the bitter feelings hidden. (IR, II, p. 168.)

The position of the second wife is illustrated by the case of IR's elder sister Śrīdēvi, who was married to Ārūr Aṭittiri. Both the first wife and Śrīdēvi were supposed to participate in regular *śrauta* rituals, but as Śrīdēvi was ill-treated by her husband, she protested and did not come. As a result Ārūr Aṭittiri pulled her hair and tore her earlobe. It was her brother who took her to a doctor to be treated. (IR, II, p. 164.) On the other hand there could be affection between one of the co-wives and the other wife's children. NNA (p. 180) tells about his fathers's second wife's able services in the household and affection towards NNA and his children, although she had children of her own.

In 1925 the Travancore Nāyar Act made polygamy illegal in that state, but not yet in Cochin (Iyer 1968-70, II: 72). Though this was 30 years before the Hindu Marriage Act (1955), which conferred both monogamy and rights of divorce for both partners, IR said that in Panjal there have been only two cases since 1925 of a Nampūtiri taking a second wife while the first was still living, one in Vaikkākkara

Mana and one in Tōṭṭattu Mana (IR, II, p. 168). Tōṭṭattil Śivakaran Nampūtiri was dead by the time we came to Panjal, but his two widows lived together. Neither of them had any children.

Respect and subjugation

In many rituals, it is necessary for a Nampūtiri to have his wife sitting beside him. The householder's sacred fire is also a symbol of the mutual marriage bond of a couple. The spouse who dies first is cremated in this sacrificial fire itself, which is not maintained after that. (NNA, p. 98.) This speaks of the importance of the position of a woman by the side of the man. The married ladies are also respected as the pure birthgivers of Nampūtiris, and cooks of the daily food for the family. As housewives they can also be responsible for part of the management of the economy of the household, especially as the supervisors of the work connected with harvesting and handling of paddy. IR writes about his mother:

> My mother was a great help. She was really a Śrīmati and her name Śrīdēvi was very apt. She was very efficient also. Take and keep the paddy brought by our tenants in Panjal after measuring it, give the paddy to the Nāyar women to make it into rice, take it when they brought it back as rice, collect the things needed for the *namaskāraṃ* in the temple – all these my mother managed.
>
> For the family expenses and for the feasts in the temple we needed 1000 *paṟas* of rice a year. When my mother came here in 1069 the family income was only 1500 *paṟas* of paddy received as *kāṇaṃ* rent (*kāṇaṃ miccavāraṃ*). And we had a debt of Rs. 20,000, the loan we received from Naṭuvil Maṭhaṃ, mortgaging our land in Chelakode. (IR, I, p. 32.) .
>
> So within 10 years after my mother's arrival here the income of our family was increased from 1500 *paṟas* to 7600 *paṟas*. The debt of Rs. 20,000 was cleared. From 1079 we began to buy new lands. (IR, I, pp. 38-40.)

And later:

> Everybody thought that if my mother was alive this calamity would not have happened. ...It was my mother who actually managed the family until her death... My father was mostly engaged in teaching Veda. Sometimes he went to Chelakode or Vadakkancheri for family affairs – that is all. (IR, I, pp. 126-128.)
>
> During that time I began to help my father in managing the family... All these were done by my mother until her death... With the death of my mother our family lost its peace. (IR, II, p. 184.)

NNA writes about his relationship with his wife:

> I can remember my wife Umādēvi, who entered into my life, with utmost affection and regard. Her education was not much – she could read Malayāḷam and used to read Rāmāyaṇa and Bhārata in Malayāḷam verse and also could read and understand the

> Almanac. But her mind was pure, filled with love and devotion to God and me – her husband. She helped my mothers in making arrangements for Agni *upāsanas* in *vaṭakkini* and *pūjas* in *śrīlākaṃ* and also in preparation in the kitchen. Services were rendered to all elders very carefully and with reverence. In any matter, even if I got angry, she put up with it and tried to make me understand the facts by describing the details.
>
> Our married life lasted nearly for fifty years. During this long period, she had been a unique friend and partner in the life journey, through all its ups and downs. She had been my inspiration for the onward journey... During the busy days of *somayāga* and *atirātra* she observed the rigorous ordeals of *vrataṃ* along with me. We had twelve children... She brought up all of them and saw them married. During the days of partition of the family property among members, and at the time of the introduction of the Agrarian Relation Act by the Government of Kerala, we were having bad days. During all these days of happiness and sorrow, as a true devoted wife she stood with me as a wall of strength. (NNA, pp. 100-102.)

All these citations tell about respect and what properties were expected of a good Nampūtiri housewife. These properties are still valued.

U was a demanding and frugal housekeeper, who kept under control not only the servant women, but many others, including us. We soon learnt, for instance, to hand over to her any food items that we had purchased. It did not do just to pass a bag of fruit or sweets around for everybody to help themselves, keeping the rest ourselves. The housewife was in charge of everything that was consumed in the household, it had to be pooled, and she decided what was eaten by whom and when.

Despite all the respect the ladies could enjoy if they had good husbands and sons, their lower status was shown in many ways. The women of the house usually did not sit and eat together with men, only after them, even during our field-work. A wife used to eat from her husband's leaf or plate in some ceremonies, to express her subordination. This was a very strong demonstration considering that even one's own saliva is extremely polluting for any person, whereas the husband's is not. In the 1950s DA still had her meal from IR's banana leaf in celebrations. I have never seen such a thing happen, but I was told that some Nampūtiri couples still followed this custom at least in the 1980s.

In the performance of rituals the women's lower status is also obvious. Although in their *nivēdyaṃs* and other rituals like touching the *tāli* the Nampūtiri women address deities, saying, for instance, 'obeisance to Śiva!' (*namaś śivāya*), they do not utter a Vedic mantra or the sacred syllable *Om*, nor do they use the *pūja* bell. When a Brahmin speaks of mantra without a qualification of the term, he means 'a Vedic passage'. No Dravidian woman uses the sacred syllable *Om*. (Bharati 1993: 103-104, 137.)

Nampūtiri women should not utter the name of their husband. This is another way to demonstrate respect and subordination. The rule was followed so strictly that the husband's name was not mentioned even when it referred to someone else.

