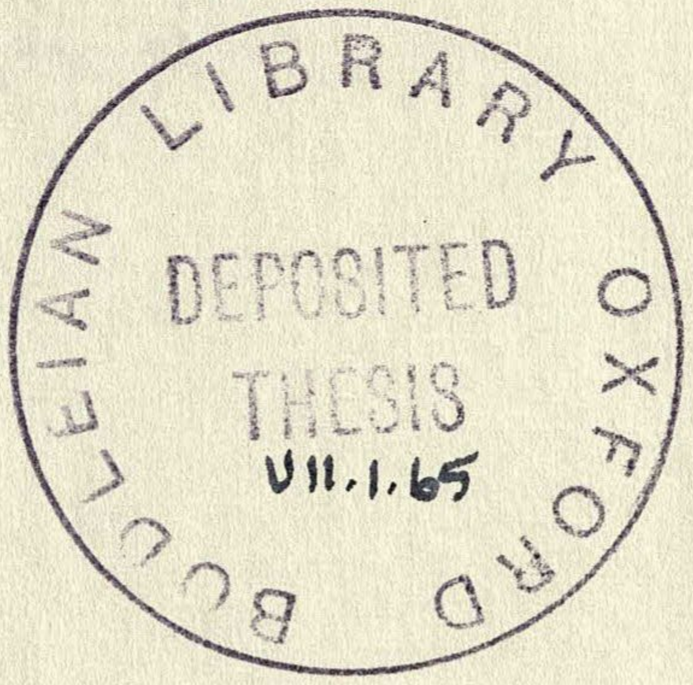
THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF LETTERS

IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

THE EXAMINATION OF MARRIAGE RITUAL AMONG SELECTED GROUPS IN SOUTH INDIA

Brenda E.F. Beck



Somerville College
Oxford
Trinity Term
1964

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1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis is concerned with variations in the traditional Hindu marriage ceremony as practiced by the several Tamil-speaking castes on the east coast of South India. The primary objective is to survey the descriptions of marriage ritual which are available in the current literature, rather than to attempt a sociological analysis of any particular problem. The intention has been to organize and examine the existing material with a view to additional field research in person in the near future. In the following pages we point out several significant differences in the nuptial rituals as they are performed at different levels in the caste hierarchy and these facts are interspersed with a discussion of the relation of the marriage ceremony to South Indian ritual in general. Because information on this topic is relatively abundant, the area to be considered in detail has been limited to three districts of Madras State: South Arcot, Tiruchirapalli* and Thanjavur*.

These three districts, together, constitute the larger part of the so-called Carnatic region of South India. This region lies at the heart of the Tamil-speaking area and it has a long history of political unity. The Tamils have been

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* Before Independence these districts were referred to by the British as Trichinopoly and Tanjore respectively. As most of the available date of marriage ceremonies comes from this pre-1947 period we will use the earlier spelling in the following pages.

frequent rulers of the South in the past and their language can claim "one of the longest unbroken literary traditions" of any of the world's living tongues (Basham, 1954: 476). They also enjoy a splendid architectural and musical inheritance. The vast majority of the people in this region are settled cultivators who live on the flat, fertile plains of the Coromandel Coast. The area is broken by only two small hill ranges and, for the most part, men live at close quarters in scattered villages of multi-caste complexion. There has been relatively little population migration in and out of these districts historically and there are no proper tribes or other pockets of isolated people. As a result this region remains socially and culturally the most homogeneous area of the South today.

For these reasons a thorough familiarity with the history and traditions of the Carnatic is a necessary foundation for the building up of a body of knowledge on the South of India as a whole. Without such information we cannot hope to understand and to place in perspective the customs of the more mixed populations and also of the small colorful but isolated communities also found in the lower half of the peninsula today.

Despite the importance of the Coromandel area, very little work on this region has been published by anthropologists in the last fifty years, and we must still largely depend on Edgar Thurston's encyclopedic Castes and Tribes of Southern India, a monumental work published just after the turn of the century.

It is fortunate, therefore, that the author of these seven volumes was an ethnographer of the highest standard, intimately acquainted with the region, and that the information compiled rests on more than fifteen years of research.

Thurston's material is uneven on many subjects, but he took a particular interest in marriage ritual and published detailed, descriptive accounts of it as performed by a large range of castes. He recognized that in marriage lay a key to the understanding of both social structure and religious ideology in India and the importance that Indians themselves attach to the marriage ceremony. He saw that by a detailed comparison of the nuptial rites of the various castes one could approach the study of ritual at various levels of the social hierarchy more generally and he intended the material he had gathered to be so used. In his Ethnographic Notes on Southern India he devotes one hundred and thirty-one pages to noting various descriptive parallels in the ceremonies he had so carefully gathered, paying particular attention to what he calls the "grafting of Brahman ritual onto the non-Brahman community", (Thurston, 1906: 1). Unfortunately, however, Thurston never persued his intended analysis beyond these 'notes,' which record a variety of colorful practices and superficial similarities.

This thesis, taking Thurston's material as a starting point and supplementing it with other descriptions to be found here and there in the literature, attempts to organize the information available on marriage ceremonies in Tamilnad in a

new fashion. By so doing we hope to bring to the surface some interesting general patterns which have largely escaped comments by other writers. On some points Thurston's data are so scanty that we have been able to provide little in the way of comment. This is the case, for example, with information on the quantity and nature of wedding gifts, the invitation of guests and other important sociological topics which surround the actual nuptial rituals themselves. The comparative study of these questions, therefore must largely await further field research. On the variation in the ritual of the marriage ceremony itself, however, Thurston provides enough descriptive material to discuss at some length.

The analysis of this information, to which this thesis is devoted, is carried progressively in several directions. First, the selection of castes to be studied is discussed in some detail and a generalised outline of a traditional upper-caste marriage is presented for the convenience of the reader. Then several dominant themes, common to nuptial ritual at all levels in the caste hierarchy, are developed against a background sketch of Hindu ideas and of South Indian ritual in general. The main themes to be discussed, as evidenced by the chapter headings, are: the relation of the marriage ceremony to Hindu cosmological ideas; the nature of the ritual prescribed by the ancient texts; the intimate association of the wedding events with concepts of purity and auspice; and the importance of gift exchange. Simultaneous with the development of these motifs the variations in the details of

their expression at various levels in the caste hierarchy are noted. The thesis concludes with a summary outline of differences in the ceremony as it is performed by the different castes in the region, and with this information attempts to expand and modify the current conception in Indian anthropology that the marriage ritual of the lower castes has been and is being "Sanskritized".

Map Showing The Location Of
The Three Districts Studied



(Taken from C. Davies, An Historical Atlas of the Indian)
Peninsula: pp. 72-3

2 THE CASTES SELECTED FOR STUDY

(a) The Area and Its History.

The three districts of South Arcot, Trichinopoly and Tanjore have enjoyed a degree of political unity and cultural homogeneity over the past two thousand years which cannot be paralleled in any other region of South India. They represent, today, what was for centuries the heartland of the Chola empire, and can be taken as the region where whatever customs and traditions were distinctive of the Dravidian kingdoms in the past are most likely to persist in recognizable form. There are no isolated tribal groups in the area and it is entirely flat, with the exception of a few small ridges of hills on its borders. Thirty-six percent of the more than 26.5 million speakers of Tamil in India live in these three districts, (Govt. of India. 1962:23, 434,) and as a measure of its relative homogeneity, 92% of the inhabitants consider Tamil their mother tongue. (Govt. of India, 1954: 25).

Our knowledge of the history of the region begins in about 250 B.C. when King Asoka, to the north, recorded the existence of an independent Chola territory on some of his rock edicts, (Panikkar, 1947: 60). In 190 A.D. under Karikala Chola these people of the Coromandel Coast began to expand after defeating the Pandyas, and the Cheras, and other small kingdoms to the south and west. Panikkar describes Karikala as an "enlightened ruler who promoted reclamation of land,

built extensive irrigation tanks and generally looked after the welfare of the people", (Panikkar, 1947: 61). The first Sangam or literary academy was also well established by the time of his rule and some of the great Tamil classics date back to this period.

A second great Chola expansion took place at the end of the 9th century. For some three hundred years following, the Chola dynasty gathered power and momentum. Now, during their classic period of hegemony, the Chola kings held sway over the Coromandel Coast, much of the Eastern Deccan and Northern Ceylon as well. According to historians, the administration of the empire was well organized and village and district councils exerted a considerable influence on the ruler's policy. More irrigation works were constructed and splendid temples were raised. The political stability which resulted encouraged the growth of Tamil culture and many inscriptions testify to the presence of a flourishing economy, (Basham, 1954: 76).

Around 1100 A.D. the Chola hegemony began to wane and Ceylon, and other parts of the empire were lost. The region was now to feel the force of Islam and the Sultanate of Delhi which had already well established itself in North India. During a series of raids in 1296-1315 under the Sultan Ala-ud-din the newly independent Deccan was crushed and for several years a Muslim sultanate was set up at Madura, deep in the South (Basham, 1954: 76). This sultanate was only to last a few years, however, for in 1336 an independent kingdom was founded at Vijayanagara to the northwest of our districts, under two great leaders : Harihara

and Bukka. Vijayanagara was essentially a military state, and having learned something of military strategy from their Muslim enemies they were able to resist attempted Muslim invasions from the Deccan. As a result of their strength, the South retained its independence from developing Mughal power in the North of India for another three hundred years (Panikkar, 1947: 139).

This period of Peninsular history is of particular cultural importance. According to Panikkar "The Vijayanagar emperors were fully alive to and consciously cultivated the idea of being the emperors of orthodox India in the tradition of the great kings of old... The claim of Vijayanagar emperors was that though the rest of India was under the Musselmans, the tradition of Hindu empire was lodged with them" (Panikkar, 1947: 142). During this period a new ecstatic, devotional theism arose in the Tamil country, a popular movement which looked to vernacular poems and hymns, rather than to the Sanskrit texts, for its main source of inspiration. According to Basham, it was this development which "was subsequently to set the standard for the popular religion of the whole of India, through the work of missionary theologians who travelled all over the subcontinent in the later middle ages" (Basham, 1954: 77). Krishnadeva Raya, the most powerful monarch of the dynasty, was a scholar and a writer himself, and several of the queens of this era figure as poets. The growth of later Vaisnavism is also connected with the history of this kingdom and the famous jural work of Madhavacharya is associated with the Vijayanagar court (Panikkar, 1947: 141).

