

10. INTIMATE POLLUTION

I use the term intimate pollution for such pollution which is direct or transmitted by something else than air. It can exist in inter-caste relations, within one's own caste, or even within one's own person.

INDIRECT AND TOUCHING POLLUTION

The touch of even a Nampūtiri under a pollution is considered by conservative persons to cause pollution and the need for a bath. A rule of Śaṅkara (AP 9) states that those Brahmins etc. who desire ritual purity should take a bath if they happen to touch a Śūdra and the like. Kerala customs according to Gundert (63) claim that Europeans pollute only by touching. In the case of foreigners, economic, political, and scholarly factors have certainly played a part in placing them high in the hierarchy, despite their often being meat-eaters.

According to IR, young babies could be bathed and carried by Śūdra Nāyar women as long as the children wore a groin cloth (*kaupīnam*) of leaf or spathe (see Chapter 12). Then the young children were not considered polluted by the touch of the servants, as opposed to when they had a *kaupīnam* made of cloth. According to L. K. Anantha Krishna Iyer (1909-12, II: 203), a Śūdra maid servant anointed and bathed the child after the *caulam* or hair removing ceremony had been performed during its 3rd, 5th or 7th year. NNA (p. 30) states that it was after the ceremonial hair cutting in the 4th year or somewhat later, when the distinctive hair tuft was styled on the head, that the Nampūtiri child should not touch members of lower castes. Even before the hair cutting ceremony, castes lower than the Nāyars caused pollution by touching a Nampūtiri baby, but that could be removed by sprinkling the child with the water from a copper vessel. After the ceremony, pollution was removed only by taking a bath. Nowadays servants take care of Nampūtiri babies regardless of what they wear or what ceremonies they have undergone.

Conservative adults still avoid touching lower castes. A lower caste person who by necessity has to touch the Nampūtiris is the barber. Some elder Nampūtiris in the village still take a bath of purification with the barber's touch in mind, the younger ones do not pay attention to it. While Gundert's rule (63) states that Europeans etc. pollute only by touch, many Nampūtiris had relaxed their rules even



Fig. 44. Informants and researches. Those who lived in IR's household did not fear to touch foreigners. Photo 1985.

about touching us. This is true not only about the young, but even IR touched us at least in rituals. Maybe we were considered family members by our own hosts, but our status remained ambiguous among others. There was, for instance, some uneasiness about my taking into my arms a baby, whose mother is originally from Kaippañcēri Mana, after the birth ritual (*jātakarma*) and naming (*nāmakaraṇa*) ceremonies performed at Ravipuram by IR. Either the family did not agree to us being treated like Nampūtiris in Panjal, or the auspiciousness of the ceremony made the baby vulnerable.

After this experience, before the ceremony of the first feeding of solid food to Vāsudēvan of Muṭṭattukkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Mana, U went in advance to the Taṛavāṭṭu to discuss our participation. She came back with the message that we could participate, but that we should be reserved in our behaviour because Vāsudēvan's maternal grandmother, an orthodox lady from Iriññālakuṭa Grāmaṇ, Kōvūr Mana, was to be present. But during the feast I was told that I could take the baby in my lap.

Bodily issues, even one's own, may be defiling. Special care should be taken not to touch a lower ranking person's bodily issues or those of one under a pollution. DA had a habit of wiping the area around her mouth with her fingers. But touching one's lips and saliva is a different thing. She was alarmed when I licked

my finger the better to turn a page of my note book. She said that I should immediately go and wash my hand. The Nampūtiris eat in such a way that no food which has touched the mouth drops down again, and our clumsiness in letting some food fall back on the plate while eating was ridiculed. Fawcett has understood that Śaṅkara's rule 21 refers to this mode of eating:

A particular mode of taking meals/food (not to put too much in the mouth, because none must be taken back).

This corresponds to the following two rules in AP's translation (AP 21, 22):

One should eat after having made [i.e. rolled] [the rice] into a morsel-ball; and (one should eat) in such a way that there will be no leftovers.

Another of Śaṅkara's rules (AP 16) mentions separately that even food left over by a child should be avoided. It is rather natural for a mother or nurse to finish the meal, and the rule demonstrates the strictness of the code. MS agrees that all leftovers were avoided earlier, but that they are no problem any more. In the washing of the hands and the mouth after meals the aspect of pollution was in the foreground in IR's childhood. He writes:

We cannot touch anything before washing the hands after the breakfast. If touched that thing will be polluted. After meals we should wash our hands rubbing and should drink much water. (IR, I, pp. 46-48.)