Many Nampūtiri ladies repeated Nārāyaṇa in adoration. Śrīdēvi had to repeat Kṛṣṇa for example, because her husband's name was Nārāyaṇan. DA could not call her grandson Ravi by name, because her husband had the same name, and that is why she called him Aniyan, 'younger brother'. It caused a lot of merriment among DA's children and grandchildren when she, in mistake, pronounced her husband's name when explaining to us that among the Nampūtiris Iṭṭi is often placed in front of the name Ravi. Although the wife should call even her husband Ēṭṭan 'elder brother', the young daughter-in-law Sāvitri has taken the liberty to call her husband Ravi-ēṭṭan, a bold new practice.

The husband can call his wife by name as elder persons can always call younger persons by name, with the exception mentioned in the previous paragraph. However, IR called DA Akattuḷḷ āḷŭ 'a person moving inside the house'. Both IR and DA called U, their daughter-in-law, Naṅṅēma. This is the Āḍhyan spoken variant of Umādēvi (the corresponding Āsyan form is Uṇṇyēma, cf. Nampūtirippāṭŭ 1963, III: 210). U's father's sister had insisted on this variant, because in her house there had been someone else who had come from an Āḍhyan home, called Naṅṅēma.

No man, especially not a Nampūtiri, would usually give a seat to a woman on a public bus, no matter how heavy a burden she was carrying. Even MS, the politest of rather traditional Nampūtiris, let his wife and me carry all the bags when we were travelling to Kidangoor. He seated himself on the only vacant seat, and on top of everything he handed his own spectacles for us to hold. All this he did without any intentional demonstration of authority, but just as the most natural way to act. But the story continues. After reading about the incident in this study, he, when visiting Finland and following me out from a shop, gave a solemn grunt, typical of him when he was going to say something important, and said: 'Of course, I could also carry something.' When made conscious of the matter he was ready to change his behaviour, at least abroad.

The position of the married ladies naturally varies from case to case as it does all over the world. Śrīdēvi, Ramaṇi and Sudha do not work in spite of their schooling. The ladies said that it was the husband who decided whether the wife should have a job or not. Sudha's husband taught me facts about the position of the Nampūtiri ladies *expressis verbis*. He informed me that what Nampūtiri men did could never be called into question, only the women could do wrong. Śrīdēvi's husband let me know how well he knew that the wives were dependent on their husband's good-will. He said that the reason why the ladies fell ill very often was that they were neglected by their husbands. He also said that any medicine would do them good as long as they got some attention. My own impression though was that being aware of this problem might not necessarily influence the behaviour of Nampūtiri men.

Children

When young, U had not only to look after her own five children, but she had to take care, among others, of the youngest of her mother-in-law's ten children as well. No wonder that the holiday of three days during her monthly period was welcomed by her. The period of pollution after childbirth must have been a well-earned holiday, too.

Modern scientific methods for limiting the number of children have been known in Kerala since the generation of IR's children. Many of the men have had vasectomies performed for them. Actually one of IR's younger brothers was ahead of his generation, and had the operation done in Bangalore in Karnataka before it was possible in Kerala. The same brother's children have become highly educated and are familiar with Western culture in general. Among the younger of the generation it is usually the women who have been treated. They have had tubal sterilizations. (Uṇṇi.) Most of the middle-aged and young couples among my informants have two children.

The methods discussed so far are of course meant to solve the problem permanently, when the couple already has the number of children they wish to have. Temporary methods are also used nowadays, like the age-old natural method, hormonal contraceptives and intra-uterine devices (Copper T 220 C was the commonest of these). After their first delivery the women may get guidance on sex matters, as 90% of all births are institutional or take place at home attended by trained professionals (Ramachandran 1995: 22).

The rate of couples using contraception in Kerala increased from 36.8% in 1981 to 60.9% in 1990 (Ramachandran 1995: 19), and according to the 1991 statistics, 80% of couples use family planning methods. The average birth rate per woman according to the 1990 statistics is 1.8. (Mathew 1995: 203-204.). Educated females marry 3.5 years later than illiterate females in Panjal. The marriage age correlates in part with bringing the number of births down. Professionals have fewer births than do labourers. (Franke 1993: 236-239.)

Not being able to have children, led, as we have seen, to serious problems for the wife in earlier times. She normally had to accept a co-wife or two as her rivals. The childless women, however, often found a useful role in the division of labour of the traditional households. Nampūtirippāṭŭ (1963, Chapter 5) writes:

> Women who have not given birth to children, especially when they become older, will like children very much. They take pleasure in bathing and caressing the children of any person... The wife of my father's elder brother was very much fond of telling stories to the children and making them happy by that...

I saw one of IR's granddaughters suffer from childlessness for many years, but I never detected signs of disrespect or loss of affection towards her on the part of her husband. The couple adopted a daughter eventually, and had a daughter of their own soon after. The fact that the adopted child was not a boy also tells of changed attitudes.

Household routines of Ravipuram women

Nowadays, as there is usually only one female servant in each *mana* and as there is seldom a male servant to do the heavy work outside, the burden for this female servant has grown. As a consequence, the Nampūtiri women have to do part of the work which used to be done by the maid servants, and their burden has become heavier, too. In 1983 I got up unusually early on some mornings and went into the main building in order to see how the women's ordinary day ran from early morning until late evening.

The first to get up in the morning was DA. At four o'clock or later she would light the fire in the kitchen stove, draw some water and put on the rice kettle. When Rm left for his job early, he took with him for lunch some rice and leftover curry from the previous day, and some pickle or chillies in coconut oil. U sometimes took a bath at 6 o'clock, sometimes only after all the morning work was done. Usually she made coffee between 6 and 7, and was busy preparing the breakfast, drawing water from the well, and carrying it to her husband for cleaning his teeth.

In the meantime M arrived around 6.30. She started by sweeping the verandah and the courtyard. If needed, she interrupted this work, for instance, for pounding black gram and chillies. She would also wash the cooking utensils left from the evening meal. She had to fill the toilet water basin with water carried from the pond. After her bath at around 6.30, DA would join U in the work. If *iḍḍali* or *dōśa* was served, she would help with the preparation of the coconut chutney or the mixture of roasted and powdered black gram, chillies and coconut oil. She also did some preliminary preparations for the lunch before serving IR his breakfast. After this she helped U to serve the breakfast to the rest of the family and us. The last to eat were DA and U themselves.