By the middle of the seventeenth century the central authority of the Vijeyenagar kings finally broke down under increasing pressure from the Mughals. Now, for about 100 years the area along the Coromandel coast was under the sway of these northern kings. This was followed by ~~civil~~ a so-called war of succession in which the British and French supported rival candidates. Under the leadership of Robert Clive the British won the day and a puppet was safely installed as Moghul Governor whose responsibility to Delhi was nominal (Panikkar, 1947: 191-4). By 1805, under Wellesley, the British East India Company had succeeded in establishing its sovereignty over the Coromandel region along with almost all the rest of India outside the Punjab. The area became a part of the Madras Presidency under English rule. Today, in independent India, the three districts we will consider, fall under the administration of Madras State.

From this short historical summary we can appreciate how relatively few shifts in the major seat of power there have been in this area over the past two thousand years. Despite changes in dynasty, these three districts have never suffered political division for more than the briefest period. We have also seen that the region has repeatedly been a center for cultural and political developments which have had an important influence throughout peninsular India. The relative homogeneity of the marriage ceremonies, which we shall examine, reflect this historical unity, while the influence this area has had on more general religious and social developments in the South argues for the importance of such material for a

general understanding of the ritual traditions of neighbouring regions.

(b) The Source Material.

The Castes and Tribes of Southern India has remained the only comprehensive ethnographic work available on the people of the South Arcot, Trichinopoly, and Tanjore districts in the fifty-five years since its publication. Fortunately, however, the author was intimately acquainted with this region and he took great pains to inquire and to record what he knew; thus the fruits of his research have remained both interesting and surprisingly accurate dispite the passage of time. Edger Thurston, as the Permanent Superintendent of the Madras Government Museum at the turn of the century, took his job as collector and recorder of information about the people of Madras State seriously. He considered it a part of his duty to take periodical tours of the Presidency to collect ethnographic information and he borrowed the necessary equipment to take anthropomorphic measurements as well. He also collected photographs, made lantern slides, gathered recordings of tribal music and conscientiously published his material in successive Museum Bulletins.

While Thurston was Superintendent, a plan for a detailed ethnographic survey of all of India was passed by the British government and he was subsequently appointed to direct the inquiries in the Madras Presidency. He was allotted Rs. 5,000 for the job and with these funds he was able to greatly

increase the scope of his previous research. In the eight years following the government decree of 1901, Thurston collected an impressive volume of additional information, and after reviewing what had been available previously in other books, in periodicals and in the census reports, he organized his material with the help of assistants and published his famous encyclopedic work (Thurston, 1909: xiii).

In the text Thurston makes it clear that he visited people and attended ceremonies himself, but that he relied on the reports of informants for additional material. Where there are differences in the resulting information he does not attempt to reconcile conflicting observations, but juxtaposes the statements in his writing so that the reader may judge for himself. It is not clear, from the author's description of his research, how fluent he was in one or more of the South Indian languages which the people around him spoke. However, it seems a likely surmise from the length of his stay, the intensity of his interest and his frequent use of Tamil words in his text that he had a good working knowledge of the language of the area with which we are concerned.

Unfortunately, when it comes to information on lineage organization, the relative position of a caste in the social hierarchy, and even the ritual activities surrounding death, Thurston is very variable in the amount and the clarity of the information he supplies. His particular interest in the marriage ceremony, on the other hand, led him to make detailed inquiries. As a result the author supplies us with a brief

account of marriage for almost all of the 300 castes and tribes included in his survey, and with a much more detailed description in the case of many. The only important gap in his treatment of this subject is the lack of information on spouse selection, the wedding guests and the relative values of gifts exchanged. When it comes to the actual sequence of ritual acts at a marriage he is quite detailed. It is this rich but specialised vein running through the mountain of Thurston's general observations which we intend to mine in the following pages.

The information Thurston supplies in his encyclopedic work can be supplemented to some extent by his 131 pages on marriage in Ethnographic Notes in Southern India and also by some of his early articles in the Madras Government Museum Bulletin. There are also two useful missionary accounts of marriage ceremonies in this region written about the same time, one by the Abbe Dubois and the other by Rev. J. E. Padfield. In addition we have one recent account of marriage ritual among the Pramalai Kallar by Prof. Louis Dumont. This sub-caste lives in an area somewhat to the West of the three districts with which this thesis is largely concerned. Yet Dumont's material is useful because it presents current and detailed information on a relatively low-status caste, and because the author rounds out the available information on marriage in the Tamil region by stressing precisely the questions of spouse selection and gift exchange which Thurston tended to overlook. Finally, this thesis goes further afield to compare ~~some of~~

some of Thurston's descriptions with Srinivas's information on Mysore and Coorg, as well as with one or two descriptions of nuptial ritual to the north. A few of the better known works in Hindu symbolism and religious ritual are referred to in developing the general argument.

(c) The Castes Selected and Their Ranking.

The majority of information available on the castes in the area with which this thesis is concerned results from research carried out in the first eight years of the twentieth century. Thus, we have decided to work from a list of castes known to populate the area at that time. Thurston deals with caste groupings which spread over wide regions of the South and he is not always precise about which districts they inhabit. The 1901 Census of India, however, does give a detailed list of the castes inhabiting each district of the Madras Presidency. The lists given in this publication for the districts of South Arcot, Trichinopoly and Tanjore have been taken as a base for this study. Not only does this list correspond in time to the years during which Thurston carried out his research, but it agrees extremely well with his own ethnographic material. The 1901 Census does not lump together castes which Thurston distinguishes, nor does it distinguish those which Thurston treats as one. There is only one caste mentioned in this census, the Seppiliyan, which Thurston does not record in his encyclopedic report, and W. Francis suggests that this group may be a

sub-division of the Kallan (Govt. of India, 1901, Vol. XV.177) a caste which Thurston discusses at some length.

In earlier censuses of the area, the enumeration of castes was greatly confused by lumping together numbers of castes under blanket occupational terms. One caste name was picked, seemingly at random, to head a column and then others, thought to resemble them, were placed under it as "sub-divisions." On the otherhand, beginning with the 1911 census castes were no longer enumerated by district, but treated simply as inhabiting the Madras Presidency as a whole. Furthermore, W. Francis, the Superintendent of Census Operations, Madras, in 1901 later published a government manual entitled South Arcot in 1906. In this more descriptive volume the extent of his knowledge of the region and heat of his enthusiasm as an ethnographer come to light. Francis and Thurston appear to have been colleagues and the latter author makes frequent reference to Francis in his work.

In 1911, a new man, J. C. Malony, became Superintendent of Census Operations and the quality of the census report as an ethnographic document shows an unfortunate decline with his appointment. Other reasons, in addition to inexperience with the area were probably responsible for this noticeable change. As J. H. Hutton writes, "On the occasion of each successive census since 1901 a certain amount of criticism has been directed at the census for taking any note at all of the fact of caste. It has been alleged that the mere act of labeling persons as belonging to a caste tends to perpetuate the system",(Govt. of

India, 1931: 430). A strong campaign against any record of caste was thus begun in 1931 and has influenced the census reports ever since.

One final and extremely important reason why the 1901 census is the best of these government documents for our purpose is that this is the only year in which a report dealing with the Madras Presidency attempts to discuss the order of precedence which the castes enjoy in the general social hierarchy. Concerning the previous reports on the region, W. Francis writes: "At none of the three censuses which have so far taken place in Madras have the castes been arranged in a manner which enabled their characteristics to be examined in a systematic manner" (Govt. of India, 1901: 125). Nevertheless, to lay out in a government publication the general hierarchical order in which the castes stood was a bold move. By 1911 there was a good deal of criticism and in the census of that year we find that "The irritation produced by the social precedence tables of 1901 ...found vigorous expression on the part of many no longer willing to admit their polluting abilities in black and white" (Govt. of India, 1911: 159). Such a general idea of the hierarchy into which the castes fall is of great importance if we are to examine the variation in marriage ceremonies. After 1901 no further attempts in this direction were made.

The attitude and general approach which W. Francis took toward the construction of his Table of Social Precedence show his sensitivity to the problem and his sociological inclination.

His words are worthy of quotation at some length.

> The subsidiary table... shows how the various castes arrange themselves for social purposes at the present day....The table professes to place each caste in that group in which it would be classified by such public opinion as can be said to exist upon such a matter, and not to arrange them according to the shastric evidence regarding its position which each can produce....The chief difficulties in drawing up the table were occasioned by the facts that different sections of the same caste frequently follow different social customs and that the same caste is sometimes held in higher estimation in one district than it is in another. In such cases the caste has been grouped in accordance with the place held by the majority of its members....I drew up the table in accordance with the information available, neither extenuating anything nor setting down aught in malice, and committees of native gentlemen formed for the purpose in every district have criticised and amended the original draft, but I am well aware that the task has been a most delicate one. The first few and the last few groups gave comparatively little trouble. It is those in the middle which are the difficulty (Govt. of India, 1901: 129-30).

W. Francis does not attempt to arrange all the castes in the Presidency in an absolute order of social precedence which he argues would be both a difficult and an invidious task. Instead he sorts the castes into twelve groups, having adopted a combination of three considerations: "Whether Brahmans act as purohits at the religious ceremonies of the caste, whether it (the caste) carries pollution either with or without touch and in the case of the lowest caste, whether it allows or does not allow the eating of beef." He then ranks these groups of caste in their accepted order of precedence. His table is given on the following pages. Castes not present in the area chosen for intensive study, according to the 1901 census, have been deleted.

HINDU AND ANIMIST CASTES BY SOCIAL PRECEDENCE

(Govt. of India, 1901: 136-39. Edited to include only those castes represented in the Districts of South Arcot, Trichinopoly and Tanjore)

(A) -	1.	Brahman and allied Castes:	Brahman
	2.	Kshatriya and allied Castes:	-
	3.	Vaisya and allied Castes:	-
(B) -	4.	Sat or Good Śūdras:	Chetti Idaiyan Kanakkan Kusavan Pandāram Vellāla
(C) -	5.	Śūdras who habitually employ Brahmans as purohits (priests) and whose touch pollutes to a slight degree:	Agamudaiyan Āndi Kaikolan Maravan Nattaman Occhan Palli Vaniyan
(D) -	6.	Other Śūdras who occasionally employ Brahmans as purohits (priests) and whose touch pollutes:	Ambalakāran Ambattan Kallan Karaiyān Panikkan Pattanavan Sembadavan Uppiliyan Urali Valaiyan Vallamban Vannān Vēdan Vettuvan
(E) -	7.	Śūdras who do not employ Brahmans as purohits (priests) and whose touch pollutes:	Irula Kuravan Mondi
(F) -	8.	Castes which pollute even without touching but do not eat beef:	Koliyan Pallan Shānan Valluvan
	9.	Castes which eat beef but do not pollute except by touch:	-

(G) -	10.	Castes which eat beef and pollute even without touching:	Paraiyan
	11.	Castes which deny the sacerdotal authority of the Brahmans:	Kammalan
	12.	Cases in which caste was insufficiently indicated:	Kongan Udaiyan

The author includes several comments on his table:

> The line which divides group 4, Sat Südras, from group 5 who also habitually employ Brahmans as purohits (priests) but whose touch pollutes to a slight degree, is not very well marked. The Südras who appear in the former have been placed there on a consideration of a variety of circumstances. Chief among these are the facts that Brahmans will take curds and butter from their hands without restriction, will cook in any part of their houses, and are polluted by their touch only to a slight degree and also for many small reasons which it would be tedious to set out at length, they are placed by Hindus generally in the upper ranks of the great body of castes which habitually employ Brahmans as priests at their ceremonies. (Govt. of India, 1901: 129-30).