The right hand, while being used for eating, is unclean both physically and symbolically as it is in contact with the mouth, and with boiled rice. For these reasons the left hand, which has not been in contact with the food or the mouth, must be used for helping oneself and serving others from a pot with a spoon while eating a meal. Usually this was done by the women only while eating together, because otherwise there was a person to serve the others with an unsoiled right hand, and serving the males with a left hand was prohibited (Nampūtirippāṭṭi 1963, Chapter 12). AP, thinking that the use of the left hand should be altogether avoided during a meal, made the mistake of using his right hand for helping himself from a pot, and he was promptly corrected. Also to emphasize that one does not want more food when it is offered, one has to use the left, not the right hand.

In 1983, after our first meal in Panjal consumed under IR's eyes, we were asked to remove our plantain leaves ourselves, as according to IR there were no servants at the moment to do that. This we usually had to do ourselves, and the metal plates (*kiṇṇam*) we had to rinse after the meals in Raviapuram. It was thought proper if I rinsed AP's plate, but not vice versa. After the preliminary rinsing the maid servant could wash our plates properly with ashes and water. But in many other Nampūtiri houses we were stopped from moving our leaves or plates ourselves,

and were asked to leave them where they were for the servants or maybe younger family members to carry away. This was because they were polite towards foreigners or because they did not want us to drop any remains of the meal on the floor.

In spite of the care taken by the family members not to be polluted through our used plates, when we were leaving the village the family asked us to present our plates to them, and the family members started using them. This would have surprised me had I not been forewarned by a Kerala rule according to Gundert (39):

In other countries people who eat together neither use the same plate (*kiṅṅam*) nor after it is cleaned do they allow it to touch the cooking utensils (*kalam, caṭṭi*). The Ker[alites] do not mind this.

One can say that one's own bodily issues and those of persons and creatures that are lower than oneself are in principle still believed to be defiling, but in practice younger people worry less about them than older people. While travelling in Kerala with some Nampūtiri youngsters, I was not able to finish a meal because the chicken in it was too tough for me. My companions, male Nampūtiris, eagerly finished the meal that I, a woman not even of their caste, had started. This event points to a great change of attitude or to my rank in the eyes of young Nampūtiris. Touching or even consuming another being's, human or animal, bodily issues may demonstrate great respect, like when people use cowdung or cow urine as a purifier. Courtyards are smeared with cowdung as well as mats on which paddy is dried, and pulverized dung is smeared on faces and bodies. Its purifying effect relies on the fact that the cow is higher in hierarchy than man. As mentioned earlier, a Nampūtiri wife used to eat after her husband from his plantain leaf in order to show her subordination and his superiority.

I thought that kissing a woman and sexual intercourse with her would be very defiling acts for a Nampūtiri man, who is higher in hierarchy than a woman, and in this manner touches a lower person's bodily issues. This was not, however, admitted by my younger informants, who wish to be modern. I was told quite directly that they are not polluting acts and that there is no need for purificatory rituals. The only thing that matters is that the acts should be secret. But the morning bath after sexual intercourse at night is, of course, a purification.

Śaṅkara has something to say about indirect pollution as well: one should perform submersion in a bath if one happens to touch water of a well or a tank touched by a person of a low class (AP 11). This means that water is a conductor that can confer the degree of pollution of the person that has touched it to another person (Eichinger Ferro-Luzzi 1977: 359). Air does not have this conducting quality, comparable to touching. It seems that only if a low-class person has stepped on the same place as a higher person later treads on can pollution be transmitted by earth. Śaṅkara's rule (AP 12) about sprinkling the ground with water points to that:

and (one should perform submersion in a bath) if one should happen to tread upon a ground that has been well swept [with a broom] (by a low-class person) without a (foregoing) sprinkling (of the ground with consecrative water).

Water thus also has a strong purifying quality. A ceremonial sprinkling of water on the ground after it has been swept by a low-class person is still done in Nellikkāṭṭu Māmaṅṅu Mana. MS said that after sweeping the ground the Nāyar servant has to sprinkle it with water mixed with cowdung. In Muṭṭattukkāṭṭu Māmaṅṅu Mana this is no longer done.

