13. IS PANJAL A NAMPŪTIRI VILLAGE?

I will try to find an answer to the question 'is Panjal a Nampūtiri village?' first by examining the relations between the different castes. Observing distance pollution rules, which chart the relations between higher and lower castes in a very concrete and visible way, will open the discussion. The significance of *dāna*, proved to have a central position in northern India in intercaste relations, will be weighed in the light of Kerala cases. Joint and separate cultural efforts of the different castes will be used to further illustrate intercaste relations. Remembering that the Nampūtiri reaction towards foreign influence was mostly very negative at first, a short discussion about Westernization and globalization will follow to find out whether the original attitude still has support and weight. The last chapter deals more directly with the relationship between caste, class and politics.

DISTANCE POLLUTION

Indirect and touching pollution rules, as will be remembered, may concern polluted persons within one's own group. Lower castes naturally also pollute by direct and indirect contact (i.e. when some other substance than air is the mediating material). There are also castes near the top of the hierarchy pyramid which, if they are in a pure state, only pollute by touching. Distance pollution rules (see Chapter 7) more exclusively concern inter-caste relations. Still, according to a Kerala rule recorded by Gundert (63), a menstruating woman and one lately delivered should stand at a 12' and 18' distance respectively. The rule probably refers to a Nampūtiri woman and the male members of her own *jāti* respectively.

A Kerala rule according to Gundert (63) gives exact distances for different castes to be kept from the Nampūtiris. For instance, a Śūdra had to stand at a distance of 5' from a Brahmin on holy occasions, but otherwise 3, a Buddhist 12, commonly 6, a Kammāḷar, Tīyar, a washerman etc. 36, Pulayan, Paṟayan 64, Nāyāṭi 74. Europeans etc. polluted only by touch. In 1900 Fawcett wrote that a Nāyar should not come nearer than 6 paces, a man of the barber caste 12, a carpenter, goldsmith or blacksmith 24, a Tīyar 36, a Malayan 64, and a Pulayan 96 paces to a Nampūtiri (Fawcett 1900: 59). Fuller (1976: 35) again has slightly deviating distances for different groups.

As will be remembered, Mencher claims that the distances relate to places like the gate, courtyard, or the first step on the verandah, not distances in terms of feet.

A Śūdra Nāyar could enter the house, but could not touch anyone or enter the kitchen or the *pūja* room. Lower Nāyar castes, such as washermen, were allowed only on the verandah, and members of the artisan castes were expected to remain in the compound far away from the verandah (Mencher 1966b: 19). A carpenter who did not have his tools with him was allowed to the gate, but a Ceṟuman or Pulayan had to stay even father away, and a Nāyāṭi was expected to call from the field or a particular stone (Mencher 1966a: 154).

The Tampurākkaḷ of Āḷvāñcēri Mana, the spiritual leader of the Nampūtiris, told us that when his ancestors moved outside their compound a servant carrying a sword used to walk in front of them shouting 'hoo' to announce their advent. The authority of the leader used to be such that even the Mahārāja of Travancore, not to speak of other rulers, had to prostrate in front of him. Any member of the lower castes who did not vanish out of the leader's sight could be slain on the spot. As to when this was still possible, the outside and inside views differ greatly. A university professor of the Īḻavan caste did not doubt that this was possible until the independence of India. MS, on the contrary, felt that this was not possible in the time of the present Tampurākkaḷ's father or even grandfather, but maybe his great-grandfather.

There were ways to avoid the awkward situation of the high and the low meeting on the road. Earlier, low castes were not even allowed to use the footpaths crossing the paddy fields. In MS's youth, Nampūtiris themselves used to shout 'hoo', when walking, to warn lower castes. The maid servants, walking in front of Nampūtiri women, used to shout 'yaahee' ('hee' with a raised accent), for the same purpose. When working at a spot, a craftsman used to place a stone on leaves on the way at some distance as a forewarning of his presence. (MS.)

Fawcett (1900: 59-60) remarks at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries that the 'inferior races' travel parallel to the road, but not on the road, not because they are forced to, but because custom clings to them. On the roads and outside the compounds in general, the distance pollution rules are not at all obeyed any more. The space where the difference between the past and the present is perhaps most dramatically felt is inside the village temples. (MS.) The next situation to examine is the encounter or coexistence of Nampūtiris and other castes within or near the Nampūtiri compound.

There were no rules about the polluting effect of the members of the Nampiyār or the Ambalavāsi caste from a distance in my sources. About the situation in recent times in Panjal village I know more. The Nampiyārs stepped on the verandah without hesitation to explain and plan their *kaḷaṃ* performances with AP in 1996, but they did not enter any rooms. The elderly Vāriyār lady, who was a personal friend of DA's, coming in even through the verandah and the main entrance, sometimes

came in to the *akatte pūmukhaṃ* to gossip with the ladies of the house, and tell them the latest news of the village.

None of the castes lower than the Ambalavāsis came, with the exception of a few individuals (see below), just to visit the family, only on business. Even the younger Vāriyār woman, who worked as a seamstress, also came as far as the *akatte pūmukhaṃ*, but usually through the kitchen entrance, and only when summoned for work. So did the Śūdra Nāyar women including M, who helped to dry and clean the paddy. None of these women were supposed to go to the kitchen in the early 1980s, and I never saw them roaming freely around the house in rooms where the family members had their daily meals or slept.

Comparing this continence with the history of reform in Kerala, it can be remembered that K. Damodaran, a Nāyar intellectual and a famous Kerala reformist, brought to his mother's kitchen representatives of different castes, of the highest and the lowest, in 1938. The women of the family had been shocked, but had all the same cooked for them. According to Jeffrey, the procession with a Pulayan baby through the family kitchen of high castes, was a repeated theme in many memoirs of the 1920s and 1930s. (Jeffrey 1992: 126-127).

The Ravipuram people, children and grandchildren, including those who have gone to live in different towns, nearly all have a Nāyar servant woman doing the coarser kitchen work, but as a rule not cooking. As there are usually no separate rooms for preparing the foodstuffs for cooking in addition to the kitchen in urban households, the kitchen itself is entered by the servants when peeling, grinding and doing some other preparatory tasks. In Chapter 11 I told how, exceptionally, M had been allowed to enter the kitchen in 1983. After IR's death in 1989, due to DA's frequent absence and deteriorating health and U's falling ill, M's entrances became more frequent. At first there was uneasiness about the situation on both sides. Later, when the gas cooker was used for cooking the meals, the old kitchen was used only for cooking and parboiling rice, and the latter was often done by M.

The barber who used to come to shave the Nampūtiris and cut their hair was allowed in the shed on top of the stairs leading to the tank. The shaving took place in the temple in earlier times, and later in the private houses. When a person was too weak to go to sit in the shed, the family members used to do the barber's work. This happened for instance when Nārāyaṇan of the Taṟavāṭŭ was ill in bed. His sons Rāman and Vāsudevan cut his hair and beard with scissors. When IR, on the other hand, was confined to his bed for the last time, the family asked the barber to come and shave him once a week, and now he was allowed to enter IR's bedroom itself. He was not willing to continue after coming twice, as he preferred to work in his barber shop, and the family members had to do the shaving themselves. Even NNA went to the barber shop in Panjal at last, but in the beginning he felt uneasy doing this in his own village, and went to Killimangalam instead.

The Vaṭṭēkkāṭṭŭ Nāyar mediator between the Nampūtiris and the agricultural labourers used to stand for hours on the *iṟayaṃ*, leaning on the wall. Very few words were exchanged, but the family did not object to being gaped at. AP saw the mediator step on the verandah when the man was served a meal there in 1989. The Veḷuttēṭattu Nāyar (dead by 1990) and his mother seldom came to count the washing on the verandah, although according to Mencher (1966b: 19) this would have been allowed. They never called to get attention, but waited patiently until they were noticed. The man never gaped at the people on the verandah, but kept his eyes cast down. All this modesty was excessive considering that the clothes that the Veḷuttēṭattu Nāyars wash are considered ritually pure without any purificatory steps.