The milk arrived at the same time as the morning paper, before 7.30. The former was received by one of the women or the boys, the latter by one of the men. The Nampūtiri women boiled the milk and started the curd. Either DA or M began to churn butter out of the previous day's curd in a clay jar with the help of a wooden stick with a hemispherical notched end. DA used to roll the stick with her hands, M usually with the help of a rope going round a wooden eaves support outside the kitchen side door.

At the same time as breakfast was served, a busy interplay between the three women began for the preparation of lunch. M sat outside on the narrow verandah on the kitchen side chopping raw yam, bananas etc. She made bigger cubes for wet curries and smaller for the dry. The yam jacket made her hands sore with its irritating sap. The ladies of the house carried the cubes inside in wooden vessels, as M could not enter the kitchen.

The grating, grinding, cooking and frying were done by DA and U in smooth cooperation with very little negotiation, each of them knowing what to do next. This work was often interrupted by drawing water, making and serving coffee or tea, buying chillies, firewood etc. from sellers coming to the house, collecting, counting and giving dirty clothes to the dhobi to be washed, and receiving the clean ones. All three women were from time to time asked to provide some plants or other ingredients for rituals, although DA and M were the most expert. DA was the only one to collect the ritual implements from the storeroom.

Sometimes the kitchen door could be closed after 9.30 and the food left alone, and then there was some time for U to take a bath and wash some of her own clothes. But very soon one or the other had to return to stoke the fire or to add something to the cooking. Before noon, food was served to IR, and soon after to others. When the meal was finished, and the dishes washed, there was a resting time for everybody almost daily.

M went to her home usually after 9 o'clock when she had first bathed and washed DA's clothes. She came back at different times. She parboiled paddy and carried it to dry or to the grain bin, or took it to the mill and back whenever husked rice was needed. Then she or some other Nāyar woman winnowed it as well. All this was very hard work for a delicate woman, and she was often complaining about some pain, but so were the ladies of the house. M also went on errands like buying kerosene, carrying ingredients to the temple for *pūjas* for the house, summoning craftsmen to Ravipuram, and bringing *pappaṭaṃ* wafers from the houses where they were prepared. If there was going to be *iḍḍali* or *dōśa* the next morning, she helped U in grinding black gram and rice. She swept the floor inside the house in the afternoon. Harvesting time was extra hard for M, as she took part in the cutting and carrying of paddy as well as in the threshing afterwards. When M went home before it got dark in the evenings, she took with her some rice and curry.

The ladies of the house cooked for the evening meal and made and served coffee twice after the break. The afternoon milk arrived around 3 o'clock, and again it had to be boiled and the curds started. DA was a specialist at this, but she also had some time for talking with her lady friends who happened to drop in. The Ambalavāsi woman always had some news to tell. DA lighted the wicks for the deities at 6 o'clock and retired for some rest in the room which she shared with her husband. U had time to sit and talk only after she had heated and carried bath water

for IR and given him his evening milk. At eight o'clock the ladies served the evening meal to all others.

Those days when U had to go to town, or when there were male guests, were busy indeed. If lady visitors came to stay, they always helped in the household work. When the women had been watching a *kathakaḷi* performance in the Kēraḷa Kalāmaṇḍalaṃ, or if they had been watching a ceremony in the temple, and returned late at night or only in the morning, they were expected to carry out all their work in the normal way, while the men who did not have a job to attend to could take a long rest. No wonder that the women were happy if the boys or we helped by purchasing and carrying food-stuffs and medicines from town.

There are many changes in the daily routine of the women. DA stopped taking part in the household work in the 1990s, and instead, the young daughter-in-law started helping U. The new electric kitchen facilities, the gas cooker, and the water pumps, have changed the place and the hour of several proceedings, like the bath and food preparation. The television has brought a change in the daily routine as well, like the postponement of the evening meal and the retirement to bed, and the place of the evening gathering.

Nampūtiri women's ritual practices

As has been implied above, married Nampūtiri women have a part to play in Vedic rituals: collecting and preparing the ingredients and implements for *pūjas* and *kriyas* and sitting with their husbands in some. But although their presence in many of them is essential, their role in them is of minor importance compared to their husband's role. Apart from this, the women perform rituals of their own, or additional rituals within Vedic domestic rituals, rites of passage. The rite of the first menstruation and the non-Vedic marriage ceremonies described above are examples. These are not prescribed and described in the ancient Sanskrit literature as *saṃskāras* or parts of them. Some of these rituals are but short episodes, others are elaborate rituals which take several days. In this chapter more examples often connected with a housewife's life follow.

Ladies' *pūjas* are explained as being lower and less elaborate and called *nivēdyaṃs*. A regular *nivēdyaṃ* is still performed by Nampūtiri ladies in the private temple or the *pūja* room in some Nampūtiri houses. In Nellikkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Mana the same room is used both by men and women. In Kainikkara Mana the men perform a *pūja* in the Kṛṣṇa temple, and the ladies a *nivēdyaṃ* for Bhagavati in the smaller temple every morning. They use some quick and graceful hand movements (Tantric *mudrā*) between lamps, other ritual objects and their chests, sprinkle water and offer flowers, plants and rice to the deities. Gaṇapati is always worshipped

Fig. 42. Ladies of Kainikkara Mana performing a *nivēdyaṃ* for Bhagavati in their small private temple. Photo MP 1983.

first. Some movements correspond to the exclamations (*svāhā*) and mantras in men's rituals. The chest is touched 'to get the feeling' (MS). In Ravipuram the custom of women's regular daily *nivēdyaṃ* has been dropped.

Daśa-puṣpaṃ

A bunch of ten flowering plants called *daśa-puṣpaṃ* is used in many rituals. It was customary earlier to wear the ten plants on one's head every day after the morning bath (MS). All the ten plants are supposed to have some medicinal value. The *daśa-puṣpaṃ* is, for instance, supposed to protect against snake bites. Men did not know which plants should be combined, only the elderly women. The knowledge was not restricted to Nampūtiri women. The Ambalavāsi woman who was DA's friend, and the Nāyar servant M, for instance, also knew which plants were to be collected and in which order to be arranged. In actual fact, it was often not the Nampūtiri women who went around collecting the plants, but the servants who followed the orders of their mistresses. The Nāyars, however, were not supposed to use the bunch in their ceremonies.

