

Y I N D U W E N H U A G A I L U N

毛世昌 ○ 著

A SURVEY OF INDIAN CULTURE

印度文化概论

(下)



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Chapter 5

Marriage, Dowry and Widowhood

5.1 Marriage

To a Hindu marriage is the most important and most engrossing event of his life; it is a subject of endless conversation and of the most prolonged preparations. An unmarried man is looked upon as having no social status and as being an almost useless member of society. He is not consulted on any important subject, and no work of any consequence may be given to him. A Hindu who becomes a widower finds himself in almost the same position as a bachelor, and speedily remarries.

Though marriage is considered the natural state for the generality of men, those who from pious motives remain unmarried are looked up to and treated with the utmost respect. But it is only those persons who have renounced the world, and have chosen to lead a life of contemplation, who can take vows of celibacy. In any other case marriage is the rule, and every one is under the obligation of discharging the great debt to his ancestors, namely, that of begetting a son¹. No doubt it will be asked whether the Hindu devotees who take vows of celibacy do really remain as chaste as they are supposed to be. In fact, most do. These sannyasis² or penitents are able to exercise such self-control, however difficult it may be to subdue one's passions in a country where the warm climate and the corrupt state of morality continually serve to arouse them. These men, either from ostentation or from fanaticism, subject their bodies to the cruelest ordeals. Through the harsh, self-inflicted *tapasas*³, or penances, they do prove, as far as one can see, their wish and intention to subdue their sinful lusts.

But this privilege which men possess of remaining single, and giving themselves up to a life of contemplation, is not shared by women. They at all events cannot, under any circumstances, take vows of celibacy. Subjected on all sides to the moral ascendancy of man, the very idea that they could possibly place themselves in a state of independence and out of men's power is not allowed to cross their minds. The opinion is firmly established throughout the whole of India, that women were only



created for the propagation of the species, and to satisfy men's desires. All women therefore are obliged to marry, and marriages are carefully arranged before they arrive at a marriageable age. Polygamy is tolerated amongst persons of high rank, such as rajahs⁴, princes, statesmen, and others. Kings are allowed five legitimate wives, but never more. None the less this plurality of wives amongst the great is looked upon as an infraction of law and custom, in fact, as an abuse. But in every country in the world those in power have always been able to twist the law in their own favor, however definitely it may be laid down. The principal Hindu gods had only one wife. Brahma had only Sarasvati; Vishnu, Lakshmi; and Siva, Parvati. It is quite true that under their different forms these venerable personages committed frequent breaches of their marriage vow; but this only serves to prove that from the earliest times marriage was looked upon by the Hindus as a legal union between two persons of opposite sexes.

One hardly ever meets with a woman who is not or has not been married. Blind, dumb, deaf, or lame, all find husbands amongst poor Brahmins, whose low fortunes do not allow them to aspire to an alliance with any more attractive spouse.

It may, it is true, be retorted that amongst Brahmins a widow cannot remarry, whereas a widower may at once take to himself another wife. The consequence is, it may be urged, that the women of this caste must be more numerous than the men. But the age at which the two sexes marry compensates for this difference. Girls are married when seven or even five years old, whilst boys wait till they are sixteen, twenty, or even older.

The indissolubility of the marriage tie is also an essential principle which is not less firmly established amongst the Hindus than that which limits this important act to the legal union of one man with one woman. A Hindu can only put away his legitimate wife for one cause, and that is adultery. If this rule is violated, it is only among the most degraded of the lower castes. A marriage can also be annulled if it has been contracted in violation of the prohibitory degrees which are laid down by custom, and which of themselves are sufficient to nullify the union.

A divorce is not permitted on account of incompatibility of temper, nor is a man allowed to put away his wife simply in order to marry another woman. Hindus put too serious a value on this solemn contract to allow it to be thus degraded to a state which would be nothing more or less than concubinage. A Hindu, and especially a Brahmin, would hardly be inclined to repudiate his wife even for adultery, unless her guilt is very notorious. As a general rule, when the wife of a Brahmin gives occasion, by injudicious behavior, for remarks of a kind damaging to her character, her friends and relatives do their utmost to excuse her conduct and to hush up all scandal about her, so as to avoid the necessity of such an extreme measure as a divorce, the disgrace



of which reflect on the whole caste.

A young Brahmin should, ordinarily speaking, be married when he is about sixteen years of age, but the ceremony is often postponed till he is older than this. The wife chosen for him is generally five, seven, or at the utmost nine years old.