The Pappaṭa-c Ceṭṭi women came to the kitchenside courtyard to hand the ordered amount of *pappaṭaṃ* wafers if they were not handed over to M or the Nampūtiri boys passing the house gate of the members of this caste. The more regular sellers of yam and bananas stepped, with their heavy burden, on the verandah, where the goods were weighed, because the hook for the big scales was screwed into the verandah ceiling. Other sellers, singers and players stopped outside near the verandah and did not even climb on the *iṟayaṃ*. Sometimes they showed some stamina in the bargaining, but it was the Nampūtiris who usually said the last word.

The carpenters remained standing a little further away in the courtyard, not rising to the step outside the low porch wall. The women from goldsmith Kṛṣṇan's house who brought the small amount of zebu milk twice a day to Ravipuram either handed the milk over from the step outside the porch wall or brought it to the kitchen door, and they even dared to utter a small sound to get the attention of the ladies or the boys of the house. Goldsmith Kṛṣṇan and his son also stopped at the same place, and used the wall as a counter when pieces of gold had to be scrutinized or weighed, but their behaviour was not distinctly servile. I will further illustrate their position in the village community.

As the Nāyars insisted on keeping their two Murukan/Subrahmaṇya temples for themselves, the craftsmen, with the goldsmiths in the lead, in the 1970s started to arrange Subrahmaṇya feasts in the Kāṭṭil Kāvŭ, the small Nampūtiri temple situated on the southern side of the valley. As will be remembered, the *pūjāri* in these celebrations was a Nampūtiri. The craftsmen were the main organizers of the festival, but also some Nampūtiris, like Perumaṅṅāṭṭŭ Vāsudēvan, were active in it. But the grand celebration stopped due to a disagreement about the money collected for the festival. The *devasvaṃ* had earlier given the money collection box to the organizers of this festival, but later moved it to the Ayyappan temple for the benefit of another simultaneous celebration there. The organizers of the Subrahmaṇya celebration were advised to keep some other box for their collecting, but they were not happy about this. That is why all that remained of this was a special *pūja*. (MS.)

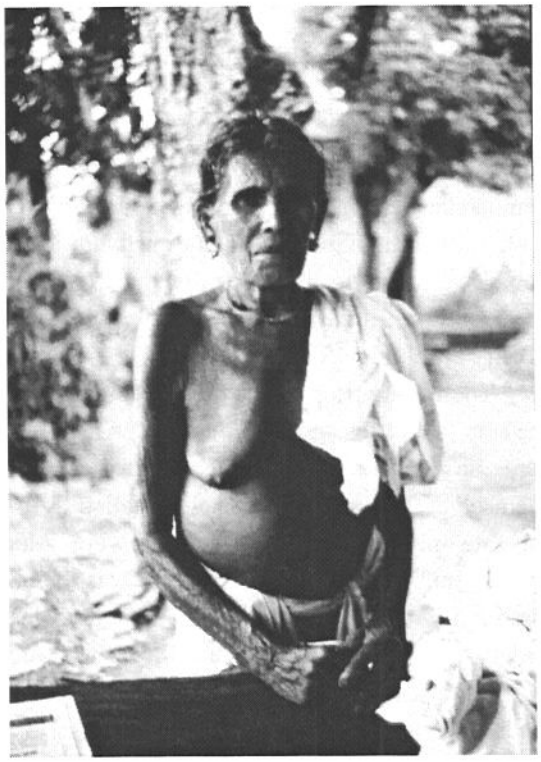

Fig. 53. Veḷuttēṭattu Nāyar woman waiting for the washing to be given to her. Photo MP 1983.

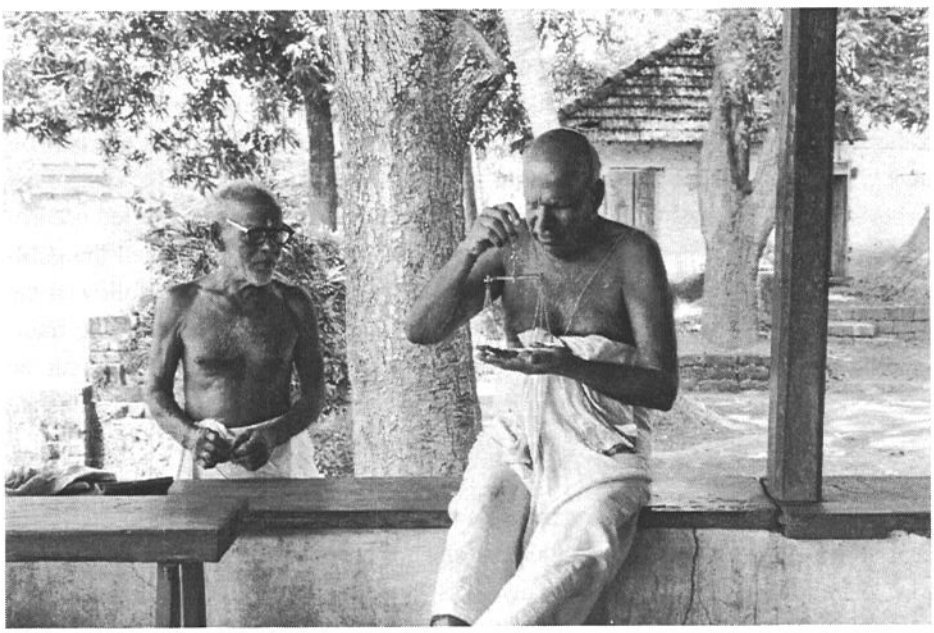

Fig. 54. Sitting on the verandah wall, IR weighs the gold to be given to the family goldsmith for a new piece of jewellery. The goldsmith has stopped outside the verandah. Photo MP 1983.

There were strong aspirations for a higher prestige for the Taṭṭan *jāti*, seen for instance in the pomp of its ceremonies in Panjal, and maybe the air of boldness is a herald of an emancipation from the traditional hierarchy of the society. In December 1983 the son of the goldsmith departed for Śabarimalai on a pilgrimage, which is part of the Ayyappan cult, a modern south Indian *bhakti* cult. There is said to be a democratic element in all *bhakti* cults through the idea that man can achieve contact with gods without a Brahmin intermediary, and in south India the cult has been the vehicle of revolt against caste divisions (Kjærholm 1986). As Kjærholm observed concerning a Tamil Nadu village, the challenge was not radical, but still a clear token of aspiration for emancipation.

There were people who did not come to the courtyard of Ravipuram or even to the step ladder leading to it during our field-work in the 1980s. The Nāyāṭis, who came on *dvādaśi*, the 12th lunar day of each month, to sell rope articles made by themselves, but mainly to beg alms, called from far off in the fields, and approached the gate only when told. In 1990 they were bolder in approaching the gate. According to Thurston (1909, V: 275), there was the belief that the Nāyāṭis contaminated a Brahmin within a distance of three hundred feet. Mayer (1952: 38) tells, from the break of 1940 and 1950, about a Nāyāṭi walking up and talking without embarrassment in the company of a Nampūtiri with the author. In Panjal they followed more traditional rules.