Because there was a lot of variation in the translation of the plants into English, I will be content with giving their names in Malayalam, from left to right in the bunch: *kaṟuka*, *ceṟūḷa*, *pūrvyaṃ kuruntala* = *pūvvāṃ kuṟunnilla*, *kṛṣṇa-krānti* = *viṣṇu-krānti*, *mukkuṟṟi*, *mōcami*, *kaññuṇṇi*, *nelpana* = *nilappana*, *uḻiñña*, *tirutāḷi*.

Circumambulation of the pipal tree

The pipal tree (*arayāl*; *Ficus religiosa*) is said to be the symbol of every god, and the circumambulation of this tree is likewise considered equivalent to worshipping every god (Ayrookuzhiel 1983: 45). A pipal tree was planted in honour of MS's daughter Ajita's birth in the middle of the footpath in the rice fields in front of Ravipuram. Always when passing the tree DA went around it clockwise and touched it and her head several times in a quick movement. Other elder people, men and women, did the same. DA's sister Sāvitri asked MS to clear the base of this pipal tree, and have a pavement made to ease the circumambulation for all passers-by. She even promised to donate some money for that purpose.

Antittiri *or the dusk wick*

One of the females in each Nampūtiri household lighted one or several wicks in the evening around six o'clock, just when the evening was growing dusky, to gain the protection of the gods for her home. The lighting of the dusk wick is called *antittiri*. A person under some pollution should not do this. The lighting of wicks was also done by educated people, and younger generations. In IR's son Nīlakaṇṭhan's house the ladies lighted a lamp also after their morning bath. The wife was a headmistress in a school. IR's daughter R and daughter-in-law Ammiṇi, both teachers, lighted a wick in front of paper prints, the former in front of Gaṇapati, Mahā-Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, Ayyappan, Subrahmaṇya, Śrī Rāma, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Mahā-Viṣṇu, the latter in front of Guruvāyūr Appan, Mahā-Lakṣmī, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma and Ayyappan. They also repeated 'Nārāyaṇa', an invocation to Viṣṇu, as did DA. Although they had dropped many traditions, they had a firm belief that the protection of gods increased as a result of this act of devotion. To maximize the good effect they had included many gods and goddesses.

In Ravipuram, it was DA herself, or in her absence U, who did it in the 1980s. In later years, when DA spent some time outside Panjal in one of her children's house, U could neglect the ceremony on some days. Later, Rv's wife Sāvitri did it. As it is quite a complicated ritual, the woman lighting wicks not just in one place but in several, I will describe the ceremony as I observed it in 1983 and 1985. DA used for wicks strips of material from old clothes, fresh from the washerman, which she rolled up. Before her round DA went to the bathing place to wet her hands and face as a substitute for a bath. Then she started from the food store *kala-*

varṟa, where she, using mustard seed oil as fuel, lighted a *pūja* lamp (*nila-viḷakkŭ*), and a yoni-shaped lamp (*kāl-viḷakkŭ* = *ney-viḷakkŭ*) in front of the idols. Then she bowed down touching the floor with her forehead.

DA did not always do the round in the same order, but usually she went next to the old couple's bedroom, carrying the lamp which belonged there, and after moving the lamp in front of different paper prints and other idols, she placed it in front of the corner cabinet containing idols and sacred ashes. She gave some ashes to IR, and smeared some on her own forehead and hollow of the neck. On special evenings like *pradoṣaṃ* and *śivarātri*, IR drew stripes on his forehead with a mixture of ashes and water. While he was chanting 'Nārāyaṇa', DA bowed down first towards the idol cabinet in the north, and then towards the door leading to the corridor in the west. At my wondering about this, IR explained that although men do their twilight worship (*sandhyāvandana*) in the evening bowing to the west, ladies can pray even turned towards the north.

While IR was still chanting, DA went to the dining hall and took the portable iron lamp where she had placed several wicks. She placed two wicks around the furnace on which the evening meal was cooking, and three around the one which was not being used at the moment. She also left one burning wick on the opening in front of the well. She opened the doors facing Putiya-pura, and bowed towards the serpent grove after lighting a wick for the Nāgas. The last place of worship was the central courtyard (*naṭumuṟṟaṃ*), where the jasmine plant and later also the sacred basil were growing. There, on the *mulla-t-taṟa*, she placed one wick towards each direction, and one on the plant's root, and touched her crown several times, and the bush as well as its root as a kind of worship (*toṭṭu talayil vekkuka*). After that she bowed down.

On *śivarātri* DA lighted a lamp even in front of the family idols that had been fetched from the temple for the morning *pūja*, and on *dīvāḷi* also on the window sill of the closed window opening onto the verandah. Instead of 'Nārāyaṇa', DA could substitute other names of gods on special occasions. On 30 November 1983, on the 11th day's fast *ēkādaśi-vrataṃ* (*ēkādaśi* is mainly celebrated in honour of Viṣṇu), when IR and DA had had no rice, only wheat during the day, the former recited 'the thousand names of Viṣṇu', and even DA mentioned several names. On *śivarātri* DA used the normal invocation 'Nārāyaṇa' sparingly, and said 'Śiva Śiva Mahā-deva' instead. While the main deity for the Taṟavāṭŭ is Bhagavati, the family also has idols of Kṛṣṇa, Viṣṇu and Śiva.

When the family was observing death pollution after IR's death, no wicks were lighted, but after the pollution period DA waved the lamp in front of IR's photograph also as if he were another deity. No wick was, however, left burning in front of the picture.

Fig. 43. DA placing a burning wick on the edge of the stone stand with the *mulla* and the *tuḷasi* plants in the *naṭumur-raṃ*. Photo MP 1983.