Clothes that the Veḷuttēṭattu Nāyar, the regular washerman for higher castes, has washed, are considered ritually pure without any purificatory steps. The clothes are kept separately in a clean place like the *kalavarā* before being worn in the temple for example. Although higher in the hierarchy than the Veḷuttēṭattu Nāyars, the Śūdra Nāyar women have to leave clothes that they have washed for the Nampūtiris in the tank for a Nampūtiri woman to lift up, otherwise they are considered polluting. Although the untouchables could not, Nāyars could and can use the family tank, and even earlier there was a special place for them at the temple tank. The lower castes can nowadays take a bath in the same temple tank as the Nampūtiris even though direct touching might be avoided.

It was interesting to watch an elder person like IR give a lower ranking person his or her gift or fee. He dropped the bank note with an elegant gesture to the other's hands so that he did not even for a second indirectly touch the receiver by holding one end of the bank note while the other was holding the other end. The bank note, then, is like water: it can confer pollution.

BIRTH POLLUTION

Kerala customs according to Gundert (30) include the following:

Levitical uncleanness (*pula*) after cases of birth and death lasts with Brahm(ins) 10 days the same in cow birth. – The Sud(ras) 15 days. The Temple servants (*ampalavāsi*) Cshatr[ias] etc. 12 days.

According to Fuller's experience birth pollution, unlike death and menstrual pollution, has still been strictly observed among the Nāyars in Ramankara and probably in Central Travancore in general. It only affects the mother, and she is polluted for 15 days, but is not allowed to go to the temple for 56 days. (Fuller 1976: 48.) The Nampūtiris and lower castes as well still observe birth pollution. The duration is usually 10 days for the Nampūtiris and 12 for the Vāriyārs as Gundert mentions, but according to my informants, it is 11 days for the Kṣatriyas and 16 days for the Nāyars.

In the case of the Nampūtiris birth pollution not only affects the mother but the whole family, except the *brahmacārins*, who can go on studying (IR, II, p. 90). The mother's original *mana* does not observe pollution. IR implies in his memoirs that *manas* which observe birth and death pollution for each other are to be counted as belonging to the same family (IR, I, p. 42). The entire Māmaṅṅu Mana including Nellikkāṭṭu Māmaṅṅu Mana observes common birth pollution. As a young man IR had taken advantage of the birth pollution rule when he wished to be back home from the place where he was teaching the Vedas:

So I told them that I had received a letter informing me of a birth of a boy in Nellikkāṭṭu Mana. So I had birth pollution. (IR, I, p. 298.)

The rules differ in the case of near and distant relatives (MS):

| Sex of the baby | Near relatives | Distant relatives |
|-----------------|--|--|
| Boy | 10 days pollution for all male and female Nampūtiris | 10 days pollution for all male and all married female Nampūtiris 3 days pollution for unmarried girls |
| Girl | 10 days pollution for all male and female Nampūtiris | 3 days pollution for all male and female Nampūtiris |

Birth pollution included avoidance or restrictions in *pūjas*, *kriyas* and some mantras, and entering only the *gōpuram*, the gateway of the temples. Birth pollution did not bring any new food restrictions. As religious rites are not performed as regularly as before, the restrictions go more unnoticed nowadays.

The mother, giving birth in the room called *aṛa* in Ravipuram and laid on a mat, was assisted by a Viḷakkattala Nāyar midwife. A Śūdra Nāyar nurse in government service used to come to Panjal homes from Killimangalam hospital in 1972-73. Even a doctor could come home for deliveries before Nampūtiri ladies started going to the hospitals themselves. The Nāyar servant who was looking after the mother and child for 10 days in old times did not have to worry about getting polluted during that period from touching the mother. The doctors being part of the modern world are not necessarily bothered about pollution rules at all.

Kerala customs according to Gundert (15) include the following:

to remove various pollutions (*aśuddhi*) other nations let the Br[ahmin]s perform purification (*punṅyāham*). But in K[erala] if the Br[ahmin] even be polluted (*pula* through corpse, women's childbirth etc.) a Maran (*mārān*, high Sudra) has to purify him.

This does not apply to Panjal (MS).