Although the Constitution of India (which came into force on the 26th of January, 1950) abolished untouchability and made it a penal offence, survivals of the age-old custom of lower castes respecting the higher by keeping at a distance from the proximity of them was still partly possible to observe in Panjal in and near the Nampūtiri compound in the 1990s. The elderly Nāyars seemed to act very much in the same way as demanded long ago. If there was a big change in the pattern, there was uneasiness on both sides among the elderly members, as in the case of the barber's work. The washerman even behaved more modestly than expected according to the rules, but it may be a matter of personality. The carpenters and the goldsmiths had gained an air of boldness and self respect, but even so they followed the distance rules. The Nāyāṭis and other castes ranking very low followed the traditional distance rules still in 1985. By 1990 they were slightly more relaxed about the rules. The lay-out of the Nampūtiri compound indeed made it possible to elaborate on the pollution rules and keep them alive for an amazingly long time.

It was also obviously the respect for some elderly, particularly honoured, Nampūtiris that made representatives of nowadays relatively well-to-do lower castes follow age-old customs. As almost all of these old Nampūtiris have died by now, the situation can change radically. It is those representatives of lower castes who are well known to, and in close contact with, the families for many generations

who behave in a more traditional way. Strangers are more relaxed about age-old rules.

The Nampūtiris claimed that they did not force the old distance pollution rules to be followed even in their own house or compound, but I am sure that they would have objected to them being totally relaxed. They certainly lacked actual means to force the rules on others except the very poorest people who were dependent on them. But the custom still clung to the majority of inferior castes in Panjal even in the 1990s, so that the Nampūtiris did not have to put their liberality very often to the test in this respect.

There were a few bold individuals whose modern behaviour was not objected to by MS. For instance, an Īḻavan ex-colleague of his in the Panjal school, a great idealist of the type that hastens without hesitation to work for his native country or anything that he believes in. He came to sit several times on the verandah during our stay in Panjal, and usually he was able to ignite a sparkling and spirited discussion. Likewise, a Nāyar teacher came to sit on the verandah of Ravipuram, whereas his old father, a farmer, would never have ventured to do so. And it was taken for granted that M. G. Shashibhushan, a respected Nāyar Professor of Malayalam of the University College in Trivandrum, was welcome to enter. We visited with him several Nampūtiri houses, even that of the Tampurākkaḷ. It is above all education that gradually brings lower castes to the verandah and even to the inner parts of the house.

INTERCASTE RELATIONS, *DAKṢIṆĀ* AND *DĀNA*

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the Nampūtiris should not participate in the life crisis ceremonies of castes lower than themselves. Participation in their death ceremonies brought Nampūtiris the contempt of their own community. MS agrees. One Śaṅkara's rule (AP 35) forbids a Brahmin to accept a gift (*dakṣiṇā*) at a *śrāddha* from a Śūdra. According to S. V. Iyer (1977: 48) there is a class of Brahmins who are considered to be lower than the Nampūtiris, who officiate as priests for the *śrāddha* performed by the Śūdras.

A Kerala custom according to Gundert (11) says:

> When elsewhere Br[ahmin]s have 6 occupations (*ṣaḷkarmmaṃ*) Vedam-reading and teaching, giving and taking charity, sacrificing and causing to sacrifice (*yāgaṃ*). In Ker[ala] they have 5 only, for they are not allowed to take alms, being landed proprietors.

According to Nampūtirippāṭŭ (1963, Chapter 7), learning, performing sacrifices as a *yajamāna*, and giving *dāna* are considered to be the best works, while teaching, assisting in the performance of sacrifices as an officiating priest and re-

ceiving gifts should be done without accepting money. The Āḍhyan Nampūtiripāṭŭs should not take *dakṣiṇā* even if it was for Vedic performances, and so should not take any such jobs either. This means that only those who have no other source of income are entitled to do these latter works. Because they are just means of livelihood, they are considered mediocre work, and for that reason avoided by the Āḍhyans. Nampūtirippāṭŭ (1963, Chapter 10) also says that the latter are not supposed to accept *dakṣiṇā* (*pratigraham*), generally being rich landlords. The one-way flow of 'charity', or giving away *dāna*, by the landlords, would correspond to the situation in northern India.

As far as the Āsyans are concerned, although mostly landlords in the past, the situation is different. NNA (p. 158) refers to the Manu-Smṛti and other *dharmic* code books when he explains the duties of Brahmins. It is their duty to give *dāna* and *dakṣiṇā* to worthy and deserving persons and to receive it when devotedly given by others.[47] It was necessary that poor people, coming for help, should not be turned away empty-handed from their doors. Likewise, NNA says, when others desire salvation from sin and other evils, and want to give *dāna* and felicitations, a Brahmin should accept it. 'It is not only for the value of the presentation they give, but for the welfare and mental satisfaction of the man who performs the *dāna*.' But, we must remember, NNA was an Āsyan.

After IR's mother's death at every monthly ritual his father gave away one *tāli* from her necklace as a *dāna* during the *dīkṣa* which lasted one year (IR, II, p. 182). NNA (pp. 10-12), discussing the sixteen rites of passage in the life of a Nampūtiri, mentions that the highly respected teachers of the family were vested with the responsibility and authority to preach and perform all the *śrauta* and *smārta* rituals for all the members of the disciple families. The offering of *gurudakṣiṇā* as part of the *samāvartana* ceremony, the ceremonial completion of the study of the Veda, is explained by NNA as the presentation of some money to the preceptor as a token of respect and love for having taught the Veda.

In a *yāga*, *dakṣiṇā* means giving away rewards to all the ritualists and money to the great authorities supervising the ritual, according to their status, to obtain their blessings (NNA, p. 152). As mentioned earlier, Sōmayājis were respected and held in great esteem, and on auspicious occasions they were invited and entertained in temples and the houses of landlords with feast and *dakṣiṇā* (NNA, p. 156). NNA's son Vāsudēvan in his translation uses the synonyms 'award' and 'reward' for *dakṣiṇā*, and the saying that a person is 'respected' with *dakṣiṇā*. Now, according to Raheja (1988: 219), *dakṣiṇā* is clearly a 'payment', yet seems to carry with it a penumbra of inauspiciousness, while by far the most significant vehicle for the transfer of inauspiciousness is the *dāna*.

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47 Nampūtirippāṭŭ (1963, Chapter 4) uses *dakṣiṇā* and *dāna* as variants as he takes *paśu-dāna* as an example of a *dakṣiṇā*.

The term *dāna* NNA (p. 12) uses of the presentations of money with cloths and betel leaves and slices of areca nuts which is a part of the celebration of each rite of passage. According to Raheja (1988), one of the main characteristics of the *dānas* is that they are not reciprocated in any way, and that they are not given in exchange for any goods or services. I have a strong feeling that in the cases discussed by NNA, the recipients were not reluctant to receive their *dāna*, but considered it to be a kind of payment for the ritual services performed at life-cycle rituals, gifts which according to Raheja (1988: 212) stood in contrast to *dāna* in that they were not thought to transfer inauspiciousness. Besides, the families discussed by NNA were reciprocally each other's teachers.

According to MS, some *dānas* which the Nampūtiris gave to each other may have had the aim of giving away inauspiciousness. He has heard about one such *dāna*, called *karmma-vipākaṃ* 'ripening of deeds', and he says that it was mainly meant to take away the sins of the family. MS has heard that some Nampūtiris were reluctant to receive that *dāna*, but, he says, that was an exception. On the whole, Nampūtiris were willing and happy to receive and 'get more blessings'.

At the time of a *somayāga* and an *atirātra*, devotees, relatives, and scholars in *śrauta* rituals, and other Nampūtiris from different places used to come, worship, and give respect to the great ritual, and offer money, clothes etc. believing that it is good for their welfare and prosperity. The money would be used for the expenses of this and future *yāgas*. These devotees used to be fed by the sacrificer family. (NNA, pp. 152-154, 216.) Their donations can be equated with an offering to gods.