It is clear from the above that W. Francis was well informed about the castes included in his table. In addition, his information agrees fairly well with the few hints about social precedence which Thurston gives in his discussion of these various groups in his Castes and Tribes of Southern India. On the basis of the care with which this chart was constructed, and the considerable ethnographic knowledge which its author appears to have had, we have accepted it as the basis for the ranking of castes in this thesis.

Nonetheless, for the purpose of our study we have modified W. Francis's work in several minor ways. For example, the last two groups in the above table fall outside the hierarchy, the eleventh (Kammalan) because they deny the sacerdotal authority of the Brahmans and the twelfth (Kongan and Udaiyan)

because of lack of information. With a little research it has been possible to deal with these three castes in other ways, and thus to simplify the table. The Kammalans, according to Thurston, do not deny the sacerdotal authority of Brahmans, but on the contrary, employ them at the marriage ceremony (Thurston, 1906: 27). Also, we find that "there is a close connection between the Kammalans and the Archarapakam Chettis", a section of the Chetti caste. "They interdine and both bury their dead in a sitting posture" (Thurston, 1909: III 115). Furthermore, Thurston tells us that the Kammalans are comprised of five occupational divisions, all of which are generally classed as clean and respectable trades in the Hindu world. These Kammalan occupations are : goldsmith, brassmith, carpenter, stone-mason, and blacksmith (Thurston, 1909:III 107). For these reasons the Kammalan are placed with the Chettis in the Sat or Good Sūdra group in our discussion of marriage ceremonies.

The two castes in group twelve, the Kongan and Udaiyan, we have been able to eliminate from our study because of the lack of information provided about their marriage ritual. The Udaiyan are considered by Thurston to be "closely connected with the Kattaman, Malaiman and Sudarman castes" (Thurston, 1909: VII 206). There are a total of 191,296 people living in our area who reported that they belonged to one of these four groups in 1901 (Govt. of India, 1901: Table 13), but since we have no information on the marriage ceremony of any of them they have simply been listed, along with others of this

category, in the appendix. The name Kongan, on the other hand, we have eliminated completely. This term, according to Thurston, means "inhabitant of Kongu country" (Thurston, 1909: III 417). This region corresponds to the present districts of Coimbatoire and Salem which lie to the west of the area we have chosen. The 1901 Census returned no Kongan in South Arcot, no Kongan in Trichinopoly and only 17 Kongan in Tanjore (Govt. of India, 1901: Table 13). In addition, there is no information available on marriage ceremonies for this caste. For these reasons, the Kongan have not been included in our study. A final change is one of spelling. W. Francis's Kuravan caste has been referred to as Korava in our text in order to match Thurston's usage. It is assumed that these two names refer to the same group of people. The final n on a name in Tamil is generally only an alteration in form having no morphemic significance, and an initial u is often changed to o in colloquial speech (Jothimuththu, 1963: 251).

This leaves us with ten groups in the original table. However, three of them are empty categories as there are no Kshatriya no Vaisyas and no castes which "eat beef but do not pollute except by touch", living in the three districts we have selected. If we eliminate these, (groups two, three and nine) we are left with seven caste categories which, for convenience, we have relabeled with the letters A through G. These letters have been placed in parentheses on the left-hand side of the original table. The names Francis has given his categories are so long that we will sometimes refer to them by letter at

later points in the text.

(d) <u>A Brief Description of the Sample of Castes to be Studied</u>

Information about the marriage ceremony is not available for all of the castes on W. Francis's list. Only those for which we do have such data are included in the discussion on the following pages. They represent the basic sample on which the argument of this thesis is based. The twenty-four castes excluded because of lack of information are described briefly in the appendix. It should be noted that those castes for which data on marriage are published are a fair and well-distributed sample of slightly less than half of the total forty-five mentioned in the 1901 census returns for our districts. Group C (Sūdras who habitually employ Brahman priests and whose touch pollutes to a slight degree) are the least well represented. Information on their marriage ceremonies is available for only two out of the original seven castes listed. Each of the other six categories, however, is represented by half of its original castes, or more. In addition, there are two further castes (Parivaram and Malayalai) found in this region according to the census returns, but who are overlooked by Francis in making out his list. We have included these castes in our sample because material on their marriage ceremonies is available. The Parivaram and Malayalai are placed in Groups D and F respectively, by using the same criteria Francis originally employed.

Within each category Francis simply listed the castes in

alphabetical order. He specifically states, however, that he does not mean to imply by this procedure that the castes in each group stand to one another as absolute equals. He avoids too fine a ranking for two reasons. First, he was anxious not to produce additional controversy over what was already a delicate issue, and second, he, himself, felt that an absolute ranking would become an "invidious" task. We cannot but respect his judgment on the first point and agree with his stand on the second. Ethnographers have told us time and again that castes in the middle ranges of the hierarchy dispute their relative statuses and there are frequent cases where several castes appear to be relatively equal in the eyes of others. Yet when we study W. Francis's categories in detail, it soon becomes clear that they do sub-divide further as a result of the status of their major occupation and by the degree of their material affluence. These are criteria which Francis does not bring to bear on his ranking problem, but which, in reality, are of considerable importance in the determination of the social precedence of particular groups. In the descriptive account of the sample of castes we are to study which follows, therefore, the castes within Francis's groups are not treated in alphabetical order. Instead they are listed in a descending sequence determined by their apparent economic strength and social importance, these differences being, for the most part, readily inferable from Thurston's descriptive material.

The argument developed in this thesis does not depend on this precise an ordering, and additional information would

be sure to shift some of the castes up or down the list a few places. The reason for putting the castes within each group in sequence is because the difference in social prestige between some of the castes within a category emerges quite strikingly from our material. It should be an aid to the reader, as it was in studying the ceremonies, initially, to be able to refer back to this general description of our sample and to note where, in a large group, a particular caste generally appears to fall.

CASTES REPRESENTED IN SOUTH ARCOT, TRICHINOPOLY AND/ OR TANJORE FOR WHOM INFORMATION ON THE MARRIAGE CERE-MONY IS AVAILABLE

Population in 1901 (in these three districts)

GROUP A: Brahmen and allied Castes

176,280 Brahmen: Traditionally scholars, teachers and priests. Vegetarism. Abstain from alcohol. Will eat only from the hands of their own caste men. Are generally agreed to be ritually superior to all other castes.

GROUP B: Eat or Good Sūdras

221,344 Idaiyan: Traditionally a pastoral or shepherd caste. According to mythology Krishna was raised among them. Some are landowners, cart-drivers, shopkeepers, constables, family doctors and mendicants. The census report in 1871 and again in 1901 says they "hold a position of some social importance" (Thurston, 1909: II 352-3).

144,396 Kamalan: Have five occupational sections: goldsmith, brassmith, carpenter, stone-mason and blacksmith. They are closely connected with the Acharapakan Chettis (in Francis's group B) and interdine with them. They employ Brahman priests at marriage and non-Brahman priests at death, (Thurston, 1909, III 106-15).

33,817 Kusavan: Potters. The sacrificial earthern vessels which are now made by them were, according to the Vedas, intended to be made by the temple priests themselves. Some make clay images and pots for temple ceremonies. Some employ Brahmin priests, some their own priests. They are generally illiterate although a few have earned the distinction of scholarship. On the whole they are a poor class and are somewhat despised on this account by others. Divorce and remarriage are allowed (Thurston, 1909 IV 188-195).

Population in 1901		
	GROUP C:	Śūdras Who Habitually Employ Brahmans as Priests and Whose Touch Pollutes to a Slight Degree
131,691	Agamudaiyan:	A cultivating caste. A Tamil proverb has it that a Maravan (Francis's group C) may develop into an Agamudaiyan and by slow steps become a Vellala (Francis's group B). They closely follow the latter in customs and manners (Thurston, 1909: I 5-16).
1,11,607	Palli:	Agricultural laborers. Many now farm their own lands. Some are engaged in trade or government service. Sometimes they own their own temples. Leaders of the castes opened seven schools during the later half of the 19th century and have also established rest houses at five places of pilgrimage. They employ a Brahman priest at marriage and are tending gradually to approach a Brahmanical standard of conduct (Thurston, 1909: VI 2-23).
	GROUP D:	Other Śūdras who occasionally employ Brahmans as Priests and whose Touch Pollutes
56,656	Ambattan:	Barbers, hairdressers and musicians. The women are midwives, and the men often arrange marriages by acting as go-between. Widows may not re-marry. They employ Brahman priests at weddings, and are considered to be one of the most "Brahmanized" of the lower castes (Thurston, 1909: I 32-36).
1,925	Parivaram:	Domestic servants of the Tottiya Zamindars. Parivaram means "an army" and it is alleged that these people were formerly soldiers. Brahmans sometimes officiate at weddings. Divorce is allowed (Thurston, 1909: VI 157-7).
215,613	Kallan:	Agriculturalists and village watchmen. They eat meat, except beef, and indulge in intoxicating liquors. Divorce and re-marriage are permitted (Thurston, 1909: III 53-83).
16,016	Sembadavan:	Fishermen who fish in freshwater tanks, lakes and rivers. Some are ferrymen, while others have now taken to agriculture.

Population In 1901

GROUP D continued

weaving and the hawking of salted sea-fish. Employ an inferior sub-caste of Brahmans at weddings. Many are Lingayats. All are poor. Consider themselves superior to Pattanavans (Thurston, 1909: VI 350-53).

6,310 Uppiliyan: Manufacture salt, earth salt and saltpetre. Their original occupation is considered to have been tank, channel and well digging. They are also associated with brick-laying, house-building and other kinds of construction labor. The women are said to be hard workers (Thurston, 1909: VII 229-33).

15,225 Pattanavan: Saltwater fishermen. Inferior to Sembadavans who will not accept food at their hands and who discard even an earthen pot touched by them. Thurston equates them with a caste named Karaiyan (karai/ means sea-coast" (Thurston, 1909:VI 177-85).