Healing ritual

Collecting some ingredients, waving them in front of the victim of some illness or defect caused by the evil eye, and throwing the ingredients on the hearth, is recorded by Thurston in several cases. As a remedy against the sudden illness of children, often attributed to the evil eye, chillies, salt, human hair, nailcuttings, and finely powdered earth from the pit of the door-post were mixed together, waved three times in front of the child and thrown on to the fire. If the child had lost its appetite, a little sand or dust from under the supposed evil person was taken, or else a handful of cotton seeds, red chillies and dust from the street, was whirled round the child's head, and thrown on the hearth. If a pungent or suffocating smell in the first case, and a strong smell in the second arose, the evil eye had been averted. (Thurston 1906: 256-257.) Presumably the ingredients guaranteed that the smell was as expected!

When U was not feeling well, DA took some chillies, black mustard seeds, and salt in her right hand. She made rotary movements with her hand in front of U's face and body. Then she threw the spices into the kitchen fire and said that the illness would now burn away. Even in this family the ritual is mostly done for children, especially if there is some sudden inexplicable change in a child's condition, e.g. if a child suddenly starts crying after playing happily. The reason for this sudden change is thought to be that somebody is envious of the child.

Pressure cooker pūja

The first pressure cooker in Ravipuram was put into use on Rv's birthday in 1983. The first dish to be cooked in it was a sweet festive delicacy (*pāyasaṃ*). Before the cooking began DA performed a *pūja* in the *kalavaṟa* in front of the idols. A *daśa-puṣpaṃ* was placed in the pressure cooker, and DA repeated the invocation 'Nārāyaṇa'. The first cooking with the *pūja* is called 'enticing' (*mayakkuka*), which according to Rv means that the kettle is 'hypnotized' to cook well.

In spite of all this, the first cooking of rice in the pressure cooker was a failure. The rice was very much overcooked, for which they apologized to us.

Birthdays

Fawcett (1900: 53) wrote that the birthday was kept, but that there were no special ceremonies observed. According to Namboodiripad (1976: 25), while the birthdays of boys were celebrated, those of girls went practically unnoticed. Some ceremonies were observed in IR's family and the celebration of birthdays was almost similar for both male and female members.

According to my informants, the birthday person used to go to the temple with his or her family to bathe and have *darśana*. If the person was absent, his or her mother used to go to the temple. An Ambalavāsi woman was given some raw rice and oil for the lamp on the previous day. The rice was for the *naivēdyaṃ*, which the Ambalavāsi woman eventually got. The amount used to be the smallest rice measure *nāḻi* filled as many times as the person had years. However, if somebody asked about the person's age, he or she was not supposed to tell it on his or her birthday. In the 1980s only approximately one *iṭaṅṅāḻi* of rice was given for the purpose, and in the 1990s it was often not given at all.

The hero or heroine of the day was be made up with *kajjaḷaṃ* around the eyes and with sandalwood paste in the usual places (see Chapter 12). The *daśa-puṣpaṃ* could be kept for a while on the person's head in the morning. In front of a boy was placed a *nila-viḷakkŭ* and an *aṣṭamaṃgalyaṃ* when he sat down to have his meals, which consisted of rice and festive dishes served on a banana leaf. In front of a girl was placed the smallest rice measure, the *nāḻi*, filled with husked raw rice and a *vāl-k-kaṇṇāṭi* stuck in it. (U; Rv.) According to Uṇṇi, no rice was placed in front of a girl. The person sat on a *palakaṃ* facing the east. In the sipping ceremony (see Chapter 11) the lady assisting would also hold, as a speciality for this occasion only, a creeper in her right hand if it was a male person's birthday. Before he sprinkled water, the lady made three circles clockwise with a spouted water vessel (*kiṇṭi*) and the creeper, and placed the creeper on his head.

When it was Rv's wife Sāvitri's birthday in 1996, her husband sat on her right side with the *aṣṭamaṃgalyaṃ* in front of him. Both were facing the east. In addition to the above-mentioned vessels and ingredients meant for female persons Sāvitri

also had a piece of banana leaf with some jaggery in front of her. Because it was not Rv's birthday, U had no creeper in her hands when she served food and water, first to Rv and only then to Sāvitri. U gave first ghee, then rice, and then more ghee to her son, then water for sprinkling and sipping, salt, and then the ordinary festive dishes. After that she served food to her daughter-in-law, and then had her own meal.

On happy occasions it is customary to give used clothes to the servants. Rv, for instance, gave his mother's used *muṇṭu* to M on his birthday in 1983. On the *ōṇaṃ* festival, again, new *muṇṭus*, and maybe even jackets and upper garments (*vēṣṭis*), are given to the servants.

Touching the tāli *and chewing* pān

Twice a day a married Nampūtiri lady whose husband is still alive was supposed to say *namaś śivāya* 108 times, at the same time touching with her right hand her marriage ornament (*tāli*). The first time this was to be done before noon after taking a bath, and the second time after 3.30 p.m. After 6 p.m. the *tāli* was not be touched any more. *Namaś śivāya* means 'obeisance to Śiva'. For Nampūtiri girls doing service to Śiva was considered important for getting a good husband (Nampūtiripp**āṭ**ŭ 1963, Chapter 12). Among all the divine married couples, Śiva and Pārvatī seem to be considered the ideal married couple, despite the fact that in mythology they have a most unstable relationship (cf. Handelman & Shulman 1997). Repetition of the formula is done for the good health and long life of the lady's husband. The ladies of Ravipuram confessed, however, that they have not been doing this regularly since the beginning of the 1970s.

It is interesting to compare this ritual with another daily custom which the Nampūtiris told me about. A housewife should chew *pān* thrice a day. The first time she should do this after cleaning her teeth but before taking her morning bath. This was done for Śrī, i.e. in order to gain wealth. The second time was after lunch for beauty, and the third time after supper for better enjoyment of wedded life. One can conclude from the purpose of the latter two that they were probably performed for Lakṣmī and Pārvatī respectively, although Lakṣmī is also identified with Śrī.

The Vedic ritual called *sandhyāvandana*, the prayer which mostly is or was performed in the morning and evening twilight by the male members of the family, could also be performed three times daily, the middle one taking place at noon, the borderline between forenoon and afternoon. The three *sandhyā* adorations are named Gāyatrī, Sāvitrī and Sarasvatī respectively. The act is usually connected with sunrise, sunset and with ritual bathing. The ancient sages wanted to secure long life, intelligence, glory, fame and spiritual eminence by means of long *sandhyā* prayers. (Cf. Kane 1941: 312-313.)