After his *atirātra* NNA was invited as a celebrity to temples, palaces and very rich Nampūtiri houses, and given *dakṣiṇās* and *dānas*, even a milch cow with its calf, a true *paśu-dāna* (NNA, pp. 218-219). Nampūtiris received *dānas* not only from other Nampūtiris but also from kings, and, says MS, on some very rare occasions, like their 60th birthday, from Ambalavāsis and Nāyars. Also then it was taken care of that hierarchy and pollution considerations were respected, and the presents, cloth and money, were placed on a banana leaf before the Nampūtiris to avoid touching and giving pollution to the superiors. In 1990, goldsmith Kṛṣṇan celebrated his 84th birthday. The difference compared to earlier times was that he had invited Nampūtiris to come to his house to celebrate and have presents, cloths and money from him. Many went, but MS did not, because he was in *dīkṣa* after his father's death.

On an important occasion, an idol of Lord Dakṣiṇāmūrti was presented by the king as a *dāna* to the grandfather of NNA. NNA (p. 72) says that it was given in appreciation of the grandfather's great Brahmanic achievements. The Rāja of Cochin used to give *dāna* every year to Nampūtiris who had performed *agniṣṭoma* or *atirātra* and become Sōmayājis or Akkitiris. That it was not an obligation but a privilege to receive this *dāna* is further shown by the following detail. When a re-

cipient died, the *dāna* would go to the Sōmayāji or Akkitiri who was the first to inform of the death in the palace. MS says that candidates used to be ready to hurry to the palace in order to be entitled to receive this *dāna*.

Thus, there is a giving and receiving of *dāna* by the Brahmins/landlords, not just a one-way patronizing flow of *dakṣiṇā* and *dāna* from the landlords to Brahmins, washermen and drummers (cf. Raheja 1988: 248). There is a different attitude towards gifts by the Āḍhyans and the Āsyans, but the latter emphasize that it is their superior qualities in spiritual matters that entitle them to receive gifts.

MS says that the Nampūtiris were dominant in the village both in material and hierarchical status, and if something central was done for the well-being of individuals, the family and the village, it was the seeking of the blessings of the village gods. The Brahmins were the persons to do this. Combined with the high status of the Nampūtiris goes the ideal of their possessing supreme knowledge gained through hard work and austerity, a simple life, and a calm and quiet nature. All this and their worshipping of gods is done, in their own words, for the welfare of the whole society. (NNA, p. 4.) This has to do with the belief, discussed in Chapter 4, that pollution rouses the vengeance of gods towards the whole society, and explains why all the social groups had an interest in safeguarding Brahmin purity through conforming themselves to the hierarchical social system.

> The faith is that, at the time of *somayāga*, different offerings... would reach different Gods and they would become happy and would bestow blessings upon us... not only to our family but to the whole village and region it was considered beneficial. (NNA, p. 136.)

When kings assumed their reign they used to take an oath proclaiming:

> Let there always be welfare to the cows and Brahmins and let all the people of this world be happy (NNA, p. 4).

This combination of the cows, Brahmins and the happiness of the community is explained by NNA as following from the cow being worshipped as a goddess, and the Brahmin having the knowledge of the Vedas, worshipping god, and leading a disciplined and simple life, all for the welfare of the whole society. NNA thus tells about the mutual respect and regard between the Nampūtiris and the ruler. (NNA, pp. 4-6.)

There were villages in Kerala where the royal families or Nāyar landlords were supreme. These matrilineal families respected the Nampūtiris to the extent that they were particular about getting a Nampūtiri 'husband' for all their female members (MS). As NNA's brothers had married princesses in the family of the Maharaja of Cochin, the house got some financial advantages, like a low-interest-rate loan when they were in trouble, but this was paid back when times were better (NNA, pp. 128-130).

Nāyars played some part in the rituals of the Nampūtiris and the Kṣatriyas, but the Nampūtiris did not enter the houses of Nāyars, as it would have been polluting for them. Consequently, no *pūjas* were performed by Nampūtiris inside Nāyar houses. Rich Nāyar families, where they had Nampūtiri 'husbands', had special quarters for these Nampūtiris, and in their own territory there, they performed *pūjas*. Once a year, DA's father performed a *pūja* in the snake grove of the goldsmith, and NNA's father in a snake grove of an Īḻavan. The Nampūtiris acted similarly in the case of snake groves belonging to Nāyar families. (MS.) There were, however, precautions against the Nampūtiris becoming polluted. A special path through the fence was made for them to enter the grove without pollution. The *paśu-dāna* was not given to them directly even in these cases, but it was put on the ground for them. (MS.)

Nowadays, some Nampūtiris do enter the houses of Nāyars and even lower castes. They also perform *pūjas* there and receive *dāna*. (MS.) DA's brother, for instance, although he belongs to the elder generation, entered a Nāyar house by the normal way, had a cup of tea in the house, and received a cloth directly from the hands of the hosts. (MS; Unni.) In these cases, I think that *dakṣiṇā* would be the proper term, as it is clearly a payment for services done. But these are also sporadic events.

I cannot find evidence for centrality of *dāna* in Kerala. Thus, Raheja's observations about the nature of *dāna* obviously cannot be generalized to cover all parts of India. In a time perspective, too, there are differences in the importance of pollution and hierarchy in structuring intercaste relations. In Kerala, the role of the Nampūtiris, even the Āsyans, not only as Brahmins but also, together with the Kṣatriyas and higher Nāyars, as landlords, certainly complicates the situation.

JOINT AND SEPARATE CULTURAL EFFORTS OF THE CASTES

Some celebrations are joint efforts of several castes. Two examples follow.

Every spring there is a procession from the Panjal Ayyappan Kāvŭ to the Kōḻimāṃpaṟampŭ Bhagavati temple in Cheruthuruthy in connection with the festival there. During the last five days preceeding the festival, dressed-up demon (*pūtan*), hunter (*nāyāṭi*), dancer (*veḷḷāṭṭŭ*) and mendicant (*āṇṭi*) characters used to visit every house and receive paddy, old clothes or money. *Pūtan* is played by a Peru-maṇṇān, *nāyāṭi*, *veḷḷāṭṭŭ* and *āṇṭi* by a Pāṇan. On the festival day Pulayans carry bulls (*kāḷa*) made of hay covered with *muṇṭus*. The Pulayans worship the bull as the vehicle and servant of Śiva; they do not worship his lord Nandikeśvara directly. The mask and the bamboo poles of the image are kept for the next year, but the hay is fed to the cows. During the past few years the lower castes have stopped coming to every house, but take the bull directly to the temple. (MS; Uṇṇi.)

In the procession there are further drummers, an oracle (*veḷiccappāṭŭ*) impersonating the god Ayyappan, and boys dancing in honour of Bhagavati (*kummāṇṭi*), carrying a coconut on their heads. These are all Nāyars. In the procession there is also an elephant, and on its back sit Brahmins holding umbrellas and other objects. The Pulayans carrying the bull follow after the main procession. (MS.)

For my second example I will take the Golden Jubilee of the village library in Panjal. This was celebrated in December 1992. In the 1940s the library was in the hands of the Nampūtiris, and for about twenty years Nampūtiris and Vāriyārs were the only active workers. According to MS, the library activists were in the communist and progressive camp, and eager to form popular movements in the village, but other castes were reluctant to come forward. In 1992 there were active members from several castes, and even a Pulayan was a member of the working committee. Still, the majority were Nampūtiris and Nāyars, the chairman and the secretary were Nāyars.

In the Golden Jubilee organizing committee there were Nampūtiris, Vāriyārs, Nāyars, Ceṭṭis, Īḻavans, Āśāris, Christians and Muslims, but a Nampūtiri was the president, and a Nāyar the secretary. For weeks before the celebration different groups rehearsed their programmes for the two-day celebration. Some young men and women had chosen to present two dramas, one of which was written by MS. According to him the parts of the play were open for any castes, but most of the actors and actresses were Nampūtiris and a couple of them were Nāyars. No other castes were actually represented.