This custom of marrying girls in their early childhood, and as soon as possible, though common to all castes, is most strictly observed by the Brahmins. Once a girl has passed the marriageable age, it is very difficult for her to find a husband. In this caste there is often an enormous difference in age between the husband and the wife. It is no uncommon thing to see an old man of sixty or more, having lost his first wife, marry for the second time a little child five or six years old, and even prefer her to girls of mature age. What is the result of this? The husband generally dies long before his wife, and often even before she has attained the age which would allow him to exercise his rights as a husband. So the poor girl becomes a widow before she has even become a wife, and as by the custom of her caste she may not marry again, she is oftentimes tempted to lead a dissolute life, thereby reflecting discredit on the whole caste. Everybody recognizes these abuses but the idea of remedying them by allowing a young widow to break through the stern rule of custom and marry again would never even enter the head of a Hindu, more especially of a Brahmin. It is true that the strange preference which Brahmins have for children of very tender years would make such a permission almost nominal in the case of their widows. The expenses of a wedding are so considerable that in all castes one often sees young men, who are without the necessary means, using the same expedient to procure a wife. Just like the holy patriarch a Hindu without means will enter the service of one of his relations, or of some other person of the same caste who has daughters to marry, and will engage himself to serve for a certain number of years without wage, on condition that, at the end of that time, he is to receive one of the daughters in marriage. When the time agreed upon has expired the father fulfils his promise, undertakes the whole expense of the marriage, and then allows the young couple to go away and live where they please. At their departure he gives them a cow, a pair of oxen, two copper vessels (one for drinking, the other for their food), and enough rice to feed them for the first year of their married life. It is very remarkable that in India the term which a man has to serve for his wife seven years.

The inclinations of the persons about to be married are never consulted. In fact, it would be ridiculous to do so amongst the Brahmins, seeing the age at which they marry their daughters. But even the Sudras, who often do not marry their daughters until they have attained full age, would never dream of consulting the tastes and feelings of their children under these circumstances. The choice is left entirely to the parents. That



which chiefly concerns the young man's family is the purity of the caste of his future wife. Beauty and personal attractions of any kind count for nothing in their eyes. The girl's parents look more particularly to the fortune of their future son-in-law, and to the character of his mother, who after the marriage becomes the absolute mistress of the young wife.

The same months are chosen for a wedding as are selected for the ceremony of the upanayana, that is to say, the months of March, April, May and, June, and especially the two last.

However, it is possible in a case of urgency for a marriage to take place in November or February. But in both these months there are so many precautions to be observed, so many calculations to be made according to the signs of the Zodiac, the phase of the moon, and other ridiculous follies, that it is far from easy to find a day on which all the auspices are propitious. There are four different ways of arranging the preliminaries of a marriage. The first, the most honored and respected of all, is for the father of the bride not only to refuse to receive the sum of money to which he is entitled from the young man's parents, but undertake to bear all the expenses of the ceremony, to purchase all the jewels and other ornaments which it is customary to give a girl on this occasion, and also to make handsome presents to the son-in-law and his parents. But this can only be done by the rich and people of high position.



The second way is for the parents of both the contracting parties to agree to share all the expenses. The third method is that usually adopted by people of all castes who are not rich. The parents of the girl insist not only on the youth's parents bearing all the expenses of the wedding and of the jewels, but they also exact payment of a sum of money in return for their daughter, the amount of which is laid down by caste custom. The fourth method, to which none but the very poorest have recourse, is very mortifying to the girl's parents, for they go themselves and hand her over to the tender mercies of the young man's parents, leaving it to them to do what they will with her, to marry her when and how they like, to spend as little or as much as they choose on the wedding, and begging them at the same time to pay them something for their daughter.

As soon as the parents have discovered a suitable girl, and have ascertained if the family is likely to assent, they choose a day when all the auguries are favorable, and go to formally ask for her. They provide themselves with a new cloth, such as is worn by women, a cocoanut, five bananas, some vermilion, and some powdered sandalwood. While on the way, they pay great attention to any omens that they may notice. If they consider them to be unfavorable they retrace their steps, and postpone the business till another day. Thus, for instance, if a snake crosses their path, or a cat, or a jackal, or if

they should happen to see anything that is regarded as an evil omen, they decide that the best thing to do is to return to their home.