There are enough similarities to make one think that the ladies' daily ceremonies echo the *sandhyā* performance of the men. It is hoped that ladies' ceremonies would bring to the performer what Nampūtiri ladies used to and still do prize highly, namely wealth, beauty, long life and health for their husbands, and a good wedded life, whereas proper performance of men's ceremonies were and still are said to secure long life, intelligence, glory, fame, and spiritual eminence.

Tiruvātira

Tiruvātira, or 'the birthday of Lord Śiva', is celebrated by a woman whose husband is still alive, as it is said, for the promotion of his health and long life. One can add as a logical extension that it is celebrated for the good life of a woman herself, as that depended, especially in the past, on the husband more than anything else. 'The birthday of Lord Śiva' is a suitable occasion for such a purpose, Śiva and Pārvatī being the ideal married couple. *Tiruvātira* is celebrated between December 15th and January 15th under the constellation *tiruvātira* (Malayalam for Sanskrit *ārdrā*). Fawcett (1900: 58) says that it is a fast and vigil in honour of Śiva, and observed by women only, in the month of *dhanu*. N. Subramani Aiyar gives a more detailed description:

> This is a day of universal festivity and rejoicing. For seven days previous to it, all the members of the house bathe in the early morning, and worship Śiva. This bathing is generally called *tuṭiccu-k-kuḷi* or shivering bath, as the mornings are usually cold and intensely dewy. On the day previous to *tiruvātira*, *eṭṭaṅṅāṭi*, or eight articles of food purchased in the bazar, are partaken of. Such a repast is never indulged in on any other day. The *tiruvātira* day is spent in the adoration of Śiva, and the votaries take only a single meal (*orikkal*). Night vigils are kept both by the wife and husband seated before a lighted fire, which represents the *sākṣi* (witness) of Karmas and contracts. (Hence the common term *agnisākṣi*.) They then chew a bundle of betel leaves, not less than a hundred in number. This is called *keṭṭuverṟila tinnuka*. As the chewing of betel is taboo except in the married state, this function is believed to attest and seal their irrefragable mutual fidelity. (Thurston 1909, V: 194-195, quoting Aiyar; the spelling of the Malayalam words has been revised here.)

Earlier *tiruvātira* used to last a whole week according to my informants, and in Kainikkara Mana, Thuravoor, it was still celebrated on many, perhaps four, successive days in the 1980s. In Ravipuram *tiruvātira* was in recent years celebrated only on one day and the preceding or following night. For a young wife her first *tiruvātira* is a special celebration which relatives even from far away come to witness. All castes celebrate *tiruvātira*, but there are differences in the way they do it. Śūdra Nāyar women told me that they usually take the bath in the temple tank, but Nampūtiri ladies bathe in the family tank.

The Nampūtiris are mainly watchers in a ceremony performed by Nāyar boys and men, which takes place on the night preceeding the *tiruvātira*. A procession starts from the Ayyappan temple and proceeds towards the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa tem-

ple. Drummers and cymbal players lead the procession, which mainly consists of boys dressed in dried banana leaves, with a headgear having a top resembling a cobra's head and neck. They represent, as my Nampūtiri informants call them, Śiva's demons (*pūtans*). The group splits into two, and the two groups start visiting all houses. The boys shout threateningly, and one man called Kālan (the god of death) and another masked as an old woman called Muttiyamma, demand money from each house. Some of the participants stepped on the verandah in 1996, which they even then would not have done without the excuse which the celebration and their role as mythological characters gave them.

The Nampūtiri ladies' *tiruvātira* celebration was said to be strictly for the women only, not for the whole household. Men, they said, had first-hand knowledge about the ritual especially from their early years when they were still allowed to accompany their mothers everywhere. Recently I also saw men watching the dance in the open. Vaikkākkara Citran Nampūtiri's wife celebrated together with DA and U in the 1980s, as there is no tank in her compound. Furthermore it is customary for many women to celebrate together, as the houses used to be big. M, although she is a Śūdra Nāyar, and although her husband had left her, celebrated together with the Nampūtiri women up to the 1980s when she still had some strength. In the 1990s there were again more married Nampūtiri ladies living in the compound, and consequently, more participants in the ceremony. As a widow, DA only watched and hummed the tunes while the others were dancing.

Tiruvātira begins on a different moment of the day in different years. In 1996, when I was an observer myself, it began in the afternoon. That is why the sleepless night and the dancing took place before the bath and the eating of the betel leaves. In the following, the succession of the celebrations is given as it is on a year when the *tiruvātira* begins early in the morning.

About 4 o'clock in the morning the women take a bath called *tuṭiccu-k-kuḷi* 'shivering bath', because the night and the water are cool at that time of the year. One betel leaf should be consumed before the bath by each woman. In 1996 Sāvitri (Rv's wife) and IR's son Ravi's wife and daughter-in-law took the bath together with U. A *nila-viḷakkŭ* was kept burning near the bathing place. The women splash the water strongly sideways with their hands and sing (this song as well as the other *tiruvātira* songs have been translated from Malayalam by MS):

Ātira in *dhanu*
Birthday of God.
Day of fast for Bhagavati.
No food, no sleep.
Splashing the water,
bath in the pond.
In the little pond
splashing spread.

We should swing and sing.
Cows have come to the field.
Awake, awake, Uṇṇimāya.
Oh! Trichur Vaṭakkunnāthan!
Oh! Śrī Pārvatī!
This, my worship.

This song, like the other songs sung during this ritual, are known by heart by elder ladies, but the younger women may need to consult a book.

The clothes should be washed by a Veḷuttēṭattu Nāyar, and on the morning of the last day they should be new, but first washed (*kōṭi alakkiyatu*). During the bath women apply turmeric paste, and after the bath sandalwood paste to their forehead and neck. They should also apply the black spot connected with the Goddess Kāḷi on their forehead, and black colour (*kajjaḷaṃ*) around their eyes. The Nampūtiri and Ambalavāsi women put a bunch of flowering plants on their head. Ten of them, the *daśa-puṣpaṃ*, are common for many rituals as told above, but in addition this bunch contains two extra plants. They are plants with red flowers as is suitable in honour of the goddess Pārvatī, namely *aṭaykkā-maṇiyan* (*Sphaerastrus indicus*) and *pātiri* or *pātiri-p-pūvŭ* (*Bignonia suaveolens*).