The young goldsmith, blacksmith and carpenter men together as a group rehearsed what they called their ancestral dances. They used to dance these in their celebrations like the marriages, as did other castes. The dancing could go on in these celebrations for hours on end. A selection of these complicated and precise dances with sticks (*kōl-k-kaḷi*, or *paricamuṭṭukaḷi* as MS calls them) were danced around a *nila-viḷakkŭ* accompanied by songs from the Rāmāyaṇa translated into Malayalam by Eḻuttaccan. One *śloka* corresponded to each of the chosen four dances. Some elder members knew these songs by heart, and taught them to the others. According to the old blacksmith of Ravipuram, his elders had even had the lyrics written down in palm leaf manuscripts, now lost. In a similar way songs from the Mahābhārata might accompany the dances. The Nampūtiri men or other high castes did not have a tradition of dancing *kōl-k-kaḷi*. If there is an imitation of higher castes in this tradition, it is of the Nāyars' fencing exercises in the schools of martial arts: wooden sticks instead of swords (cf., e.g., *Folk Arts Directory*, pp. 65, 148).

In the past, Nampūtiri men also had a dance of their own,[48] but that had nothing to do with the dance described above. A special performance called *pānēṅkaḷi* or

48 Manu (4,64) says that the householder should not dance, sing or play a musical instrument.

saṃghakkaḷi sometimes took place when the first feeding of solid food or the marriage of the eldest son of a wealthy family was celebrated on a grand scale. The performance included rituals, music, drama and dance. It had devotional aspects, but more important was its social satire. One or two very old Nampūtiris, and some young men who had studied the *pānēṅkaḷi* from them, still knew it, but there was no chance to perform it any more. MS has seen the performance once or twice as a child.

Nampūtiris were in general not allowed to take part even in other performances like the *kathakaḷi*, and most of the performers of this dance drama and the *ōttantuḷḷal* were Nāyars. *Kathakaḷi* is a classical art, which requires the audience to come up to a higher level for full enjoyment of the drama, and rich landlords and big temples invited troupes and arranged their shows (NNA, p. 66). It was not, however, absolutely impossible for a Nampūtiri youngster to study the *kathakaḷi* art and take part in performances as early as the beginning of the 20th century, if one was independent enough not to mind the objections. Ravi Sōmayājippāṭŭ, grandfather of MS's son-in-law Satīśan (Ravi), had such a great interest in *kathakaḷi* that he learnt it and took part in many performances. Later, however, when he wanted to perform the *agniṣṭoma* sacrifice, he was forced to perform a *prāyaścittaṃ*, a ritual for amending or atoning misdeeds, before he could do it. Nowadays there are many famous Nampūtiri artists in *kathakaḷi*, and there is even one Muslim *kathakaḷi* singer.

The local dance drama institute, the Kēraḷa Kalāmaṇḍalaṃ, was established in the 1930s at Cheruthuruthy, when a cultural renaissance was perceived as imperative in the wake of the national movement (cf., e.g., Nambudirippad 1993: 46-47). As the performing troupes had originally been supported and maintained by high-caste households, a *kathakaḷi* performance in Ravipuram, on IR's and DA's 60th wedding anniversary in 1985, took the art back to its roots. The previous performance had been in IR's home in 1937, although before that the family had had it every year since 1926 (IR, I, p. 190; II, p. 282). In the Golden Jubilee of the village library the Nampūtiris tended towards drama alone, an art form which, as was mentioned above, was also included in their traditonal *pānēṅkaḷi* performance.

The craftsman caste women's dance *kai-k-koṭṭi-kaḷi* much resembled that which I had seen the Nampūtiri women perform in their simulated *tiruvātira* celebration. Before starting they lighted a wick in the ritual lamp *nila-viḷakku*, and touched the flame and their forehead, thus emphasizing the ritual nature of the dance. The women accompanied their dance with their song about Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In their impeccably clean white dresses they also looked like Nampūtiri women. MS presumes that in this form the dance was an imitation of higher castes. In the 1940s MS had seen a Nāyar teaching the girls of the craftsman castes, but their performance was not, according to him, as refined as that of married Nampūtiri and Ambalavāsi

women. Another occasion when the dance used to be performed by higher castes besides the *tiruvātira* was the *ōṇaṃ*.

Nampūtiri women assembled in houses of their own caste on the *tiruvātira* night for the dance. In the 1990s it was not performed in the *ōṇaṃ* feast at all in this village. Dances in Kerala had developed into an item in competitions in youth festivals and public celebrations, even in tourist festivals in Kerala. There it had undergone a change adding to it more dance movements and background instruments. There were no caste considerations on these occasions. (MS.) Some songs composed for the dances in Kerala during the last thirty years have words meant for political propaganda, and even Christian and Muslim themes have been introduced (Venu 1990: 94). The Panjal artisan's songs had, however, purely Hindu religious themes, and were danced, as mentioned above, around a ritual lamp. In addition to these performances there were in the Golden Jubilee first many long speeches even by politicians, and a drama competition for groups that had come from other villages.

I had accidentally heard that there was another celebration near the library on the previous evening. I interviewed R's son, an educated youngster happening to visit the village at the time of the celebrations. He had observed the celebration and told me that it was the anniversary of the so called Arts and Sports Club for the area around the library that arranged it. That organization had some Nāyar members, but a majority were Ceṭṭis. The programme had consisted of light songs and jokes, as they considered, for instance, dramas to be feudal entertainment. There was a third group consisting of Muslim youngsters, who protested against this celebration as well, as they wanted to have Muslim songs included. Neither of these groups wanted to be patronized by the former landlords.

MS thinks that there was no demonstration against the higher castes or the Golden Jubilee celebration. He had actually inaugurated the Arts and Sports Club himself, and had usually been asked to speak in its celebrations. After my report on what I had heard, he said that there must have been some individuals who thought that they had not got enough attention, and who therefore had raised some trouble.

Be that as it may, these demonstrations, if they were such, were very mild compared to the strong political agitation only a few kilometres away in Vallathool Nagar, not to mention those in Alleppey and Palghat areas, the centres of labour associations. Since 1971, I have myself witnessed political agitation in the streets and highways and suffered inconvenience as a traveller because of the many strikes in the state, which tell of political awareness and defiance, and a demand for social justice.

As rituals have been seen as a means of securing the continuity of social structure, so was the more traditional celebration certainly felt to be meaningful as consolidating the cultural and political leadership of those who were in charge.

Maybe it could be called a ritual, at least it contained ritualistic performances. Perhaps the other celebration could also be called a ritual, as it was a parallel occasion. It can be seen as an effort to establish new practices, clearly meant to result in social change, something that rituals are nowadays considered to be capable of.

The ritual dances of the artisans may be said to have both a socially preserving and a socially creative element. The artisans adhering to traditional religious dances and avoiding modern political themes in their songs may be seen as a preserving element. The artisan women's dances may be imitations of those of the higher castes, and choosing to sing only devotional songs in artisan men's dances makes close co-operation possible. Imitation of and co-operation with the former landlords is a path for lower castes to gain more prestige and a higher status in their society. This is like modernization through so-called Sanskritization, where lower castes seek a higher status through adopting stricter pollution rules from their superiors.