If nothing of this sort has disturbed them on the way, they present themselves at the house of the girl's parents and make known the object of their visit. The latter, before giving any answer, look steadfastly towards the south, and wait till one of those little lizards which one sees running about the walls of a house has uttered a certain sharp cry, such as these reptiles often make. Then when the Lizard of the South has spoken, the parents of the girl give their consent to the marriage, and accept the present which has been brought by the other parties.

In the evening of the same day, about dusk, they call together a few relatives and friends, and summon a *purohita*⁵ in order to consult him about the marriage. Whilst the men seated on mats or carpets, are talking together, the women purify a part of the house; that is to say, they rub the floor well with cow-dung mixed with water, and then draw lines of red and white upon it. As soon as they have finished, they bring in the god Vigneshwara⁶, to whom they do *puja*⁷, and for *neivedhya*⁸ they offer peas, sugar, a cocoanut, and a sweet beverage called *paramanna*⁹. All present worship this god, and pray him to remove any obstacle which might interfere with the projected marriage. If during this ceremony *the Lizard of the South* again utters his cry, they think it a favorable omen.

After this ceremony, the *purohita* fixes on a lucky day on which to begin to celebrate the marriage. The parents of the girl then definitely give their permission, and in token of their promise they offer betel to all those who are present. These preliminaries ended, they begin to think of making preparations for the wedding. Gold and silver ornaments are ordered for the couple, and form the subject of endless discussion. The wedding garments are also got ready, a large number of cloths, such as are worn by both men and women, are bought to be given away as presents to relations and friends, a large store is laid in of rice, wheat flour, liquefied butter, oil of sesame, peas of all kinds, dried and fresh vegetables, fruits, groceries, pickles, and in fact every sort of edible that a Brahmin is permitted to use. They also provide saffron, or turmeric, vermilion, antimony, sandalwood powder, incense, quantities of flowers, *akshatas*, or colored rice, betel, areca-nut, and so on, also a great quantity of small silver and copper coins. Further, they buy new baskets, and above all, plenty of new earthen vessels of all shapes and kinds; for these vessels may never be used a second time, and are immediately broken after being once used, no matter to what purpose they have been put.

When everything is ready, they begin to put up a *pandal*¹⁰ or canopy. The god Vigneshwara is carried into it, and to him they do *puja*, entreating him to ward off any



hindrance or misfortune which might happen during the celebration of the marriage.

The purohita who presides at the ceremony must be one of the first to take up his place under the *pandal*; he must be provided with some *darbha*¹¹ grass, small pieces of wood from the seven sacred trees, and a few other indispensable objects for the sacrifices he is about to offer up.

In the first place, due honor is paid to the household gods. To this end all the Brahmins present, both men and women, anoint their heads with oil of sesame, and then bathe. The women, after preparing the various dishes for the feast, take a portion from each, which they place on a metal dish, and proceed, singing songs and accompanied by all the guests to offer it as *neivedya* to these gods, having first, of course, done *puja* to them. They even go so far as to place to the right of them pickles, to give a relish to their rice, while on their left they place a cup full of the sweet drink called *paramanna*, with which to quench their thirst. The master of the house then performs the *sam-kalpa*¹² and offers sandalwood, *akshatas*¹³, flowers, and lustral water to his guests, who ought, when receiving all this, to think of the household gods, in whose honor the feast immediately following is spread. Betel is distributed at the termination of the repast, after which the guests disperse.

The second day, nine Brahmins specially chosen for the purpose perform the sacrifice of *homam*¹⁴ and another to fire, in honor of the nine planets, as at the ceremony of the *upanayana*. Two women take the consecrated fire and carry it, singing the while, to the centre of the *pandal*, placing it on the raised dais of earth. Each of the women then receives a present of a new cloth, and a little bodice called *ravikai*¹⁵. All present then walk round the brazier of hot coal reciting *mantrams*¹⁶, scattering *darbha* grass and bowing to the ground. Presents are given to the nine Brahmins who have sacrificed to the planets, and, as usual, the meeting ends with a feast.