147,621 Valaiyan: Some catch fish. Others smelt iron. Many are engaged in cultivation and in coolie work, others trap rats and jungle fowl. Some in Tanjore employ Brahmans as priests and forbid the remarriage of widows. They often live in streets of their own. Described in 1868 as a low, debased caste (Thurston, 1909: VII 272-80).

3,571 Vallambam: Small cultivating class. Sometimes the caste headmen and the wealthy employ Brahmans at their ceremonies. They are said to be the off-spring of a Vellala (Francis's group B) and a Valaiyan (Thurston, 1909: 229-302).

GROUP E : Südras Who Do Not Employ Brahmans As Priests And Who Touch Polutes

24,800 Irula: Chiefly hill cultivators. Speak a corrupt form of Tamil and live in scattered huts. They live by employment as watchmen, baling water from wells and by crime of a minor kind. Some collect honey and snare hares. Some of the women are prostitutes. Some husk paddy and gather sticks for sale as firewood. They will eat meat, dead rats and termites, and are perhaps the poorest community in the district. According to Thurston the Irulas living to the North in Chingleput, can freely enter the houses ~~of~~

GROUP E continued

Population in 1901		
		of Brahmans and are not considered as carrying pollution. This caste may consist of migrants from the Nilgiris. They are described in the 1901 Census as a semi-Brahmanized tribe (Thurston, 1909: II 372-391).
20,326	Korava:	(Kuravan) Thieves and quack doctors, and wandering gipsies. They also weave baskets and tell fortunes and will receive any but Paraiyans into the ranks of their caste (Thurston, 1909: 438-99).
	GROUP F:	Castes Which Pollute Even Without Touching But Do Not Eat Beef
25,477	Valluvan:	Sew cloth and are employed as doctors or astrologists. Some act as priests for the Pallans and Paraiyans. They forbid the remarriage of widows. According to one account, Valluvans are the descendents of an alliance between a Brahman sage and a Paraiyan woman (Thurston, 1909: VII 303-10).
2,833	Koliyan:	Weavers of coarse cloth. Some work as field laborers. It is said that they were originally Paraiyans but that they do not now intermarry with this caste (Thurston, 1909: III 302).
29,275	Malayalai:	Cultivators in the hill country of South Arcot and Trichinopoly. They live in scattered thatched huts and are generally not well off. Some cultivate grain, work on coffee estates or collect wild honey, while others herd flocks. They are Tamil speakers who are considered to have migrated to the hills in recent times. Their own tradition has it that they are the descendents of a priest of Conjeeveram. Some of them prohibit widow remarriage. All are refered to as "brother-in-law" by the Pallans, a name which they do not relish. Thurston equates the name Malayalai with Konga Vellala (Thurston, 1909: IV 406-55).
279,594	Pallan:	Agricultural laborers. Also gardeners, porters, blacksmiths and office peons.

GROUP F continued

Population in 1901

They are described in the Madura District Manual as a very numerous but abject and despised people. Their principal occupation is ploughing land for more fortunate family. They often live apart in separate hamlets but consider themselves higher than the Paraiyans although the Paraiyans of Tanjore dispute this (Thurston, 1909: V 472-4).

GROUP G: Castes Which Eat Beef And Pollute Even Without Touching

1,002,437 Paraiyan: Drummers and beggars. Some weave or are employed as medicine men. They are not migratory and live in permanent dwellings or shelters, often in a separate area outside the village. Admission to their ranks of men from higher castes sometimes occur when such people have been permanently ostracized from their own group for misconduct. Some Paraiyans will eat carion meat. Widow remarriage seems to be allowed by most (Thurston, 1909: VI 77-116).

THE IMPORTANCE OF MARRIAGE IN INDIA

Marriage is an extremely important event in the life of a Hindu. Many weeks are spent in preparation, and families frequently bring themselves to bankruptcy as a result of the large-scale expenditure involved. Mahatma Gandhi, the son of a Gujarati of modest means, has given in his autobiography, a colorful if somewhat despairing account of his own marriage. There he recounts how "Months are taken up over the making of clothes and ornaments and in preparing budgets for dinners. Each tries to outdo the other in the number and variety of courses to be prepared. Women, whether they have a voice or no, sing themselves hoarse, even get ill, and disturb the peace of their neighbours. These in their turn quietly put up with all the turmoil and bustle, all the dirt and filth, representing the remains of feasts, because they know that a time will come when they also will be behaving in the same manner" (Gandhi, 1957: 9). Many reformers have pointed to the crippling excesses which traditionally accompany the nuptial celebration. Yet to this day there has been little success in reducing the accepted place of these expenditures in village life (Dumont, 1957: 216).

Birth, marriage and death, to the Hindu, signify much more than a simple, if irrevocable change in the social position of the person concerned. They are linked to a vast superstructure of religious ideas and cosmological notions which greatly enhance their significance as turning points

in the lives of men. O'Malley, in his book on Popular Hinduism notes that "the domestic ceremonies connected with births, deaths and marriages are of more importance in popular estimation than temple or domestic worship and they are certainly observed more generally. A man may neglect the worship of the gods, but he will not neglect the ceremonies on which his status as a Hindu and a member of his caste depend". (O'Malley, 1935: 112). These three occasions, when accompanied by the appropriate ritual, are regarded as saṁskāras by the Hindu, or ceremonies which "produce a peculiar indefinable kind of merit for those who undergo them" (Pandey, 1949: 28).

The Vivaha or marriage is the most important of all the Hindu saṁskāras and the Gṛhya Sūtras usually begin their account of the various orthodox ceremonies with it. This is because marriage is regarded as the origin and necessary foundation on which all other domestic sacrifices rest. Even in the Vedic period, long before the Gṛhya Sūtras were written and to which only a few of the saṁskāras can be traced, marriage ceremonies are found recorded in a developed form (Pandey, 1949, 261). Surprisingly enough, the descriptive outline of rituals appropriate at a marriage has remained sufficiently stable over the intervening 3,000 years so that a translation of these Vedic passages into the vernacular would be recognizable as a marriage to the uneducated man even today.

Marriage in ancient India was regarded as a kind of

sacrificial occasion and one who did not enter the married life was called "one without sacrifice", a term of unconcealed contempt. Now, as then, marriage is considered to be a religious duty encumbent upon all except those who have undergone a special vow of celibacy (Pandey, 1949: 261-3). The āśrama scheme of the four stages in life, so well known today, reinforces this conception of marriage as a religious duty. This outline of the ideal life, first set down in writing during the Upanishad period, decrees that every man who is able should first become a student, second, a householder, third a hermit, and fourth a sannyasin or religious wanderer. The second stage in life had three main ends, listed in descending order of importance: the advancement of religion by performing household sacrifices; the begetting of children to insure a happy after-life for one's ancestors; and rati or sexual pleasure (Basham, 1954: 163).

Each of the other three stages in the ideal life was seen to depend on the industrious householder and for this reason, a man who could support a family while amassing wealth through honest means was much honored. According to the Laws of Manu: "As all living creatures subsist by receiving support from air, even so (the members of) all orders subsist by receiving support from the householder. Because men of the three (other) orders are daily supported by the householder with (gifts of) sacred knowledge and food, therefore, (the order of) householders is the most excellent order" (Muller, 1886: 89).

Married life is universally revered and is considered

essential for the full development of any man or woman. No tinge of antipathy is associated with it. In support of this view there is a pithy and, at the same time, moving tale related in the Mahābhārata.

Quietly skipping over the second prescribed period in life, during which he ought to have been a householder, a man once entered immediately upon the third period - that is to say he became an ascetic, abjured all female society and retired to the woods. Wandering about one day, absorbed in meditation, he was startled by an extraordinary spectacle. He saw before him a deep and apparently bottomless pit. Around its edge some unhappy men were hanging suspended by ropes of grass, at which here and there a rat was nibbling. On asking their history, he discovered to his horror that they were his own ancestors compelled to hang in this unpleasant manner, and doomed eventually to fall into the abyss unless he went back into the world and did his duty like a man, married a suitable wife and had a son, who would be able to release them from their critical predicament (Thurston, 1909: I 295).

In marrying off a son every man hopes for the birth of grandsons. These two men are key figures in the Hindu ritual that surrounds death. They are the only relatives who can ensure that the soul of their father, and grandfather, respectively, will reach a comfortable resting place in heaven, after a perilous journey across the river of death (Thurston, 1909: I 204-6). "The Sanskrit word for son, putra, means literally 'one who saves from put or hell' - the hell into which parents without sons fall" (Dubois, 1906: 205). Marrying daughters is equally important. Even though the expense entailed in marrying a girl may not be welcomed, a man in marrying his daughter is considered to earn as much, if not more merit, than when he marries a son. According to one source, such a

marriage is the "equivalent of the performance of a great sacrifice" for the father (Stevenson, 1920: 4). Not only does he secure for his daughter the most desirable religious and civil condition a Hindu women can enjoy, but he provides a means by which some other man can beget progeny in his line. Finally, from a father's point of view, well married children, who are economically and socially established, are the only guarantee of his own support in old age.

The religious overtones of marriage for the bride and groom are every bit as important as those outlined above for the parents. Besides the central sacramental act of establishing a household, both parties to a marriage acquire a new religious stature during the proceedings. A married man is now allowed to perform certain important rites such as offering pinḍa or balls of cooked rice to the manes, a right denied him as a bachelor (Srinivas, 1962: 47). Likewise, "a women may be said to attain her religious rights on marriage and to retain them only while she is married" (Pandey, 1949: 113). Women undergo only one ceremony in which, if they are Brahman, Vedic texts are used, and that is marriage. In a strict sense, then, marriage is a women's one saṁskāra or sacrament. It is therefore considered an absolutely essential undertaking for a girl (Kapadia, 1958. 168). To remain unmarried as an adult woman in India is the equivalent of a social and religious anathema, while widowhood is nearly as bad. Widows are considered most inauspicious and are not permitted to join in religious ceremonies and festivals with married women. The

general social disabilities which a widow in India suffers are too well known to require extended discussion here.

Further marriage has economic and political advantages. A man has little social status until he has married and until this time he is not consulted about important subjects. According to Dubois, no work of consequence may be given to an unmarried man (Dubois, 1906: 205). A widower regresses to a similar position and is expected to rapidly remarry. This is partly because a man's marriage activates important social ties and his standing in the village is linked to how many kin-based ties he can manipulate to his advantage. "Before marriage a man is merely so-an-so's son, after marriage he becomes someone's son-in-law, a father, and finally a bride-giver" (Beals, 1962: 28). This is the way a man reinforces, increases and with age begins to dominate, the network of kin-based relationships into which he was born.