For a long time past, then, many castes have had ritual co-operation with each participating caste having its own role and niche in a common drama. In addition they have had their separate celebrations. Nowadays, while the traditional joint celebrations are somewhat fading, the castes may bring their earlier separate efforts to joint celebrations emphasizing their own traditions and thus feeling their own importance in a more equal manner than before. As the ritual joint efforts show, the castes which were traditionally in close and permanent co-operation with the Nampūtiris sometimes try to climb the social scale through ritual co-operation with them and by imitating them. Many lower castes seem to have approved of the supremacy of the Nampūtiris until quite recently, although they gradually wish to get more prestige through them and have ritual services from them. And many Nampūtiris certainly also try to keep the lower castes under their control by having the role of cultural leaders. In this light, even the fact that all Hindus are now allowed to enter the temple is a factor which maintains the Nampūtiri ideology and religious beliefs. It is not surprising, then, that under the present circumstances, the Nampūtiris actually encourage lower castes to come to the temples and join in celebrations.

According to Śāṅkara's-rules (AP 58), the Nampūtiris should avoid religious beliefs other than those proclaimed by the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava systems. According to MS, the practice is more or less so. When the Nampūtiris, especially in northern Kerala, take part in rituals which involve non-Sanskritic characters and consumption of toddy and meat, something that Joan Mencher (1970: 344) calls 'the opposite of the Sanskritization process' seems to take place. The popular serpent worship might also be a case. However, if the Nampūtiris take an active part in these rituals, they perform a *pūja* in their own way and do not consume meat and toddy themselves, or wish otherwise to emulate the lower castes.

Local beliefs and practices have also largely been Sanskritized, and though serpent worship probably has Dravidian roots, many of the mythical snakes are

considered to be Śaiva (e.g. Vāsuki) or Vaiṣṇava (e.g. Anantan). Our Nampūtiri friends never paid much attention to Kuṭṭi-c-Cāttan, although his symbol is housed in the temple of the Taṟavāṭŭ. Joan Mencher (1970: 341) calls Kuṭṭi-c-Cāttan a non-Sanskritic god, but even in this case there have been various efforts at a Sanskritization; around Trichur, for example, he is worshipped as Viṣṇumāya, the son of Śiva and Pārvatī, brought up in the forest by a huntress (herself an enchanting female form of Viṣṇu, Viṣṇumāya) (A. Parpola 1999). In these cases, too, the process might be interpreted as the Nampūtiris being willing to get under their supervision important cultural phenomenona, and if these phenomena are non-Brahmanic, Sanskritize them in the course of time, if possible.

WESTERNIZATION AND GLOBALIZATION

To start with, the Nampūtiris tried to resist foreign influence and Westernization. I have treated the subject of Westernization in some contexts in this study before, and here I will return to the question, partly summarizing what I said already and partly adding some further points.

Traditional Indian society is widely presumed to be founded on principles of inequality, while Western society is presumed to be based on the premise of equality. The weakening and disappearance of the caste system and the opening of more equal opportunities for all groups can be considered Westernization, although one should not simplify the matter and exaggerate the difference between the two worlds (cf., e.g., Fuller 1996: 25-26).

Ramachandran (1995: 127) gives a word of warning about the future transformation of Kerala, which should, according to him, build on, consolidate, and extend the achievements of the past, and not undermine the gains of a long history of public action in order to impose a capitalist-market-driven, income-growth-alone strategy of development. He reminds us that it is public action and not policies of globalization and liberalization that was the locomotive of Kerala's progress.

To what extent, then, could one feel the influence of globalization in Panjal? I do not intend to make a profound study of the spread of capitalism and liberalization, but merely to chart the availability for the villagers of multinational/transnational products. Many ultimately Western innovations like electricity and plastic had been adopted well before our field research started, but at the same time they were mostly adapted to Indian needs and lifestyle. When AP was using a videocamera in Kerala for the first time in 1983, it aroused enormous interest everywhere. In 1985 people were quite familiar with the innovation, and those who could afford it used the services of professional Indian cameramen for recording, for instance, their weddings.

In the paddy cultivation process often locally-made hoes, iron-tipped wooden ploughs, and different levellers pulled by buffaloes or oxen, sickles and different basketwork articles and bamboo mats were common. For fertilizing the fields some paddy straw and leaves swept together in the compound were burnt in the field and mango leaves and some plants were used as well as a little dung. If they had had more money for their cultivation, many villagers would have used insecticides like DDT. In the 1990s DDT was banned, but was available on the black market. The locally-made palm-leaf rain covers and hats which were still commonly used in 1985 were mostly replaced by plastic hoods in the 1990s. Tractors were also hired for ploughing the bigger fields in the 1990s. The tools, seeds, fertilizers and insecticides were at least produced in India, if not in the village itself.

The world market price has some effect on paddy cultivation, but the effect is very small when the family only cultivates for its own use. In the case of some other products, like rubber, the world market price plays a more important role. Rubber cultivation was favoured in the early and mid-1990s, as the world market price for caoutchouc was high. But a very small percentage of the villagers had a chance to grow rubber, a few more could get a job as workers in the plots that others owned.

Most building materials, like mud, palm leaf, laterite and wood were available in the village itself or at least in Kerala. For instance, roof tiles were made in the nearby town. This goes for many household utensils like hand-cast metal objects. Plastic vessels, like buckets and pots, were Indian-made, and could be purchased in the nearest town. Furniture and kitchen utensils, old or modern, were mostly village made or at least Indian made. Modern technology was welcomed in the kitchen and even in devotional objects and idols which could get new features like electric decorations, but the ritual implements in the domestic and the grand rituals were simple and traditional. The religious objects as a genre of artefacts had not disappeared, and they were in constant use.

The women hardly ever wore Western-style clothes, but the men might. Still, the clothes were mostly made in India. The new ladies' fashions were Indian and came from North Indian urban centres, but mostly women wore their traditional loincloths and upper garments. Jewellery was generally traditional, and distinctive of area and caste, and therefore made in one's own village or elsewhere in Kerala.

The women of the family were strictly lacto-vegetarian. Rice and vegetables were often home-grown or bought from vendors or from shops. Although the diet was still very traditional, and there were no hamburger or chicken restaurants in the village, they started to appear in larger towns, like Cochin. Cornflakes became available in Shoranur. In village kiosks one could buy Indian juice and bottled drinks, but foreign bottled drinks were available in Cheruthuruthy and Shoranur. Especially

young but also some middle-aged Nampūtiri men might try non-vegetarian food in their adventures outside the village and drink some alcohol, mostly Indian beer.

Through unofficial channels it became possible to buy foreign cameras at a high price. It also became possible to buy foreign television and video sets and films, household gadgets and Duracell batteries at least in larger towns in the 1990s. Transistor radios have been popular for a long time, and televisions and videos started to appear in the 1980s. Panjal video shops at first stored mainly Malayali films, but even they have, according to MS, become more commercial in the wake of Tamil films. That does not mean the end of other forms of Indian culture at least in this village which is not under a strong influence from some urban centres, and has few tourist attractions. Traditional entertainments, like dramas and dance rituals with lots of aesthetic colour, still take place in temples and upper-caste courtyards and houses.

Availability does not mean that everybody can or wants to try a new product. Uṇṇi represents a fairly well-to-do Nampūtiri who is in almost daily contact with the world outside the village. Most villagers do not often travel to big cities or have the means to buy Western articles. Panjal has not yet been much affected by Westernization and globalization although some Western products and ideas are adopted and adapted as part of its life. At least some villagers are aware of the dangers of globalization. Uṇṇi's first reaction to my question about the matter was concern about imbalance of the economy and the danger of local handicrafts being displaced by products available in 'duty-paid shops' which were 'growing like mushrooms all over Kerala' (letter dated 10th December, 1996). Although he is also alert to new foodstuffs that might be detrimental to the health, he himself is eager to make use of Western material culture, for instance cameras, camera-repair tools, quality jackets and bags.