The third day the father of the bridegroom, having made his ablutions, takes some *akshatas* in a cup, and goes out early to call together relatives and friends. As soon as all are assembled under the *pandal*, a pure cloth or carpet is spread on the raised earthen dais, and the future husband and wife are seated there on facing the east. The married women then approach them and rub their heads with oil, singing the while, and then proceed with the important ceremony known as *nalangu*¹⁷, which consists in smearing the naked parts of their bodies with powdered saffron, and immediately after pouring a great quantity of warm water over their heads. The women never cease singing the whole time, and are accompanied by musical instruments. After the *nalangu* is over the women array the young couple in new clothes, as has already been described in the chapter on the *upanayana*. The evening of the same day, at the moment when the lamps are being lighted, the guests return to assist at the following



ceremony: the married women, singing all the time, take a wooden cylinder which they cover with lime and then paint with red longitudinal stripes. On this they tie small twigs of the mango-tree. They next sprinkle a great quantity of powdered saffron over the cylinder, which they immediately afterwards dip into a new earthen vessel. This they carry with much solemnity, singing the while, to the centre of the *pandal*, where they offer it a sacrifice of incense, and offer some betel for *neiveddya*. Every person present makes a profound obeisance to the vessel. No other saffron but what is thus consecrated is used during the whole ceremony.

All these proceedings are merely preparatory to the marriage ceremony itself, which lasts for five days. On this day the most important and solemn ceremonies take place. The head of the family goes out.

The first day is called *muhurta*¹⁸, that is to say, the great day, or the happy and auspicious day. It is early to invite his guests, while the women busy themselves with purifying the house and the *pandal*, which they decorate all round with wreaths of mango leaves. The guests having arrived stand in a row, and first adorn their foreheads with *akshatas* and sandalwood. They next anoint their heads with the oil of sesame which is provided for them, and then they go and perform their ablutions. On their return the *purohita* performs the *sam-kalpa* and invokes all their gods, beginning with Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra¹⁹, Devendra²⁰, and then the twelve Adityas²¹, the eight Vasus²², the nine Brahmas, the eleven Rudras²³, the Gandharvas²⁴, the Siddhas²⁵, the Saddhyas²⁶, the Naradas²⁷, the seven great Penitents, the nine planets; in fact, every deity whose name occurs to his memory. With low obeisance he invites them all to come to the marriage-feast, makes many flattering speeches to them, and begs them to remain under the *pandal*, and to preside over the ceremony during the five days that it lasts.

Then comes the invocation of ancestors. The couple about to be married is seated on the earthen dais in the centre of the *pandal*, having on each side of them their fathers and mothers, all with their faces turned towards the east. The father of the bride rises, places the *pavitram*²⁸ amulet on the ring-finger of his right hand, performs the *sam-kalpa*, and puts a certain quantity of rice in a metal dish, and on this rice a cocoanut dyed yellow, three areca-nuts in their shells, and five others without their shells.

Then, taking one of the nuts in one hand and the metal dish in the other, he repeats three times in a loud voice the names of his father, his grandfather, and his great grandfather. Each time he pronounces their names he taps the copper dish three times with the areca-nut, and at last, again invoking them by name. He says: "Oh, my ancestors, you who dwell in the *pitraloka*²⁹ (or paradise of ancestors), deign to come to this *pandal*, bringing with you all the other ancestors who preceded you. Be present, I



beseech you, during the five days of this marriage-feast, preside at the festivity, and grant to it a happy termination! ” He then gives the rice, the cocoanut, and the areca-nut which were on the dish to the *purohita*.

This done, the married women bring some fire on a new earthen chafing-dish, and, singing, place it in the centre of the *pandal*. The *purohita* then consecrates it by scattering all round it some *darbha* grass. To the north of it lie places some small pieces of the sacred fig-tree, by the side of which are placed three small earthen vessels and one of copper. The first contains milk, the second liquefied butter, the third curds, and the fourth a certain quantity of cooked and uncooked rice mixed together. To the south of the brazier are spread nine portions of rice on a large banana leaf. These are tactfully arranged in squares, each portion being destined for one of the nine planets. *Puja* is done to each of these nine planets individually, and offerings of bananas and betel are made to them as *neiveddya*, after which they receive the same invitation as the gods and the ancestors.

The *purohita* places on the east side of the brazier another banana leaf, on which he spreads *darbha* grass and *akshatas*. This is an offering to Brahma, to whom is presented a *neiveddya* of raw sugar and betel. Then follows the invocation of the *ashtadik-palakas*³⁰, or the eight divine guardians of the eight corners of the world; and *puja* is offered them on the same banana leaf. Then comes the inauguration of the *ishta-devata*³¹ or tutelary deity, and the deification of the five little pots in the manner that has already been described for the *upanayana*.