The foregoing paragraphs illustrate how important marriage is in Indian society and how central the ideal of marriage is in Hindu religious thought. The truth of this statement will gather even more force as we proceed to examine the details of the marriage ritual. Indeed, it will become clear that the ceremony itself is one of the leading expressions of the importance of marriage in India. We have already noted the time and expense taken in preparation for the event, as well as the length and intricacy of the rites themselves. The ceremony among the lower castes may not be as long or as textually oriented as is a similar occasion for the Brahman, but we

shall see that even at the very bottom of the social hierarchy the event is elaborate in its own way.

Furthermore, it would appear from hints in literature that the villagers are themselves peculiarly interested in the details of the marriage ritual. Novelists writing about India sometimes describe a central character as he recalls the chain of events that took him through the nuptial ritual. Gandhi, for example, writes as follows:

> As I think of it, I can even today call before my mind's eye the places where he sat as he went through the different details of the (marriage) ceremony.... The recollection of those things is fresh in my memory. I can picture to myself, even today, how we sat on our wedding dais, how we performed the seven steps, how we, the newly wedded husband and wife put the sweet Kansar into each other's mouth, and how we began to live together. (Gandhi, 1957:10-11).

R.K. Narayan has a similar passage in one of his novels (Narayan, 1952: 22-3). In addition, sub-caste names in our area are riddled with minute distinctions, based on details of the marriage ceremony. Some divisions distinguish themselves by the use of a specific number of poles in their marriage booth, or the decoration of these poles with particular leaves, while large numbers label themselves as 'the sub-caste tying large flat beads at marriage', 'the sub-caste which ties beads the size of marbles' and so forth. We will have more to say about these interesting phenomena later.

All we would argue at this point is that the marriage ceremony is significant ritual even for the villagers themselves and that people are concerned about the details we are going to examine. The word for marriage in Tamil, '<u>kalyanam</u>',

means, in its broad sense, 'an auspicious ceremony' (Dumont, 1957: 216). Furthermore, Pandey stresses that some sort of religious rite is always essential in order to make a marriage valid (Pandey, 1949: 293). Clearly, then Indians themselves think that the marriage ritual is important and they have handed down some of its basic elements, almost intact, from generation to generation for 3,500 years. The significance of marriage, and further of the marriage ceremony, in Indian eyes makes the latter worth our study as anthropologists.

4 A GENERAL OUTLINE OF THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY

One of the major objectives of this thesis is to examine the variations in the marriage ceremony at various levels in the caste hierarchy and to venture some generalizations about these differences and their significance. The over-all pattern of this variation is already known and many authors have commented upon it. The Brahmans, at the top of the social order, have a very long and intricate ceremony, while as one descends the ladder, the marriage ritual becomes shorter and the number of distinct rites performed is less. In addition, less reference is made to the ritual handbooks, or Gṛhya Sūtras, and the various verses they prescribe for recitation. Because of the fact that many of the Brahman rites are eliminated in the ritual of the lower castes the ceremony looks quite different to an observer. Yet, surprisingly enough, nothing distinctly new has been added in replacement, and each element in the low-caste ritual has a more or less obvious parallel in the full Brahman ceremony.

In the following chapters a number of themes underlying the marriage ritual as a whole will be the focus of discussion, rather than an attempt made to take up the details of the ceremony in their strict sequence. It is important, therefore, to give the reader a descriptive survey of the marriage in advance. For this purpose we will outline the traditional Brahman ceremony. It will form a convenient starting point, despite the fact that it is the longest and most complex performed

by all the castes in the area, because it ignores none of the details which are isolated and thus emphasized among the lower castes. Later in the thesis it will be precisely this subtle shift in emphasis which results from employing only some elements of the Brahman ceremony that will occupy our attention.

The order of the various parts of the ceremony are given according to Thurston in his general description of the marriage of the Brahmans of Southern India (Thurston, 1909: 278-93). This differs slightly in the order in which the details are described by other authors although the general sequence of events is always the same. The slight variations in the different descriptions probably is the result of the fact that the different sub-castes of Brahmans pattern their ceremony after the authority of various Sūtras or ritual books. These were written at varying times and places and incorporate minor regional variations. The main outline of a Brahman ceremony, nonetheless, is common throughout India (Pandey, 1949: 356).

A GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE BRAHMAN MARRIAGE CEREMONY IN SOUTH INDIA

Preparation

A) The homes of both families are scrubbed and ceremonially purified. Preparations for the arrival of guests are made. At the bride's home, where the ceremony will be held, a pavilion is erected in the courtyard on a raised mound of fresh earth and supported by four or more wood posts cut from specified trees. The bride and groom take ceremonial baths in their respective houses and dress in clean, festive clothes.

B) Arrival
The groom, decked in finery and attended by a train of

B) continued
friends and relatives, proceeds from his home to the bride's. They are welcomed ceremonially at the East gate of the bride's village by her father and sometimes other relatives.

C) Mock Pilgrimage
Soon after the groom arrives he pretends to leave on a journey towards the east carrying an umbrella, a fan, a bundle of rice, betel leaves and areca nut. The bride's father goes after him and brings him back to the marriage pavilion.

D) Riding on The Shoulders of Mother's Brothers
When the groom returns he and the bride may be taken on the shoulders of their mother's brothers for a short while and danced around the village. Each time the couple meet, ~~during the procie~~, garlands of flowers are exchanged between them. They are carried this way to the pavilion and seated there facing east.

E) Planting Seeds
Some earth is fetched ~~=~~ from the northeast of the village from the hillocks of white ants. It is brought back by a group of married women and placed in five earthen pots. These are placed in a quincunx and planted with nine kinds of seeds. The pots are watered daily during the rest of the marriage celebrations. A sacred fire is kindled in the middle of the pavilion.

F) Anointment
Next, the bride and groom are anointed with oil of sesamum by the bride's father and by guests. They may also be smeared from head to foot with turmeric paste.

G) Worship of the Gods
Small idols of Visaknsna and/or Ganapathi are set up inside the pavilion and homage is paid to them by the bride and groom.

H) Tying of Wrist Threads
Two cotton threads are laid on a vessel. After the recitation of some verses in Sanskrit by the priest, the groom takes a thread in his left hand, smears turmeric paste over it with his right thumb and forefinger, and ties it to the left wrist of the girl. The priest does the same with the other thread and ties it to the right wrist of the groom.

I) Madhuparka
The bride's father offers the groom an auspicious drink

I) continued
of honey and curds. The bride's father places the boy's feet on a tray with milk and water and proceeds to wash them. He may adorn the toes with rings. Afterwards the groom sometimes reciprocates by washing the father's feet.

J) Gift of the Bride
The bride sits in her father's lap. The father recites the names of three generations of the groom's ancestors and states that he will now give his daughter to him. The father takes the girl's right hand, places it on the groom's right hand and both the parents pour water over the joined fists.

K) Offering to Fire
Offerings of ghee and rice are made to the fire in the center of the pavilion. The bride is asked to sit ~~on~~ on heap of paddy (unhusked rice) and a ring of darbha grass may be placed on her head.

L) Yoke Held Over Bride's Head
Next a yoke is brought and held over the bride's head. Through a hole in the yoke onto her head a gold coin and/or the string tali soon to be tied around her neck are dropped. Water is also sprinkled through the hole by the groom.

M) Gift of Cloth
The groom gives the bride a new cloth and the bride puts it on with the help of his sister.

N) Tying the Tali
The groom takes the tali, a piece of string dyed with turmeric and often having a piece of gold tied to it, and, amidst a loud noise made by others, ties it to her neck with three knots.

O) Throwing Rice
Rice is thrown over the heads of the couple by guests. The girl may make an offering of fried rice to the fire which has previously been poured into her hands by her brother.

P) Seizing the Bride's Hand
The groom seizes the girl's right hand in his right hand and walks with her, three times clockwise around the sacrificial fire.

Q) The Seven-Steps
The groom then leads the girl forward seven steps in northeasterly direction. Tamil Brahmans consider this

q) continued
to be the most important rite of the entire ceremony. After the seven steps the couple are bound irrevocably in marriage.

R) Standing on a Stone
The bride is then asked to tread on a stone to the north of the fire with her right foot. She may do this once or three times.

S) Payment of Priest's Fees, Sprinkling and Painting the Bride
Another offering may now be made to the sacred fire and the priest receives his fees for officiating at the ceremony. The bride may be sprinkled with water and her forehead painted with red lead. According to the Grhya Sūtras the girl was formerly asked to sit on a red bull's hide at this point. The guests disperse until evening.

T) Looking at the Pole Star
When evening comes the couple are shown the pole star and sometimes Ursa Major. The bride must affirm that she sees celestial bodies. Somewhat earlier in the day she may have been asked in a similar fashion to look at the sun.

U) The Common Meal
That evening the guests are feasted and usually the couple are asked to eat together. This is the only time in their life when they may dine in such a manner. In the future the bride will always serve her husband first and eat after he has finished.

V) Marriage Games, Songs and Processions
On the second, third, and fourth days processions with the bride and groom in the lead are made around the village. Much fun is had by all enacting mock domestic scenes, coaxing the bride to dress as a man and singing bawdy nuptial songs. Prominence is given to the maternal uncles. Turmeric reddened with lime may be smeared on the couple's shoulders and faces. An ornament called the bhashinga may be tied on their foreheads.

W) Establishing the Domestic Fire
Early in the morning of the fifth day the groom may ceremonially establish the household fire and make oblations to it.

X) Taking Seeds to a Tank
On the fifth day the pots planted with seeds and having been faithfully watered are taken in procession to a

X) continued
tank, pond or river into which the seedlings are thrown. The wrist threads on the couple are removed and the pavilion may be disassembled.

Y) Procession to Groom's House
The bride is then taken in procession to the groom's house where she is ceremonially welcomed. She may be asked to enter her new home right foot first and to kick over a pot of uncooked rice on entering, scattering the grains on the floor.

The marriage ceremony among Brahmans usually lasts five days. However it may last only one if the family are poor and as many as thirteen if they are exceedingly wealthy. The Brahman ceremony is lengthened by spending many days in feasting guests, playing games, singing and parading around. It is shortened by cutting down in quantity on the same. The sequence of ritual gestures that make the body of the ceremony is rarely changed. Usually an odd number of days is chosen in preference to an even number for the marriage festivities. Thus one, three, five or seven days are better than two, four, or six for the duration of the feasting, games, and merry-making (Srinivas, 1942: 86). The months from January to June are considered the most propitious, although marriage at another time of year is sometimes arranged. January to June is also the slack period agriculturally. This is the time when labor is least needed, the crops have been harvested and money is in hand. In this matter, at least, convenience and auspice appear to have struck upon a pleasing partnership (Redfield, 1896: 121).