While women may do more things in Kerala than elsewhere in India, the Brahmanical and the Indian middle-class value system of the nationalist movement reinforced by the media continues to resist the influence of the West. Although one might learn about Western products from television, it is only through the satellite channels that one can get into more direct contact with Western ideas, and they are not available for the majority of people.

The Indian subcontinent has received repeated waves of invaders through its northwestern mountain passes over thousands of years. New influences, new races, new religions have arrived, later from all directions. With colonialism, Western influence became prevalent. India is famous for having been able to adopt, adapt and indigenize alien elements. One example is south Indian Christianity. In orders of service, art and architecture, it has, to a large extent, given in to local Hindu forms (Smidt Hansen 1986: 236-259). In the Indian crafts, for instance, hardly anything seems to disappear, but remains to coexist side by side with new features, which

again are indigenized. The totality still has a particularly Indian character. There is not much in the light of my material which would foretell change of all these principles in the future. Basic Indian thoughts and customs may remain in one form or another.

There is, however, a recent development in Kerala the impact of which was not much visible yet in Panjal village during my field-work. Kerala is considered a fertile ground for the growth of the information technology industry, its well-developed telephone network being one factor and its well-trained personnel another which facilitate this process. India's first and most advanced technology park was set up in Trivandrum and has been operational since 1994, and other software technology parks and software complexes in major cities in Kerala were to follow. In Chapter 2 an intensified literacy campaign in Kerala in 1991 was discussed. Kerala has since achieved a notable level of computer literacy in the urban centres as well, and is now planning to improve the information technology literacy of the rural population. We must not forget that Rm's wife Dēvi used to teach the use of computers in an English medium high school at her native place. Killimaṃgalaṃ Kunju Nampūtirippāṭŭ in Killimangalam village next to Panjal has e-mail access at home since 1999. Information technology may bring a considerable number of new employment opportunities, new modes of entertainment, and change the character of Kerala culture in general more than any previous innovations. It may prove to be a highway to Westernization even in the rural areas. (Keralaindustry 1999; Technopark 1999.)

CASTE, CLASS AND POLITICAL POWER

Since the 1880s, elections were held for offices at various levels in India (Kolenda 1978: 121). In IR's younger years the members of the Panchayat, the village council, were nominated by the government of Cochin, and very rarely any others than landowners were chosen. The Panchayat used to cover Attoor in addition to Panjal, Killimangalam and Painkulam. Attoor belongs to Mulloorkara Panchayat nowadays. The Panchayat decided on practical matters like the maintenance of the roads. In minor court cases as well the Panchayat could decide, in more important cases the court in Vadakkancheri was approached. IR was for some time a member of the Panchayat. For electing the members for the legislative councils for the state, tax payers, that is landowners even in this case, were the voters. (MS.) All this shows that in spite of what was earlier said about the new governmental methods of the British times the Nampūtiris retained political influence. NNA says in his memoirs that, despite British rule, all day-to-day affairs of the community went on under the administration of the Hindu ruler of Cochin, a Maharaja of the royal family of Tripunithura, assisted by his divan and other officers (NNA, pp. 2-4).

Franke defines class as the main source of wealth of the household, which includes both occupational and resource-based income. Wage earners are divided into classes by the educational levels demanded of their jobs, income, and the prestige associated with the work. He finds the following classes, from the top down: landlord, professional, service, craft, farmer, petty trade, recipient, tenant farmer, labourer, and agricultural labourer. Households can move in and out of classes, something which does not in principle take place with castes, which are closed, emic, marked ritually, and (previously) marked legally. Classes are more open and tend to blend into each other at the boundaries. Class identifying badges are more flexible, and classes do not usually confer formal legal rights, and need not be recognized by respondents. (Franke 1993: 93-94, 103.)

For more precision in his analysis, Franke considers nine aspects of class: occupation, income, wealth, personal prestige, association, socialization, power, class consciousness, and mobility (Franke 1993: 90). When they were landlords, the Nampūtiris were highly esteemed according to their occupation, and their income and wealth were high as well. Their power was the norm for the society, and they were certainly conscious of their class. As a caste they had prestige, and some individuals had personal prestige as well. As a close group their association with others was strictly regulated, and socialization taught both them and the others how to speak and act towards each other. But class mobility was probably not considerable. There were poorer Nampūtiris who also got some respect, as MS puts it, but, he continues, only some, for material matters were also important.

In 1971 there were still two landlord households in Panjal, both of them Nampūtiris. There are no traditional landlords any more, so that the Nampūtiris have moved down in the class scale, but then no other caste has taken their place. A large proportion of the professionals are of the Nampūtiri caste, but also of the Nāyar, Īḻavan, and Maṇṇān castes, while none of them are of the craft or Pulayan castes or Muslims. Caste inequality still remains particularly in higher level education. Although, as K. C. Alexander (1968) has shown, even people from a low stratum in Kerala may achieve higher status by assimilating the values of the higher castes (see Chapter 4), Franke concludes that caste membership constrains occupational class mobility. (Franke 1993: 243-246.) Although the *janmi* type of landlordism ceased to exist, E. M. S. Namboodiripad talked about landlordism of another type in contemporary India. The modern landlords are those who get their lands cultivated through wage labour and those who live on usury and are the dominant section in rural trade. (Ramachandran 1995: 92.)

As the majority of land does not belong to the Nampūtiris any more, the new dominant caste in this respect is the Nāyars. As will be remembered, by 1987 the land reforms had reduced the ownership of Nampūtiri rice land to 18% in Panjal. The Nāyar/Vāriyār ownership of riceland had increased to 53%. If house com-

pound land is counted as well, the Nampūtiris owned 25% of the land. Compared with their numbers, then, the Nampūtiris still retained an enormous advantage over other castes, while the Nāyars had slightly less than their number presupposed. (Franke 1993: 136-137.) The ratio of the total income of the Nampūtiris was also 1.6 to average, while that of the Nayars was only 1.0. (Franke 1993: 116-117.)

Only a few households sent members to earn money in Middle East Gulf countries, and thus the structure of ownership was not dramatically influenced by this single factor which changed many other villages. Taxation was not an issue that one heard complaints about in Panjal. For instance, our host family only paid land tax and house tax, altogether around 100 INR per year. According to MS, only those whose annual income exceeded INR 60,000 had to pay income tax. As MS puts it:

> Luckily we are not rich and so no income tax (letter dated 12th December, 1997).

Since 1952, all adults became eligible to vote in the nationwide election (Kolenda 1978: 121). Since 1957 the modern elected Panchayat or village council started to take over some of the powers of the landlords, and in the case of larger offences the police were often called in (Mencher 1966a: 156). Béteille (1965: 8) described two kinds of changes in the distribution of power in a Tanjore village, Tamil Nadu State. On the one hand power had shifted from one set of dominant castes (Brahmins) to another (non-Brahmins). On the other hand, power shifted from the caste structure into a more differentiated structure, such as political parties.

There is franchise for members of all castes who are 18 years or over. Political parties, both radical and conservative, shared the power, and the Congress Party was in the majority recently. In the Panchayat there must be a minimum number of women and members of the scheduled castes. The District Administration Act of 1979 provided for two nominated women on the district council, and by 1991 a 30% quota for women in local bodies became a part of the national agenda through two constitutional amendment bills introduced in the Parliament (Mathew 1995: 206-207). There are nine wards in the Panchayat, and the ward which Muṭṭattukkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Mana belongs to is reserved for women. Recently, their representative was a leftist. (MS.)

There have been four elections to the Panchayat since Independence, and only one Nampūtiri, M. Śivakaran Nampūtiri from Attoor, has been elected. He was a leftist and functioned as the President of the Panchayat. Two other Nampūtiris have stood as candidates without being elected, one leftist and the other an adherent of the Congress Party. The latter, however, was elected to the Board of Directors of the co-operative bank, the office of which is in Killimangalam. Panjal is affiliated to the bank, and a member is therefore elected to the Board of Directors from there.