A Maṅṅātti brought clean clothes for a Nampūtiri mother on the 4th, 7th, 10th, 15th, 20th, and 28th day after the delivery, and if the baby was a girl, even on the 40th day. On these days the mother took a special bath in the pond, applying oil before bathing. The Nāyar servant woman collected bark of the *iñca* climber (*Acacia intsia*), turmeric, castor oil fruit, and jasmine leaves, and pounded them to make a paste. Both the Nāyar woman and the mother had a dip in the pond. The servant gave some of the paste to the mother and took some into her own hand as well. The Nāyar woman then took a copper vessel, and poured water on the head, shoulder, knee and foot of the mother. She repeated the dip in the pond, taking some paste in her hand, and pouring water over the mother two more times. (MS.)

During this time the mother used to wear the cloth brought by the Maṅṅātti. After a second dip the mother wore another cloth likewise brought by the Maṅṅātti. After removing this too she wore her own cloth and took the third dip in the pond. All the ladies of the family who were middle-aged during our field-work had taken such a bath after their deliveries, but IR's daughter-in-law Ammiṇi had not after the birth of her daughter in 1975. The delivery had been in a hospital and she had moved after that to her rented house in Parli with no pond. There was no close Nāyar lady to help either. (MS.)

The purification ceremony (*puṇyāham*) was performed on the 11th day. Using *darbha* grass, holy water was sprinkled on the mother, the baby and the other polluted persons by five Nampūtiris, after they had chanted Vedic mantras. Holy water was also used to purify buildings and the water of wells and tanks. After this a mixture of raw rice and paddy grains was put on the heads of the polluted to the accompaniment of Vedic mantras. (NNA, p. 28.)

Even nowadays for three months the mother is not allowed to go to the kitchen, nor to places where ritual foodstuffs and implements are kept. If the couple lives in a joint family, the ladies of that family cook for them. Especially if they live separately, the husband may cook for them or himself, or he goes out to a restaurant for his meals. Ladies often go to their paternal homes to give birth to their first child at least. Returning to one's paternal home for the period of confinement is very practical, because then the mother and child can get good care in familiar surroundings. IR's daughters usually did this. Of U's children the eldest and the youngest have been born in Payyappaḷi Mana, U's paternal home, the eldest according to the custom, and the youngest because U happened to be staying there during her brother's wedding. When the first child Suma was born, U came home after the customary full three months. After the youngest child Rm's birth, she came home after two months, but even then she did not start cooking at home before the third month was completed.

In IR's son Nīlakaṅṅhan's family, the younger daughter Sujāta came to her paternal home before the birth of her first child. Her husband was sailing and away

for long periods, so that she needed support from her family. But it was exceptional that her mother-in-law came along from her native village. The practical reason was that Sujāta's mother, because of her job, could not do all the kitchen work for her daughter.

The mother cannot go to any temple during six months after the delivery. After the *annaprāśana* ceremony performed when the child is around 6 months she could go to Guruvayur temple. The rules are even stricter concerning the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa temple in Panjal, which the mother cannot visit for a complete year. Nampūtiris still follow this rule too.

MENSTRUAL POLLUTION

From the time of the Taittirīya-Saṃhitā (around 1000 BC) rules have been laid down in writing about the menstruating woman (Kane 1941: 802). They include ideas of uncleanliness, untouchability and the woman's segregation. There should be no sexual intercourse with her, she should not bathe or anoint herself or her eyes, comb her hair, clean her teeth, cut her nails etc. The son born of intercourse during the first three nights of menstruation is accursed, and if the woman in addition does one of the enumerated forbidden things, the son will be affected in a logical way, e.g. bathing would cause him to drown (TS II,5,1). According to Raheja (1988: 46), misfortunes are never attributed to impurity, but here is an example in ancient texts where failure to observe restrictions caused by pollution is said to bring various kinds of misfortune.

Menstrual pollution could become public in a most dramatic way during the great Vedic sacrifices. When NNA was the *yajamāna* in a *somayāga* sacrifice in 1941, his wife entered her menstrual period, and the ritual had to be interrupted and postponed for three days (NNA, p. 148). The same happened to the wife of the *yajamāna* in the *agnicayana* ritual performed in Panjal in 1975, and the whole process, which foreign scholars and film makers were observing and recording, had to be interrupted (Staal 1983, I: 194, 274). Some menstrual pollution rules were observed by most Nampūtiri women in Panjal. Of the relatives who had moved elsewhere, housewives usually observed the rules (e.g. IR's daughters Śrīdēvi and Ramaṇi), but women working outside their homes did not. Earlier, the female teachers stayed away from their job during their period (MS). The third generation counted from IR usually did not observe these rules.