5 THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY AND HINDU COSMOLOGY

(a) The Marriage Pavilion and Temple Architecture

All marriages in India traditionally take place under a pavilion. These temporary booths are erected with much care, often by a hired specialist, in the courtyard or in front of the principal entrance of the house where the ceremony is to take place. A similar construction may be erected at other moments when ceremony is called for, such as at a funeral, and, in particular, at upanayana (initiation or second birth) or a saṁskāra performed during adolescence for all men of the three highest varṇas. Because of their universal use at weddings, the foremost association of a pavilion appears to be with this occasion.

The pandalttinnai, as the pavilion is called in Tamil, is supported by anywhere from eight to twelve pillars or wooden posts and covered with foliage and the branches of trees. According to Dubois the top or ceiling may be ornamented with paintings or other costly things, while the whole is hung with garlands of flowers and other decorations (Dubois, 1906: 154). It is usually erected on a platform raised slightly above its surroundings and its floor is decorated with various designs. The pillars, for example, are often painted in alternate bands of red and white. This booth serves to shade the couple from the sun during the long and drawn-out ritual and also gives a good view, as would a stage, to the guests. The latter customarily

sit around watching the proceedings in concentric or semi-circular rings. A pavilion, therefore, has a certain practical air. It also serves as a recognised status symbol, giving a general indication of a family's wealth.

At the same time, however, these pavilions have a clear ceremonial character. Louis Dumont seems well justified when he suggests that their form resembles the superstructure of a Hindu temple. As he comments, "in one sense the pillared hall associated with Dravidian architecture is nothing but a pavilion of stone." (Dumont, 1957: 222). It is this parallel in general shape between the plan of a Hindu temple and the setting in which all marriages are performed which we shall take as the starting point of our study. From temple architecture we must proceed still further, to inquire into the general rationale behind a shrine's construction and the cosmological ideas which inspire a particular architectural plan. It is only with this background of information that we can begin to see the specific details of marriage ritual in perspective and come to appreciate the context in which they are performed. As we will discover, a proper understanding of this parallel of the pavilion with temple architecture and core ideas the latter is intended to express, will provide a key to the events of the marriage themselves.

To build a temple in India, all architects begin with the ceremonial drawing of a square plan. There is no text on Indian architecture which takes this initial step for granted, and a knowledge of its meaning as well as the means of its

execution are the first lessons which the builder must master (Kramrisch, 1946: I 39). In laying the foundations, one must first measure out a square surface and then drive in a post at each of the four corners. A cord is then stretched around the posts to enclose the area. "These movements... are not accessory nor are they a mere accompaniment to the building itself. They go into the making of a Hindu temple" (Kramrisch, 1946: I 39). The laying out of a square area and the enclosing of it by use of a string or cord wrapped around four posts has an important parallel in the Brahman marriage ceremony. We will develop it at a later point.

Next, before the temple superstructure can be built, the 'germ' out of which it is understood to grow must be laid in the foundation. On a flawless night, under an auspicious constellation of stars, a gold, silver or copper vessel is lowered down through the excavation and is placed level with the first few bricks. This vessel is called the garbhapatra, meaning womb, and is said to hold the seed (bija) of the building. This is considered the causal act "whence the unmanifest becomes manifest" (Kramrisch, 1946: I 126). With the completion of the building the seed is thought of as having germinated and to have realized its creative potential. It has figuratively "assimilated all the substance (used in construction) and grown into the body of the temple" (Kramrisch, 1946: II 360). In this sacrifical act the officiating priest is said to act as generator.

A Hindu temple is always oriented to the four points of

the compass and is understood to "fill" the four regions of space. At the same time, however, it has a second and even more important direction in the vertical. The vertical superstructure reaches "towards God, the Supreme Principle, which is beyond form and above His seat or house of manifestation" (Krammisch, 1946: I 179). When a temple is completed a golden jar is installed at its highest point, directly above the implanted seed. While the golden germ of all existence lies at the base of the temple, "the sum total of all the Forms and Principles of manifestation and their reintegration lie in the superluminous darkness of the Golden jar on top of the temple" (Krammisch, 1949: II 360). When the temple is completed the "supernal radiance" of the golden seed is considered to ride through the temple to the golden jar at the top and there to meet ~~and to cancel the descent of~~ descending the Supreme Principle from above.

> Within these two movements the Hindu temple has its being; its central pillar is erected from the heart of the Vastupurusa in the Brahmasthana, from the center and heart of existence on earth, and supports the Prasada Purusa in the Golden jar in the splendour of the Empyrean. Its mantle carries, imaged in its varied texture, in all directions all the forms and principles of manifestation towards the Highest Point above the body of the temple. (Krammisch, 1946: I 361).

Thus we see that the structure of a Hindu temple approximates to an ideal form, and that this form is intended to express certain cosmic conceptions associated with the basic supernatural forces which pervade the universe. These ideas, and the form they take in architecture, are closely linked to the primordial source of all Hindu cosmology, the Vedas. Within this body

of literature they find their best known and most articulate expression in the famous Hymn of Creation.

(b) The Creation Myth

In the Hymn of Creation we find that the poet's intuition of the origin of life is strongly dominated by the idea of duality, of two forces which came together, united in that primordial event. Separated they were nothing; joined they became the cause behind all that exists. Yet these two forces never lose their individual identity, they are conceived of as opposite in all respects and they retain their complementarity throughout eternity. They are of male and female, respectively.

The male element in this dyad is composed of pure light and intelligence. He appears as the creative breath, omni-present and all-pervading. Meanwhile, the female counterpart is thought to be dark and chaotic, and embodied in the inert mass of the primeval waters. Left to themselves both elements are barren and lack the power of creation. "Not until they unite, till creative breath enters the water, does the great mystery become a fact. At that moment and at that point Life, Hiranyagarbha, 'the Golden Germ', that is to be the beginning and origin of all creation, is born" (Bosch, 1960: 51).

Life is begotten from a germ, a small seed which resulted from the union of the two forces. In Indian art and literature this process of genesis and development from an initial seed is equated with the sprouting, growth, blossoming and fruit-bearing of a great tree, the Tree of Life. (Bosch, 1960: 55).

In post-Vedic literature the four great branches of this tree are frequently associated with the four Vedas. Thus the tree, as it branches out through space, may be identified with knowledge, as well as with life. The Maitreya Upanishad VI, calls it the 'One Awakener' and 'The enduring basis of the Wisdom of Brahman' (Bosch, 1960: 68). Many legends, for example, hold that a man sitting under a holy fig tree is able to foretell future events. Sometimes he may also be able to recall former births or to understand the language of animals. In general, a man in association with the Great Tree participates, to an extent, in that inexhaustible store of power and wisdom thought to inhere in the highest godhead (Bosch, 1960: 68).

This Great Tree, however, as mentioned in literature and expressed in art is not always recognizable as a tree at first glance. Often it is referred to in writing as something more like a pillar. The Vedas, for example, speak of "the axis of the universe and the prop of the firmament". Rg Veda X, 89, 4 compares both hemispheres with cart wheels connected by an axle and Rg Veda VIII, 41, 10 refers to "He who divides heaven and earth by a pillar" (Bosch, 1960: 93). This notion is repeated frequently in later works such as the Bhāgavata Purana and the Laws of Manu (Bosch, 1960: 55). The identification of tree and pillar is not surprising in itself. There is a complication which arises, however. A pillar cannot be seen as a stem rising from its root, or as a support of heaven and gods thought to be above it. Literature has sometimes stressed one aspect of this image and sometimes the other. The same is true

of art, and of architecture for both of which Bosch supplies numerous examples (Bosch, 1960: 153 and ff.). We have representations of pillars rising from golden jars and supporting leafy foliage on their summits, as well as pillars used as a prop, on top of which rest deities, chakra (wheels) or other symbols of the godhead.

Because of the frequent identification of the cosmic tree with pillars and the dual conception of the latter, Bosch develops a most interesting argument concerning the representation of the creation myth in post-Vedic times. With a combination of imagination and sound scholarship he is able to show that a vegetal parallel came to be applied not only to the growth of the golden seed, but that the dyadic forces which united to create it are given plantlike form. This means that the cosmic tree comes to be understood as a combination of two separate pieces of vegetation which have grown together. According to Bosch, the most frequent identification made with the female element of the waters is that of the lotus stalk, rooted in the mud below the waters and growing up through them. The male element of breath and light, on the other hand, is identified with a celestial fig, rooted in heaven and growing downwards. The latter, when it touches the lotus, implants an aerial root in it, which grows outward, strangling the lotus foliage, and forming its own top.

> The tree in question is a combination of two different trees, viz, the fig-tree, rooted in heaven and the lotus-tree sprung from the waters. The former, placed above, true to its epiphytic nature, has implanted its root, the triangular ornament, in the top of the stem of the tree-shaped lotus, causing this to decay totally except

> for the stem, after which with its own branches and leafage it formed a new top (Bosch, 1960: 78).

Thus we have a stem, conceived of as a great pillar, which grows out of a node in the root-stock or rhizome of the lotus plant in the mud below the primeval waters. It is fed by a whitish life-sap called rasa and supports on its summit a golden seed or aerial root. From this germ springs the exuberent and branching foliage of the great tree which lies at the base of all animal and plant life. This basic organic and visual form which Bosch suggests that Indian cosmological ideas take, has provided him with an extremely rich starting point for his analysis of themes in Hindu art.

Although Bosch does not specifically deal with the construction of a temple in his work, it is perhaps clear to the reader how this basic form parallels our previous description. We have seen how a seed is planted in a vessel, similar in shape to a lotus node, and laid at the foundation of the new building. Furthermore, we have noted how the life-force in this seed is conceived of as rising through the center of the structure and how it is thought of as meeting the descent of the Supreme Principle from above. The central pillar supports at its highest point a golden jar, containing a golden germ. Lastly, when the temple is complete, this seed is thought to have "germinated, assimilated all the substances and grown into the body of the temple" (Krammisch, 1946: II, 360). Since the temple is oriented to, and considered to fill all the four regions of space, the body of the temple, with the golden germ grown through it, is now synonomous with all creation.

Bosch's outline of the basic artistic expression of the cosmic ideas embedded in the creation myth, does not merely contribute to Krmarisch's description of a Hindu temple. In the following paragraphs we hope to show how reference to this imagery can contribute to our appreciation of the construction of the marriage pavilion. We will see how it can be used in the interpretation of many of the other details of the marriage ceremony as well.