Before him, M. Nārāyaṇan Nampūtiri, Uṇṇi's Marxist uncle, had been elected, and both of these Nampūtiris were also Presidents of the Board of Directors. (MS.)

Alongside and closely intertwined with landlordism and its demonstrations of power, consciousness about pollution and caste hierarchy have played a major part in intercaste relations in Panjal village and more generally in Kerala, and still do to some extent. Although some special rules for non-Brahmins are barely followed any more, the Nampūtiris have retained a great deal of their traditional high socio-religious status until recent times. Observance of many indirect, touching and distance pollution rules are examples in evidence of this.

As Mencher (1977: 319) says, central Kerala remained extremely traditional in many ways and maintained feudal ties until quite recently. Families of Śūdra Nāyars and artisans who were hereditarily serving certain Nampūtiri families still continued to do so at least quite recently, though it is true that the Nampūtiris started paying the workers wages or giving money for services which were billed. The members of the Nāyar or artisan families behaved very politely and meekly in front of elderly Nampūtiris at least as late as the 1990s. M is still a personification of honesty and loyalty towards her former landlord family. She accepts their authority and always behaves very respectfully towards all the family members, including the young.

In the chapter on radical reforms in Kerala, achievements of the pan-Kerala caste organizations were mentioned. However, Mencher points out that a great deal of their field of activity was outside villages, in small towns and cities, schools and factories. According to Mencher, the localization of authority in the hands of individuals or individual families used to be striking in Kerala. As was mentioned earlier, the authority ran from individual landlords or houses to individual tenants or labourers, or groups of families, who were even identified by the name of the house which they served. The fact that the house, not the village, was the real settlement and political unit in traditional Kerala must have been a very important factor in keeping provocation outside villages, because it created strong personal ties between the landlords and their subordinates. The pan-Kerala organizations did not yet provide a strong operational group vis-a-vis other groups in the village or its surroundings. (Mencher 1966a: 142-143, 158.)

Culturally and politically, Panjal could still be called a Nampūtiri village in the 1980s. The land reforms started to have serious effects on Panjal relatively late. It is a new phenomenon in this village, too, that socio-political matters become an open, if still cautiously expressed issue. Development in Panjal has been even and slow, and casualties relatively undramatic. In central Kerala, at least earlier, land legislation has been the main focus of attention of most of the political parties, not labour organizing. The ambivalence of many Marxist leaders, many of them landowners dependent on agricultural labourers, has probably also contributed to the slowness

in organizing the latter. (Mencher 1977: 320-321.) Despite the reforms individual Brahmin families are even today well off compared to the lowest castes.

As is shown by the separate celebrations of other groups, especially the Ceṭṭis, those castes which traditionally did not have strong ties with particular Nampūtiri families called into question the excellence of their culture, and sometimes opposed it, calling it feudal. They emphasized individuality and new styles, demonstrating differences of culture, but these protests were very mild and sporadic. These groups can be seen as those which try to debilitate the position of the Nampūtiris in the village, together with non-Brahmin persons who have had education and experience in the outside world. Still, as has been seen in previous chapters, there have from the beginning also been Nampūtiri individuals among the reformers. The poor and landless have not automatically been Communists and the landowners Congress Party supporters. But what about Hindu fundamentalism? Is that not good support for the Brahmins?

When we were sitting on our host family's verandah in December 1992, almost a month after the tearing down of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, the talk often turned to that dramatic event and the tragic riots following it. Most of our Nampūtiri friends showed no or little sympathy towards the violent Hindu fundamentalists, and condemned the massacre of Muslims. One visitor, a Vāriyār lady, however, was full of enthusiasm towards the communalists. She had been taken by them on a tour all the way to Ayodhya, and the delight that such a glorius tour gave her turned her into a fervent supporter of the cause.

In the 1996 election the Congress-led United Democratic Front government was replaced by the Left Democratic Front in Kerala in keeping with its tradition of alternating between the two (M. G. Radhakrishnan 1996: 54). But even in Kerala the all-India election winner, the far-right Bharatiya Janata Party (Yadav 1996: 23), in spite of its poor success in Kerala elections, succeeded in influencing the atmosphere. Those Nampūtiris who were more receptive to its Hindutva trends could not resist its ideal of a theocratic Hindu state with Brahmins in a leading position. The nationalists gained understanding among some Nampūtiris, because they criticized the policy of having quotas for seats in universities and government jobs for lower castes.

What about the status of the professional skills of the Brahmins? As we could see ourselves, studies of the Ṛgveda were still going on in the Vaṭakkē Maṭhaṃ in Trichur in 1996, and there was a plan to start teaching the Sāmaveda and Yajurveda as well. Besides, there is still a Yajurveda school in Iriññālakuṭa. Some of the Panjal youngsters expressed their wish to learn Vedic tradition in the 1980s. A couple of boys from Tōṭṭattu Mana were studying in a Veda school in Kalady where their father was teaching. From time to time a few boys or young men also got some Veda teaching in Panjal village itself alongside their modern education. In the 1990s

two young men, one from Tōṭṭattu Mana and another from Koraṭṭikkara Mana, both of whom had studied the Sāmaveda in their childhood, continued their studies. In the mornings they practiced *sandhyāvandana* for one hour, and in the evenings they went to Nellikkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇu Mana to practice singing *sāmans*. Later in the 1990s however, the continuation and effective revival of Vedic education failed in Panjal.

In 1997 the Sanskrit University in Kalady started sponsoring the visual recording of the Sāmaveda in Killimangalam, where a documentation centre was established under the leadership of Killimangalam Vāsudēvan Nampūtiri. But there are only very few Nampūtiri Sāmavedins in Kerala who are well versed in *śrauta* and *gṛhya* rituals, and none of them are young any more. At the same time as the traditional professional skill of the Brahmins becomes rarer and thinner, Hinduism becomes more important in politics.

But is it Brahmin power which grows with the new strength of communalism and nationalism? Earlier, when our participation in some rituals or entrance to holy places was discussed, it was the deities, other Nampūtiris, and especially Nampūtiri ancestors whose attitude was to be considered. In 1996 I wanted to enter the yard of the little temple in the southern part of the valley as I had done many times before. Rv stopped me, and in answer to my amazement he said that he feared that the Nāyars would object to a non-Hindu doing that. In the 1980s, we had been allowed to participate in a *tī-y-āṭṭaṃ* ceremony in the big hall inside the Ayyappan temple. Representatives of the seven *manas*, in whose ownership the temples are, held a meeting and decided that it was not wise to let AP sponsor and document a similar ritual in the same place in 1996. The reason was again consideration of the possible opposition by the Nāyars, especially those living on the western side of the village close to the Ayyappan temple.

Earlier, when I walked along the footpaths with my Nampūtiri friends, the lower castes gave way in a quiet and polite manner. In the 1990s young people had become bolder and noisier. When Rv and I had to cross a small bridge on our way to a Nampūtiri house on the western side of the village in 1996, some young Nāyar men were lying across it, and did not move, so that we had to step over their legs when passing. This reminds me of a landowner complaining some forty years ago to a journalist about a tenant who had not yielded the way to him as he still recently had (Jeffrey 1992: 1). Here again Panjal remained old-fashioned much longer.

When Hinduism is politicized, it is not the Brahmins but politicians who actually gain power, no matter how strongly theocracy and Brahmin leadership are emphasized in the expressed ideology. Earlier, even up to the 1980s, Panjal was definitely a Nampūtiri village. Now I am hesitant to call it that any more.