These ceremonies ended, the father of the girl performs the *homam* in honor of Brahma, Vishnu, and Rudra, of the eight gods who guard the eight compass-points of the world, of the eight Vasus, and of Indra, taking care to mention all these gods by name, and also to repeat mantrams suitable to the occasion. He again does *homam* to the nine planets, makes a sacrifice to fire, and offers the latter some liquefied butter as *neiveddya*.

A new earthen chafing-dish is then brought, to which they fasten a piece of saffron thread, and on it is placed the consecrated fire. Women carry this fire away to a place apart, singing, of course, the while. Great care is taken not to let the fire go out till the end of the festivity. It would be considered a terribly bad omen if, through negligence or any other cause, it should be extinguished.

Now comes the *muhurta*, that is to say, the most essential ceremony of the marriage. To begin with, a sacrifice is offered to Vigneshwara. The bride and bridegroom are seated on the earthen dais, their faces towards the east, and the married women proceed, singing the while, with the young people's toilette, which is of the most, elegant and sumptuous description. When attired the bridegroom rises,



performs the *sam-kalpa*, prays to the gods to pardon all the sins he has committed since he received the triple cord; and, to be the surer of this pardon, he recites a *mantram*.

He then dresses himself up as a pilgrim, and makes all preparations as if he were really going to take a long journey, announcing that he is going to start on a holy pilgrimage to Kasi³², that is Benares. He leaves the house accompanied by the married women singing in chorus, and by his parents and friends, and preceded by instruments of music. After passing the outskirts of the village he turns his steps to the east.

But here his future father-in-law meets him, and asks him where he is going, and on learning the object of his journey, begs him to give it up. He tells him that he has a young virgin daughter, and that if he wishes it he will give her to him in wedlock. The pilgrim accepts the proposal with joy, and returns with his escort to the place whence he set out. On his return the women perform the ceremony of the *aratti*³³.

The bride and bridegroom having again taken their places on the dais, and the *sam-kalpa* having been performed, they then begin the important ceremony called *kankana*³⁴. For this purpose they obtain two pieces of saffron or turmeric, around which they tie a double thread. They place on a metal dish two handfuls of rice, and on this rice a cocoanut painted yellow, and on the cocoanut the two pieces of saffron. Prayers are offered to all the gods collectively, who are implored to come and place themselves on this *kankana*, and to remain there till the five days of the marriage ceremony have been accomplished. The bridegroom then takes one of the pieces of saffron and ties it on his wife's left wrist, who in her turn ties the other piece on his right wrist. The rice and cocoanut on which the *kankana* has been lying are then given to the *purohita*.

Then follows the procession of the tutelary deity. The mother of the bride, accompanied by the other women and the Brahmins who are present, go and fetch the copper vase which represents the *ishta-devata*. The women begin to sing and the musicians to play, and forming a procession they march to the end of the street, where, after choosing a clean spot, they pour out some of the water contained in the vase. They do *puja* to the deity while it rests on the ground, and then it is taken back with the same pomp to the place whence it came. Then follows the most important ceremony of all, which is called *kania-dana*³⁵, or the gift of the virgin. This is what takes place. The bridegroom being seated facing the east, his father-in-law performs the *sam-kalpa*, places himself in front of him, and looks at him fixedly for some time without speaking. He is supposed to imagine that he sees in his son-in-law the great Vishnu; and with this in his mind, he offers him a sacrifice of akshatas, sandalwood, and flowers. A new copper vessel is then brought. In this the young man places his feet, which his father-in-



law washes first with water, then with milk, and then again for the third time with water, while reciting suitable mantrams.

He performs the great *sam-kalpa*, which consists in adding to the ordinary *sam-kalpa* the names and attributes of the *Bharata Varsha*³⁶, the *Salivahana*³⁷, the seven islands, the seven seas, the seven puras³⁸ or cities, the seven Penitents, the seven mountains, the sacred places (*punyasthalas*³⁹), and the holy cities (*punya puras*⁴⁰).

He next thinks of his father, his grandfather, and great grandfather. Pronouncing their names aloud, he prays that these and the twenty-one other ancestors, who have preceded them, may attain moksha⁴¹ (or paradise). Then, holding betel in one hand and taking his daughter's hand in the other, he says a prayer to Vishnu, begging him to look with a gracious eye on this gift that he is making of his virgin daughter. He then places her hand in that of her future husband, pours a little water over it, and gives him some betel, the usual token of a gift.