(c) Trees As Sacred Objects

In India any tree is a remainder of the Great Tree which sprung from the initial golden seed and which is understood to stand behind all creation. This is not only because in visual form any tree resembles the Great Tree, but because all trees drew their sap from the same source, the life-giving rasa of the waters. They share in the substance which animated the golden germ and, thus, are microcosmic manifestations of the same supernatural force. All plants, just like all living creatures, are essentially rooted in this magical substance and all vegetation, therefore, shares in the greatness of the divine to a greater or lesser extent. This makes rasa virtually the equivalent of natural life itself. This life is manifest "in the fertility of women, of fields and of cattle," and it is the cause of "abundant offspring, crops, livestock and earthly riches" (Bosch, 1960: 82). At the same time rasa is conceived of as the direct negation of sickness, old age and death. It is the opposite or counterpart of the forces of evil, poverty

and decay. As one force waxes the other must wane, while the two together explain the vagaries of abundance and scarcity, and of life and death.

The lotus, as the water-plant par excellence, enjoys the force of rasa in its purest essence. Trees, however, because of their similarity in form to the great tree, and because of their recognizable whitish sap, share in this elixir more than do most other plants. Among the sacred trees repeatedly mentioned in Indian literature, two species of the laciferous fig rank foremost: the ficus religiosa (pippul or arasam-maram) and the ficus bengalensis (banyan or āla-maram). These trees are two of the largest plants growing in Indian soil. They are, in fact, often referred to as vanaspati or 'lord of the forest' (Bosch, 1960: 67). Their size, their milky sap and their tendency to spread into all available space by sending down new aerial roots and tendrils associated them strongly with their mythical counterpart. On a popular level the ficus religiosa "is conceived of as the embodiment of the highest god. It is frequently said to be a form of Vishnu, just like the palasa of Brahma and the nyagrodha of Siva....Its branches drive away enemies, its leaves produce intelligence in the child, and fulfil desires for wealth and male offspring (Bosch,1960: 69). The ficus bengalensis is not mentioned in the Rg Veda but in later literature and in popular belief it occupies a similarly important place (Bosch,1960: 69).

Many, many other trees in India are also considered in local folklore and tradition to be sacred to a greater or lesser extent. Every town and village in the Tamil country

has a public place shaded with trees, some of which are regarded as holy because they provide abode for a god or spirit (Pillai, 1943: 72). Often a particular tree revered by the local population later marks the spot around which a temple is built. Sometimes the stump of a tree is preserved and protected long after its branches have withered and died (Pillai, 1943: 71). Sacred trees are also often found near the edges of the village water tank and idols of the god supposed to dwell in the branches may be placed at the feet of their trunks and worshipped (Pillai, 1943: 74). In this case the parallel with the original waters and the great tree which sprang from them is quite striking. Many travellers in Tamil country have reported seeing roadside trees worshipped by pilgrims and passers-by. The following are only two of a long list of observations recorded by Thurston:

> The champak and other trees round the ancient shrine of the Trimurti at the foot of the Anaimalai mountains are hung with sandals and shoes, many of huge size evidently made for the purpose and suspended by pilgrims as votive offerings (Thurston, 1912: 157).

> On the trunk-roads in the Nellore district rags may be seen hanging from the babul trees. These offerings are made to Pathalayya by travellers who tear off pieces of their clothing with a vague idea that the offering will render their journey free from accidents (Thurston, 1912: 155).

In addition to the popular reverence for sacred trees, there is a large group of narratives where the figures concerned meet in a situation which calls the image of a tree to mind. This situation is always the climax of the story and association with it is considered to produce the same effect as any other symbol

of the divine godhead: e.g. the characters are understood to absorb some of the life-giving and invigorating rasa which the Great Tree infuses to its surroundings.

> The introduction to these situations or their denouement is of little account and can be altered at will. The situation itself is all that matters. At the particular moment created by that situation, the elements of the narrative stand arranged in a way that calls up the image of the Tree-motif before the minds of the listeners and in that same moment the narrative is considered to produce all the beneficial influences inherent in that image (Bosch, 1960: 236).

The use of wood from sacred trees and the constant reference to the Tree of Life motif in the marriage ceremony have prompted us to include this general account of the importance of trees in popular belief in the hope of setting the following observations in their broad cultural context. Illiterate villagers may not keep the details of the creation myth in the forefront of their minds, but they are bound to be reminded daily of the significance of the tree as a sacred plant as a symbol of the life-force which lies at the base of all creation.

(d) Marriage Pavilion and Milk Post

The use of a temporary pavilion constructed specifically for the marriage ceremony is a long standing tradition common to Hindus all over India. Thurston mentions it specifically for nineteen of the twenty-one castes in our sample. For the two castes where a pavilion is not mentioned, Kuseven and Valaiyan, we have only the briefest descriptions of the marriage ceremony. It is probable that in these two instances Thurston

took the use of such a construction for granted and overlooked the mention of it. It is conceivable that at the wedding of the daughter of extremely impoverished parents a pavilion might be dispensed with. A marriage booth is not generally constructed for a remarriage.

Unfortunately, no auther has given us a really detailed description of pavilion construction. However, we know that the booth stands generally on twelve posts (some of the 'left-hand' castes are allowed only eleven) and that these are arranged in three rows and thatched with green leaves (Srinivas, 1942: 91). There is no precise information on the thatch of the booth for the areas we are studying, but it is extremely interesting to learn that the Bhils, further north, sometimes spread branches of umber (ficus glomerata) bearing blossoms over the poles and that they shake the fruit of these branches on to the bridal pair as they sit below (Abbott, 1932: 321).

The wood used for the poles also seems to be significant. It must be green and is taken from prescribed trees which vary from region to region. Abbott says that the Khandesh Bhils make their marriage booths from branches of saver (Eriodendron anfractuosum) and sayphal (Myctanthes arbor tristis). The first of these trees "is of rapid growth...(and) perhaps no tree in the world has a more lofty and imposing appearance," and the second has a white flower which "sheds a delicious fragrance" (Drury, 1873: 198, 314). Srinivas, in writing of Mysore, similarly specifies the particular woods to be used for the pavilion posts. Furthermore, we have similar evidence

from our own region.

> In the marriage ceremony of the Pallis the first of the posts supporting the booth must be cut from the vanni (Prosopis spicigera), a tree which they hold in much reverence because they believe that the five Pandava princes, who were like themselves Kshatriyas, during the last year of their wanderings, deposited their arms in a tree of this species. On the tree the arms turned into snakes and remained untouched till the owners return. The Prosopis tree is worshipped in order to obtain pardon from sins, success over enemies and the realization of the devotee's wishes (Thurston, 1906: 95).

The Prosopis tree, especially in Mysore, can also reach a very large size (Drury, 1873: 355).

There is one other interesting detail that can be gleaned from the literature concerning the construction of the marriage pavilion. A great many of the non-Brahman castes in the region we are considering incorporate as a distinctive part of the preparations for a marriage an expedition to a white ant hill from which a quantity of earth is brought, and spread out on the dais underneath the booth. Thurston says that for the Sembadavan it is actually heaped up around the supporting posts (Thurston, VI, 355). Earth from an ant-hill is used on many ritual occasions and is said to be especially auspicious, particularly for growing things, because an ant-hill is always increasing in size (Abbott, 1932, 51).

If we piece together all these bits of information, we get a general impression of the pavilion which runs as follows. Its general form, a square structure on a raised dais supported by twelve posts, reminds us strongly of the famous pillared halls of stone in South Indian temples. It is assumed that these structures have their sides oriented to the four directions, as

do temples, but this detail is not entirely clear from the description. The green wood for the posts is chosen from particular trees, usually very large ones, which are held to have a special religious significance. Under and around the posts special earth associated with growing is heaped and on top of the posts is laid a thatch of green branches, usually from a tree of the fig species. Finally the posts may be painted with auspicious red and white stripes (the importance of these colors will be discussed in detail at a later point) and on them may be tied sprigs of green bamboo and ficus religiosa.

With our knowledge of the creation myth and temple architecture we can begin to see the parallel clearly. The pandal is a kind of makeshift temple incorporating the formal cosmological symbolism of the first creation. We find posts, treated as if they grew out of the earth they stand on and which meet and support on their summit a leafy foliage of the ficus species. The bridal couple sit in the center of this temple, which is symbolically understood to encompass the four regions of the universe in the midst of abundant references to cosmic fertility, creation and lush growth.

It is interesting to note at this point that the non-Brahmans, and particularly the lower castes, place much more emphasis on the erection of this pavilion,and the ritual that surrounds it than do the Brahmans. Dubois specifically says that "amongst the Sudras the erection of the pandal (marriage booth) is one of the most important and solemn of the ceremonies" (Dubois, 1906: 232). No one makes a similar statement in

reference to the Brahman marriage ritual. This difference in emphasis is brought out much more clearly when we consider the muhurtakkāl (referred to as milk post in the literature) which is an additional post erected only by non-Brahmans.

As Dubois describes it among the South Indian Sudras, the milk post is planted in the center of the pavilion and offerings are made to it throughout the marriage ceremony. It is said to represent Vishnu, to whom the sacred fig tree is also dedicated, and processions around it take place at intervals, accompanied by deep obeisance and other marks of respect (Dubois, 1906: 232). The post is often made from a branch of ficus religiosa or at least has leafy twigs of this tree tied to it. It is interesting that, in addition to its associations with the Great Tree, to walk around a ficus religiosa tree a certain number of times daily is a favorite cure for barrenness in the villages of South India. "It is very usual sight, women circling round the huge gnarled trunks in the gray dawn. There is a proverb about a woman who after her first trip around the giant tree hopefully felt her belly!...It is said that couples sleep under the huge neepul (ficus religiosa) in the night and expect the union to be fruitful" (Srinivas, 1942: 174-5).

Thurston clearly thought that the erection of a muhurtakkāl was a significant feature of the marriage ceremony and he specifically mentions its use for thirteen of the twenty non-Brahman castes in our sample. The erection of such a post seems equally common among the high castes in this group, and the low.

Following Dubois it seems likely that the use of a muhurtakkāl is a universal custom among the Sudras of our area (Dubois, 1906, 232). It is interesting that Thurston's descriptions of this post are most detailed for the very lowest castes in the social order, and it appears likely that these are the people who place the most emphasis on it in their ritual. Later material will help to bear out this generalization. Before we develop the significance of the milk-post further, however, let us examine in some detail how it is installed.