During the first three days of menstruation women should not wash themselves, and according to my informants the rule was very strictly followed particularly on the third day. Unlike during the first menstruation, women were allowed to change the old cloths. On the other hand the women did clean their teeth, but this was the period when they particularly found time to remove lice from their hair.

No one is supposed to touch a menstruating woman during the first three days. Not only in Panjal but also in Thuravoor I was warned not to touch a menstruating female, a 14-year-old relative of Ammini's. Śaṅkara's rules (AP 31) state that if a woman touches another woman who is menstruating, the former must bathe before she can eat. Fawcett's version (28) says that all that a woman should observe if she touches another in her menses is bathing, but adds in parenthesis that a man must change his thread and undergo sacred ablution (i. e. *puṇyāham*). I was told in Panjal that if a woman touches another woman or her own son, it is enough if they take a bath, but if she touches some other man than her son, the man has to be purified by the *puṇyāham* ritual. The ancient rule forbidding sexual intercourse is said to be followed, and, as will be remembered, earlier the women used to stay in the room called *ara*, where deliveries also took place.

U took advantage of her menstruation and sometimes went to see her daughter Ajita in Vadakkancheri. On the bus she could not help touching many other people. When I was following her on such a trip, she warned me on the way back that in Ravipuram the 'no-touching rule' was to be observed again.

A menstruating woman is not supposed to cook during the first three days in a traditional household. If there are no other Nampūtiri ladies who can do the cooking, even men of the house can help. U was standing by the well outside the kitchen, giving instructions to her mother-in-law and her son, while these two were preparing the meal in the kitchen. In Ravipuram she did not serve the meals either. But on arriving in Vadakkancheri, she immediately started helping with the cooking. She looked embarrassed when I made a fuss about the matter and said that in her own house she did not cook, but here the rules were relaxed. At home U took her meals at some distance from the others and rinsed with water the place where she sat on the floor when she got up. She rinsed her plate and cup outside the house. U followed the rules at home out of respect for her elderly in-laws. Uṇṇi's wife Jayaśrī does not follow menstrual pollution rules concerning cooking and eating or bathing even in her in-laws' house. She does not even mention her period.

Soon after our arrival in Panjal the women started to ask about my menstruation, thinking that it was not my private affair. After all, I was allowed to enter their kitchen and take a bath in their family tank. I did not break the rule by entering the kitchen, but I was not prepared to stop taking a bath on a single day during our stay in India. I was criticized for this by U just once, but I defended myself by saying that I followed doctor's orders. As long as DA's attention was not drawn to the breaking of old rules in this case or some others, it did not seem to matter very much.

A Kerala rule according to Gundert (62) says that a woman's uncleanness (*pula*) is removed by the washerman (Maṇṇātti giving change of raiment). The habit was still observed in the house of M, the Nāyar maid: a Maṇṇān woman came to

wash M's daughter's towels. On the fourth day a Maṇṇātti used to come and wash the dirty towels in Muṭṭattukkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Mana as well, and my informants said that a special bath, which was similar to the bath taken after childbirth, had to be performed. No *punyāham* was necessary. As was told earlier, the washerman who took care of the normal washing of the house is of the Veḷuttēṭattu Nāyar caste. A Maṇṇātti's services are not called for any more in Ravipuram.

I was told that for 12 days, sometimes only 7 nowadays, from the beginning of menstruation the women are not supposed to go to the temple, and that even Uṇṇi's wife Jayaśrī follows this rule. I saw myself that this rule was followed by U. Even though all the women of the family went to the temple on the day when IR performed the *upanayana* rite for his grandson on the 12th of November, 1983, U stayed at home. Her menstruation had started on the 6th of November, and she went to the temple for the first time after that on the 19th of the same month. Even in Vadakkancheri she would not have gone to the temple.