The *gift of the virgin* is followed by three other gifts, namely, the *go-dance*⁴², *bhu-dana*⁴³, and *salagrama-dana*⁴⁴, which mean the gift of cows, the gift of land, and the gift of *salagramas* or small stones, to which they attach a superstitious value, and which will be spoken of later on.

Then follows the ceremony called *mangalashtha*⁴⁵. The bride and bridegroom are seated facing each other, and a sheet of silk is suspended in front of them. This is held by twelve Brahmins, and hides them from the other guests, who successively invoke in a loud voice Vishnu and his wife Lakshmi, Brahma and Sarasvati, Siva and Parvati, the Sun and his wife Chhaya⁴⁶, the Moon and his wife Rohini⁴⁷, Indra and Sachi⁴⁸, Vasishtha and Arundhati⁴⁹, Rama and Sita⁵⁰, Krishna and Rukmini⁵¹, and several other pairs of gods and goddesses.

As soon as the *mangalashtha* is finished, they fasten on the *tali*⁵², that is, the little gold ornament which all married women wear round their necks; the *tali* is strung on a little cord which is dyed yellow with saffron water, and composed of 108 very fine threads closely twisted together. Other little ornaments of gold are also added, round which are fastened flowers and fine black seeds. Two handfuls of rice are placed in a metal pot, on the rice is laid a cocoanut dyed yellow, and on the top of the cocoanut the *tali*, to which they offer a sacrifice of sweet perfumes. The *tali* is then taken round to all the guests, both men and women, who touch it and bless it.

Four large metal lamps, each with four wicks are brought in and placed on a stand, which must also be of the same metal. Above are set other lamps fashioned out of a paste composed of ground rice, and these are filled with oil. They are lighted, and four women take them in their hands. At the same time all round the pandal a great number of other lamps are lighted. Then ensues a tremendous din. The women sing,



the musicians play, bells are rung, cymbals are clashed, and anything and everything within reach from which sound can be extracted is seized on, each one striving to outdo the other in creating noise.

In the midst of this hubbub the husband advances towards his young wife, who is seated facing the east, and while reciting mantrams he fastens the *tali* round her neck, securing it with three knots.

The husband and wife, sitting side by side, then offer each other betel. Two married women approach them, give them their blessing, and place akshatas, which have been consecrated by mantrams, on their heads, and finally perform the ceremony of aratti.

Fire is then brought on a new earthen brazier, and the purohita consecrates it with mantrams, surrounds it with darbha grass, and does homam to it. The fire is surrounded by lighted lamps, and near it is placed a small stone called the sandalwood stone, no doubt because it has been smeared with sandalwood oil. Then the husband, holding his wife's hand, walks three times round the sacred fire, and each time he makes the circuit he takes his wife's right foot in his right hand, and makes her touch the sandalwood-stone with it, touching the stone with his own foot at the same time. Whilst performing this action the thoughts of both husband and wife should be directed to the great mountain of the north called Sapta-kula parvata⁵³ or the mountain of the seven castes, the original home of their ancestors, the mountain being represented by this sandalwood stone.

These are the various ceremonies which compose the muhurta. As soon as they are finished, two bamboos are planted in the centre of the pandal side by side, and at the foot of each of them is placed a bamboo basket. The bride and bridegroom then stand up, each in a basket, and two other baskets full of rice are brought. They take handfuls of this rice and shower it over each other in turn. This they continue to do many times, until they are tired, or are told to stop.

In some castes the guests perform this ceremony, which is called *sesha*⁵⁴, for the newly married pair. Princes and very rich people have been known to use for the *sesha*, instead of rice, pearls and precious stones mixed together. After the *sesha* the couple returns to their usual seat. Akshatas consecrated by mantrams are then distributed to the guests. The husband throws over his right shoulder a piece of new and clean cloth, one end of which he unfolds before the assembled Brahmins, from whom he receives a blessing, while they also recite a mantram and place a portion of the akshatas they have just received on the cloth. He takes these in his hand and puts one portion on his own head, and the rest on his wife's head, after which the women again perform aratti to the newly married couple.