After the bath ladies used to sit in a swing, probably because a swing is a sexual symbol, swinging even being part of the marriage ceremony among the Tamils. The swing used to be made out of a creeper called *ūññal vaḷḷi* 'swing creeper', but lately they had an ordinary board hanging from the big mango tree in front of the main building. In 1996 they did not swing at all. While swinging they used to sing a song with reference to Kṛṣṇa:

First, here goes the first (swinging),
Uṇṇi, the dear child was born.
Second, here goes the second,
brought up (grew) in two homes.
Third, here goes the third,
killed Pūtana sucking her breasts.
Fourth, here goes the fourth,
Nārāyaṇa is his name.
Fifth, here goes the fifth,
with ease smashed the (demon disguised as a) cart.
Sixth, here goes the sixth,
Plucked off the elephant's tusks.
Seventh, here goes the seventh,
seven-storied tower was smashed.
Eighth, here goes the eighth,
killed Kaṃsa in an instant.
Ninth, here goes the ninth,
with love herded the cows.
Tenth, here goes the tenth,
gave *mokṣa* to the devotees.

Sexual symbolism is found in eating and drinking. Ladies should eat small bananas (*ceṟu-paḷaṃ*) and drink coconut water and eat the flesh of tender coconuts. Small bananas were served and coconut was an ingredient in the steamed rice cake (*puṭṭŭ*) in 1996. Women used to prepare sweet rolls (*aṭa*) for the gods, and go to the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa temple and to the Kāṭṭil kāvŭ where the *pūjāri* worshipped Lord Śiva. The *aṭas*, which usually had banana and coconut as ingredients, were afterwards eaten as *naivēdyaṃ*. The song is about Kṛṣṇa and one of the temples dedicated to Viṣṇu, but the celebration is in honour of Śiva. Here again the fact that the Nampūtiris can worship both gods seems to be emphasized. In 1996 the women omitted preparing the *aṭas* and going to the temple.

As it was, according to the bath song, a day of fasting for Śrī Pārvatī, so it is a day of dietary restriction for the Nampūtiri women. Ladies were not allowed to eat boiled rice on this day, but they had their curries with, for instance, wheat, while the men had rice. When the *tiruvātira* started in the afternoon in 1996 the women stopped having rice and had only wheat until the end of the following day. A certain curry called *puḻukkŭ*, which is also eaten on other days and by men, too, is necessarily eaten by ladies on this day. It may be made of jackfruit or different kinds of yam and beans. In 1996 it consisted of yam and beans in Ravipuram, where other festive dishes (*kāḷan* and *ōlan*) were also served, but in Sudha's home I was served a jack-fruit curry just before the *tiruvātira*. A curry made of arrowroot (*kūva-p-pāyasaṃ*) is eaten by the women by sipping it from their right hand. Supper was to be taken before sunset in the afternoon, but a bath before this meal was not compulsory. Nowadays the women can eat at the normal time.

The ladies were not supposed to sleep between lunch and supper. If they did, it was considered to be harmful for their husbands. They should chew altogether 108 betel leaves during the *tiruvātira*, but the number of the leaves may actually be less. Numbers ending in 8 are believed, since Vedic times, to bring luck (cf., e.g., Gonda 1980: 38-39). Each leaf is usually chewed only partly and even that part which is chewed is normally spat out. The introductory ceremony of the betel leaf chewing took place in the *kalavaṟa* in front of the idols and oil lamps in 1996. There were three leaves on each of three pieces of banana leaves as offerings in front of the idols. These leaves were later added on top of the big heap of betel leaves. Every woman should eat twelve betel leaves in the *kalavaṟa* ceremonially, touching their *tāli*, saying *namaś śivāya*, and holding a *vāl-k-kaṇṇāṭi*. Lime and areca nut pieces were added exceptionally on the upper side of the leaves in this ceremony. There is no ceremony connected with the possible chewing of betel leaves after the first twelve leaves. The connection of *pān* with the married state is generally known.

On the *tiruvātira* midnight women come out to dance slow dances (*maṃgala ātira*) at moonlight and sing songs. One of them, with reference to Śiva, Pārvatī, and the benefit of the devotion to gods and goddesses, goes like this:

Oh! Hear this with care
the divine Purāṇa of auspicious *tiruvātira*.
Long ago, in Tretāyuga
a girl was born to the beloved wife of a Vaidikan.
While she was only a child,
she did penance on the *aṣṭami*,
she did penance on the *tiruvātira*,
taking bath on the *pūraṃ* she remained in penance.

She performed a *pūja* with a pure mind and heart.
'Hail to Pārvatī, Hail to Malarmaṅka', she used to chant.

At the time when her breasts were blossoming,
she was married to a noble Vaidikan.

Just before the *kuṭi-kuḷi* marriage was over,
came Antaka without any hesitation,
and took away the Vaidikan.

'Oh! Alas! What a pity!' cried all the people,
and the cry reached Kailāsa. Then Pārvatī knew.

While she was putting on the flower garland,
she heard the girl's lament.
She threw away the garland,
her chest changed colour.

Straight she went to Nīlakaṇṭha and spoke thus:
'The girl, my friend, married yesterday,
ritually ordained,
and today her husband is dead.

If she puts her hair on the floor, I will put my hair on the floor.

If today she takes away her *tāli* and bangles,
I will also take away my *tāli* and bangles.

If she wears wet clothes,
I too will wear wet clothes.

If she is on a palm-leaf mat today,
I also will be on a palm-leaf mat.

If today she parts from her husband,
I am not coming to you any more.'

'Oh! Alas!' said Śaṅkara hearing these words of Pārvatī
and then he looked at the abode of Kāla.

And then Kāla was frightened.
He remembered how Kāma was burnt,
and how a boy was saved.

Then Lord came to the abode of Kāla.
Kāla, very much afraid, gave back the Vaidikan.