Bhattacharyya (1980: 29), discussing the general situation in India, states that menstrual pollution is not generally observed strictly, but menstruating women as a rule do not visit places of worship or attend any type of religious duty even today. In Panjal, then, the pollution was more strictly observed under the eyes of old traditional people than is general in the country. The rules are relaxed and the behaviour of the same menstruating women is changed to conform to the all-India way when they have free choice outside the village.

DEATH POLLUTION

Kerala customs according to Gundert (30) state that Levitical uncleanness (*pula*) after cases of death lasted with Brahmins 10 days and the Śūdras 15 days. According to Fuller, death pollution lasts 16 days for the Nāyars, or only 10 days nowadays, but it is supposed to affect all members of the deceased's matrilineal descent group. However, when the deceased was particularly prominent, pollution might be observed for a whole year. But no informant had been able to quote an instance of this actually taking place. (Fuller 1976: 48-49.) MS says that it is impossible for pollution to have lasted for one year, only the *dīkṣa*, and that the social position of the deceased does not matter at all, only the blood relationship.

There was nothing to prevent Nampūtiri mourners from travelling outside the village, but they could not even visit the *gōpuraṃ* of the temple (MS). IR tells that during the pollution after the death of his grandmother, he went to visit his mother's *mana*. During the pollution after the death of his brother Nīlakaṇṭhan, IR studied the pollution rules (*āśaucam*). Normal studies had to be interrupted during the pollution and the only text that one could study during this period was the *āśaucam* text. (IR, I, pp. 96, 180; II, p. 90; MS.)

A married woman has pollution after her father for only 3 days, but after her father-in-law, for instance, for 10 days. The death pollution for a more distant relative, like a paternal aunt, has shrunk to 3 days. No death pollution is observed for a more distant maternal relative, as a saying reminds: 'There is no pollution after the death of an aunt [maternal aunt, uncle's wife], nor after the death of a buffalo' (*ammāyi cattāluṃ pōttu cattāluṃ pulayilla*). This proverb is referring to the inferiority of the buffalo cow compared to a zebu cow, although, of course, no pollution was observed after the death of a zebu cow either. It is to be noted, however, that birth pollution is observed only among the members of the family, but death pollution also among close maternal relatives (even if only for 3 days) counted as belonging to other families. As we have seen, even other practices show that a Nampūtiri woman's ties to her parents' home are not altogether cut, only weakened. (MS.)

In Muṭṭattukkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Mana on the 10th day the Maṇṇātti used to bring clean cloths, and all the men and women of the family took a bath wearing those clothes. The bath was otherwise not special in any way, except that the men gave some oblations with water and flowers for the deceased. The Maṇṇātti do not perform even such services to this *mana* any more. During the 10 days of pollution after IR's death the whole family was gathered in Ravipuram. The family members had a restricted diet during that time (see Chapter 11). As mentioned earlier, M had pollution for 16 days, during which she could not work in Ravipuram.

THE TEMPLE IS NOT A PLACE FOR THOSE WHO ARE UNDER A POLLUTION

During my field-work period, bodily issues were still potent symbols for practically all Nampūtiris. The purifying effect of cowdung, for instance, is still believed in, and cowdung is widely used. One's own bodily issues and those of men and creatures lower than oneself are in principle still believed to be defiling, but in practice younger people worry less about them than old.

Touching another person or a creature lower than oneself such as a servant or a dog, or a person under some pollution, e.g. a menstruating woman, is avoided by elderly Nampūtiris, but parents allow servants to touch their children without any precautions taken. Middle-aged working Nampūtiri women, and even housewives, do not stay in isolation during their menstruation. They avoid sexual intercourse, cooking, and touching other people, and possibly also bathing during that time, but not all of them are strict about the three last-mentioned restrictions. All Nampūtiri women, even the younger ones, respect the prohibition of going to the temple during seven days from the beginning of menstruation. More generally too, those under a pollution avoid going to the temple.

Pollution which comes indirectly through water from lower castes cannot be avoided altogether nowadays when temples for example and their tanks are open to all Hindus. Very orthodox people still avoid stepping on ground that has been swept by a servant, before some water has been sprinkled on it. Some Nampūtiris avoid touching an object simultaneously with somebody lower in hierarchy. Many gestures may be unconscious and dying hard. Birth and death pollutions are observed, but as frequenting temples and rituals as well as purificatory ceremonies have become less important, the observances are less conspicuous than before.