It is easy to see the allegorical meaning of most of the ceremonies which have just been described, and which are the most solemn and important of the whole proceedings. The *karia-dana*, for instance, typifies the handing over of the girl by the father to the son-in-law and the renunciation of parental authority over her. The son-in-law for his part fastens the tali round his wife's neck to show that he accepts the gifts, and that from henceforth she is his property. The sacrifice of the *homam* and the thrice-repeated circuit of the newly married couple round the fire are a mutual ratification of the contract they have just made with one another, for there is no more solemn engagement than that entered into in the presence of fire, which Hindus look upon as the purest of their gods, and which for this reason they always prefer to any other when they wish to make an oath specially binding. The ceremony of the *mangalashtha* is to call down divine blessings on the newly married couple. That of the *sesha* is the outward expression of the wish that they may enjoy an abundance of this world's goods, or that their union may be fruitful, or perhaps both.

When all these ceremonies are ended sandalwood powder, *akshatas*, and betel are given, to all the Brahmins present, both men and women. All must then go and perform their ablutions and return for the feast, which on this day must be especially magnificent.

Before sitting down to eat, they never fail to carry with due solemnity to the household gods their share of the food which has been prepared. All the guests being seated in a row upon the ground, the men quite apart from the women, so that the latter are out of sight, a large banana leaf is placed before each person, and a helping of boiled rice is placed on it, and on one side two other leaves, folded in the form of cups, one containing melted butter and the other a strongly spiced sauce. The second course consists of dried peas, green vegetables, and roots of various kinds. The third course consists of fritters, puddings boiled in water, others fried in butter, others sweetened and spiced, curdled milk, and salt pickles. Bananas, jack and other fruits make up the fourth course. Then follows the *kalavanta*⁵⁵, which consists of four different dishes all highly flavored, and composed of various ingredients mixed with rice. To finish the repast a beverage is handed round composed of lime juice, sugar, cardamom, and aniseed mixed with water. The whole meal takes place in absolute silence.

When all the guests have feasted they turn their attention to the meal for the newly married couple, not forgetting the necessary ceremonies connected with it. First of all the sacred fire is brought and placed before the dais on which they are sitting. The husband rises and does *homam* to the fire, whilst the *purohita* repeats *mantrams*. Then the women form a procession, and singing take the fire back to its original place.



The young married couple, holding each other by the hand, goes to the place where the tutelary deity is reposing, and makes a deep obeisance to it. The husband then does *puma* to it, and offers as *neiveddya* some cakes and boiled rice. They make a similar obeisance to the five little earthen vases placed near the deity, in which are sown ten kinds of seeds, and sprinkle them with water.

It is only after having gone through all these preliminaries that the young married couple is allowed to partake of the meal which has been specially prepared for them. They sit down facing one another in the centre of the *pandal* on two little stools, the bridegroom facing east. Before them is spread a large banana leaf, and at each of its four corners are placed four lamps made of ground rice filled with oil, which are lighted, as well as many others all round the *pandal*. Then the married women bring in on two metal dishes the different viands which have been prepared for the young couple, much singing and music going on the while. After they have been helped, melted butter is poured three times on to their fingers, and after swallowing this they begin to eat their food together from the same leaf. To eat in this manner is a sign of the most complete union, and is the most unmistakable proof of friendship that two persons closely united could possibly give each other. Later on the wife will be allowed to eat what her husband leaves, but never again will she be permitted to eat in company with him. This is a favor which is only granted her on her wedding day.

Their meal finished, the newly married couple go outside, preceded by music, and accompanied by the women singing, by all the guests, and by the *purohita*. The *purohita* points out to them a small star called *Arundhati*, the wife of the Penitent *Vasishtha*, which is to be found near the pole-star. The couple makes a deep reverence to the star and return to the house in the same procession. There the women perform the ceremony of *aratti*. This terminates the ceremonies of the first day, called *muhurta*, or the great day.⁵⁶

The ceremonies of the four following days are merely a repetition of those just described. What little variety there is, is much in the same style. These ceremonies are interspersed with the most innocent games and amusements, which would appear to us utterly ridiculous, and only suitable for little children, but which afford them the greatest pleasure and infinite amusement.

Amongst the second day's ceremonies one of the most extraordinary is when they place a sort of ornament, called *bassinam*⁵⁶, on the forehead of both the husband and wife. The *bassinam* is covered with gold-leaf or gold paper, and flowers are entwined round it. The object of the *bassinam* is to avert the effect of the *drishti-dosha*⁵⁷ or evil eye, the spell which is cast by the looks of jealous or ill-disposed people. Placed thus on the most conspicuous part of the body it is supposed to attract the eyes of the