The dancing and singing used to go on until four o'clock in the morning; in 1996 it stopped earlier. After the dancing the ladies put on their heads *aṭaykkā-maṇiyan* and *pātiri* flowers. They should also consume at least one betel leaf. If the celebration goes on for four days, there will be singing, bathing and swinging as well as eating ordinary feast foods like *kāḷan*, *ōlan* and *pāyasaṃ* (see Chapter 11) every day. The *pūjas*, special foods, and midnight dancing only belong to the last day.

WIDOWS

Fawcett (63) has included in the Kerala *anācāras* a rule which the other sources lack:

> Widows should lead the lives of sanyásis.

Whether the other sources have the rule or not, it probably gives a true idea of the life of a widow in earlier times. The fate of a Nampūtiri widow, according to IR, was very sad:

> Only fasts, offerings, prostrations, and penance in her life. (IR, I, p. 26.)

Something positive must be said about the position of a Nampūtiri widow (in addition to the fact that she need not shave her hair). In the Śāṅkara-Smṛti it is stated:

> After her husband has died, the wife should not perform the (ritual of) dying (and becoming cremated) together (with her husband), even if she is resolute upon her devotedness to her husband (AP 64).

MS believes that suttee has never been practised among the Nampūtiris, and is certainly not practised today. Among the Rajputs there was a case, for instance, as late as 1987, the same year the Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act was rushed through the Parliament (Baird 1993: 252). Many Nampūtiri women, among them DA, were warmly loved and highly respected by their husbands, as well as by their children and grandchildren. The family's love and respect did not seem to diminish after they became widows.

A Kerala rule according to Gundert (54) refers to the Vedas saying that a Brahmin widow may marry, but points out that in Kerala this is as little the case as elsewhere. Fawcett (1900: 61) confirms this and says that the marriage of widows was absolutely prohibited. From IR's memoirs it is clear that this was so even in the case of very young girls. He tells about the fate of a Nampūtiri girl in Perumaṅṅāṭṭu

Mana, who was married at 12, became a widow at 13 and died in 1952 at the age of 95 (IR, I, p. 26).

In the early days of the reform movement a courageous and unprejudiced Nampūtiri, M. R. Bhattathiripad, had married a widow. In spite of the reformist spirit of the movement the election of this Nampūtiri as the president of the youth wing of the Nampūtiri Yogakṣema Sabha in 1933 was opposed by some Nampūtiris just because of this. (IR, II, p. 286.) But in the 1990s the most conservative family in Panjal, Nellikkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Mana, with the consent of NNA, arranged a second husband for the latter's widowed granddaughter (MS).

FROM PURDAH TO MULTIPLE, YET LIMITED, OPTIONS

My sources seem to prove that in earlier times the rules and ideals of purity concerning Nampūtiri women were largely kept and followed. The national, political and caste movements brought about important changes in the social life of Kerala. It has been claimed that the matrilineal system had an enormous influence on social and cultural development in this state. Although intercaste marriages are legal nowadays, they are casual cases compared to the numerous sexual relationships/marriages of Brahmin males with women of matrilineal castes in previous days. In that sense the distance between the Nampūtiris and other high castes has widened, while in other respects it has narrowed.

The Nampūtiri movement gave a chance for many more women, among other things, to have an approved sexual relationship with a male of their own caste. A North Indian movement, the Brahmā Kumārī movement, which has the liberation of women from subjugation as one of its goals, also started on a male initiative from within the group. The women were kept more or less in purdah like the Nampūtiri women, while many of the men were accused of excessive extramarital sexual activity. The way to liberation propagated by the movement for both men and women, however, was very different from the Kerala movement, namely remaining unmarried, or celibacy within matrimony, i.e. total sexual denial. (Babb 1984.)

The Nāyar women represented for the Nampūtiri women the other women with whom the men of their own group, maybe even their own husbands, had liaisons. The Nāyar Service Society urged the Nāyar women to stop letting themselves be exploited as concubines by Nampūtiris. In their ideology restriction of sexual partners for their women and concentrating on one husband meant progress both for men and women of the group.

While some rites that emphasize women's dependance on men are not in vogue as much as before among the Nampūtiris, for instance lighting the wicks for the well-being of the whole family is widely continued. Traditional assets, truly feminine virtues, are valued in women, as they were in the national movement.

Women's behaviour which is too Western or too low-caste is objected to. Although many women are welcomed as money-earners, it is ultimately often the husband who decides whether the wife is allowed to work outside her home or not.

While Kerala's reputation as a far more advanced state than the other Indian states is justified (greater opportunity for girls to go to school and for women to make decisions within families, get salaried jobs, and take part in campaigns about local problems), their authority above men is not desirable or accepted. Women have low participation in social, professional and political organizations and their career in higher political posts has been blocked to a high degree. George Mathew tells about the attitude of a male government officer in Kerala towards the entrance of women in large numbers into public life. According to this officer, women, who used to be lamps in their homes, will become serpents that will make men's and male officers' lives miserable. (Jeffrey 1992: 215-217; Mathew 1995: 203, 214.)

The difficulties for Nampūtiri women over getting into public politics and achieving an equal position with men are perhaps even greater than for the former matrilineal castes, whose readiness to take part in decision-making and political matters was great. My observations support Robin Jeffrey's (1992: 217) analysis, according to which, while women may do more things in Kerala than elsewhere in India, they do not enjoy equality with men and there is no Kerala model. The achievements that earned Kerala the name of a model state date from the period between the 1920s and the 1950s, when the old system gave way to social reform. Further dramatic development is not in sight in the near future. But the fact that there are nowadays reservations for women in Panchayats and District Councils, is a small step forward (see Chapter 13).

Factors which continued to influence the position of all Kerala women even after the great social changes are the Brahmanical value system, reinforced by the patriarchal attitude of Christians (and why not of the Muslims and Jews as well), and the connected middle-class value system of the nationalist movement. Even today the media, the women's weeklies, cinema and television, support Indian middle-class values. (So far, only a few households have had television channels with purely Western programmes and values. However, even Ravipuram got a cable television in 1998.) Mathew demands a change in the school curriculum and the development of a counter-culture for preparing the way for further steps. (Cf. Mathew 1995: 211-214.)