A number of different woods can be used for the muhurtakkāl. Those most commonly mentioned in the descriptions are: green bamboo, odina wodier, thespesia populnea, erythrina indica and nimusops hexandra. The first three of these have a whitish sap. The second and third are also well-known among Indian botanists for the speed with which they will regrow from a small cutting (Drury, 1873: 318, 426). Drury does not record anything striking about the properties of the last two, but his work does not systematically describe the sap and growing properties of all the Indian trees. However, Srinivas mentions that the Kalli tree, used in Mysore for this post, exudes a milky substance when scratched (Srinivas, 1942: 92). Abbott confirms that for the region around Bombay "the majority of trees used to supply the halamba (muhurtakkāl) have milky sap (Abbott, 1932: 334). This is clearly why the post acquired the adjective 'milk' in translation into English (Dumont, 1957: 222).

The muhurtakkāl, however, also has certain associations with the color red. The Periyans actually paint it this color by rubbing on turmeric reddened from its natural yellow state

by the addition of lime (Thurston, 1909: VI 98). Also the post is sometimes made of soumidia febrifuga whose wood is reddish in color (Drury, 1873: 401), and more frequently of ficus religiosa whose sap Srinivas has called "red and viscous" (Srinivas, 1942: 92). It is most interesting that Bosch described the sap of the same tree "lactiferous" or milky (Bosch, 1960: 67). Gamble concurs in this judgment of "milky" when speaking of the bark's juice (Gamble, 188: 335). It may be that Srinivas's observation refers to the sap exuded from a cut branch. In any case, both red and white are appropriate colors. We have already seen that the poles of the pavilion may be painted with alternate red and white strips. Furthermore the post may be annointed with milk and/or with yellow cow's urine.

These various associations of the muhurtakkāl with white, yellow and red are not surprising when we stop to examine their references in the broader cultural context. If white is associated with rasa, the elixir of the water which carried in it the essential life-force of creation, red is strongly associated with marriage, good luck and prosperity. These several ideas are inextricably linked in traditional Indian thought, as will be shown in more detail at a later point. Red, of course, is also readily associated with the color of life-giving blood. And finally, we find that the milk post can be replaced by a pestle used to powder household substances, or by a piece of a wooden plow (Bhanderi, 1963: 104 and Thurston, 1909: VI 19). Both these implements are associated, in India, with the idea of an established household and material prosperity.

The muhurtakkāl is always firmly lodged in a small hole dug

for the purpose. A little milk is poured into the pit before erecting the post and sometimes curds, ghee, a pearl, a coral and a bit of gold are added as well (Srinivas, 1942: 92). The Korava actually soak the green branch in the village water tank for several days before planting it in the marriage pavilion (Thurston, 1909: 483). To the north, in Gujarat and U.P., several authors record that at the bottom of the little pit a small earthenware pot is placed to hold water, milk and other substances (Bhandari, 1963: 104 and Stevenson, 1920: 62). Evidently, when the post is erected it is inserted into the mouth of this pot.

There is a most interesting parallel to be noted here with Indian architecture. G.J. Held is one of many writers who have noted the fact that the feet of important pillars are often shaped like pots so that "it seems as if the shaft of the pillar stands in that pot" (Held, 1935: 207). The tops of these pillars are frequently carved in a way which suggests lotus vegetation. E.B. Havell, a noted authority on Indian art, has pursued this problem and suggests the following interpretation:

> (We find in these pillars) an adaption to structural purposes of the same lotus-and-vase motive, which with different implication served for the symbol of the Buddha's nativity...The open flower with turned down petals... suggested to them the heavenly vault supported by...the pivot of the universe. The vase forming the base of the pillar stood for the cosmic waters, the shaft was the stalk of the mystic flower....The bell-shaped capital was the world itself enfolded by the petals of the sky. (Havell, 1920: 41-3).

In another place Havell has suggested that the pole or pillar is also associated with Vishnu's churning stick and Siva's lingam (Havell, 1915: 53). Held notes that pillars in architecture not only have capitals with lotus-like vegetation but

that frequently the shape of the top resembles a second pot, this time with the mouth turned downwards. On the basis of this observation Held carries Havell's interpretation further. He suggests that,

> The pillar in the two kalasas (pots)...(is) a perfect representation of cosmic motion; at the base the pillar revolves in the waters of the underworld, at the top in the world turned upside down, the celestial ocean. (The pillar is like a churning stick while the) two centers of rotation should represent the two births of Agni in heaven and on earth, or the Agnitanenthana (Held, 1935: 210).

Held even suggests that an attempt to show rotation by spiral carving on these pillars can be observed in some cases (Held, 1935: 210).

After the muhurtakkal is installed, ficus religiosa twigs are frequently tied to its apex (Thurston, 1909 VI 97, and Bhandari, 1963: 104). Stevenson says that in Gujarat two sticks are tied crosswise on its summit and with them are placed pipal leaves, turmeric, reddened thread and a madana fruit. On top of this is placed one of the bride's ivory bangles (Stevenson, 1920: 61). Thurston specifically mentions the tying of a thread dyed in turmeric to the post for three different castes in our area, the Valluvan, Kaikolan and Korava. Bags of seeds, pieces of gold, pearls, coral and four-anna pieces are added to this colorful pile by some groups (Thurston, 1906: 96 and Srinivas, 1942: 92). At the end of the marriage festivities some castes leave the post to take root and grow, or it may be specifically planted nearby. In either case it is considered a good sign if it prospers (Thurston, 1909: I 14). Other castes, it seems,

ask the bride and groom jointly to cast it into a tank or float it down a stream (Srinivas, 1942: 93).

According to Srinivas the people in Mysore say the purpose of the muhurtakkal is to ensure the continuity of the line (Srinivas, 1942: 91). Earlier in the same book he suggests that "the milk-post is worshipped in order that the family may reproduce prolifically, that the bridal pair may have children, and great grandchildren" (Srinivas, 1942: 50). Further, he speculates that the twigs of the various trees may be tied to the post "to symbolize the marriage union" (Srinivas, 1942: 51). We would not disagree with any of these possibilities. With our background sketch of cosmological ideas and their traditional form of expression, however, we believe we can enlarge upon this interpretation and carry it further.

The form which the pavilion and muhurtakkal symbolism appears to take in Indian marriages can be outlined as follows. First, we have a marriage booth supported on many poles and resembling the many-pillared hall of a south Indian temple in its general appearance. Secondly, this pavilion can be linked to temple architecture in a much more profound sense. The supports are treated as if they were growing upwards from a fecund base. At their summit they meet green branches which spread out to shade the space below, just as the seed planted at the base of a temple is said to rise through its structure and support at the highest point the Prasada Purusa whose "mantle carries, imaged in its varied texture, in all directions all the forms and principles of manifestation" (Kramrisch, 1946: I 361).

The same cosmological theme is repeated in intensified

form inside, under the pavilion roof. Here, somewhere near the center, the muhurtakkāl is planted in the ground. It rises from a round pot through water or milk, all of which suggests the sprout sent forth from a node on a lotus root. At the base of the post may also be placed a bit of gold or a pearl, recalling the seed at the base of the temple. The eternal rasa can now be seen as drawn upward from the pot to mingle with the milky sap of the fresh, green post. Furthermore, on top of the muhurtakkāl rest more pieces of gold, coral, anna pieces and seeds, all of which remind us of the second great seed, the seed planted by the aerial fig root and which grew into the Great Tree of Life. The leafage of this tree is represented by the fig branches tied to the post. These twigs can be understood, not only to "symbolize the marriage union" as Srinivas suggests, but at the same time to represent the first and most important of all unions, that between the stalk that grew from the female waters and the male breath which descended in the form of a fig root.

We can also better understand now why the muhurtakkāl is said to ensure the continuity of the line. Bosch makes this very point clear in his discussion of the Tree-motif in temple sculpture and art.

> We can no longer wonder at the Indians' endless... repetition of the Tree motif....All these beings and all these things, mortal and frail as they are, can only withstand the ever-present dangers and misfortunes if constantly strengthened by the life-giving power of the amrita (rasa).
>
> From this root the sap is sent forth in all directions, it rises through the central stem, spreads through

> the side shoots...and wherever it appears it engenders Life, the Life that animates animals and men, demons and gods, that makes the fields fertile and the cattle thrive, pours riches and wealth over the earth (Bosch, 1960 : 234-64).

We have already noted that the post is frequently made from a species of tree whose cuttings grow quickly and well. We have also seen that it is often planted after the ceremony or left to take root where it stands. Auboyer mentions that in ancient India posts were sometimes raised in commemoration of an important religious sacrifice (Auboyer, 1961: 57), a fact providing an interesting parallel to the present-day custom of planting the wedding post. The Bhils go so far as to say the muhurtakāl will "confer issue on the bridal pair in proportion to its own fruit" (Abbott, 1932: 321). There is some evidence that the erection of a post is associated with fertility and prosperity in India in other contexts as well. Abbott says that the central pole of the threshing floor must be cut from a tree with a milky sap (Abbott, 1932: 334), and Thurston mentions in passing that many castes have a ceremony of "putting up the pot" when the building of a new house is commenced (Thurston, 1909: V 57). We will return to this problem in section 5g.

F.D.K. Bosch has outlined the general form which the Indian creation myth and accompanying cosmological ideas have taken in temple sculpture and the other visual arts at the sophisticated and courtly centers of Hindu tradition. We have shown how this conception is repeated in the basic conception of an Indian temple, a parallel Bosch does not develop. And, further, we argue that this same basic form appears in the traditional marriage ritual of unsophisticated villagers. Even

more interesting is the fact that the pavilion and muhurtakkāl are not mentioned in the ancient Gṛhya Sūtra texts on the marriage ceremony (Pandey, 1949: 361092). They thus seem to be truly popular ritual traditions rather than a prestige-building imitation of ritual proceedings described by the ancient commentaries. Most surprising of all is that the emphasis on the milk-post and the details of its construction increase the further down in the social hierarchy we go. Both Thurston's and Dubois's observations support this conclusion, and they are the men who have produced the most extensive and thorough ethnography on our area to date.

(e) The Place of the Square in Hindu Cosmology

One small but significant detail was omitted in the description of the muhurtakkāl given in the last section. This is the fact that in Gujarat, at any rate, the two sticks tied crosswise and balanced on the post's summit are said "to represent the four faces of the god Brahma" (Stevenson, 1920: 61). This fits precisely with the classical representation of the Great Tree. This tree appears in art and sculpture as " a symmetrical organism spreading in four directions whose axis... is the stem rising vertically from the lotus-root" (Bosch, 1960: 85). If the tree is depicted in a two-dimensional plane it has only two side branches with the stem thrust upwards between them, or four branches in two layers of two with a fifth rising vertically between them. This visual conception of the

Great Tree explains, as well, a statement by Srinivas to the effect that "the kalli branch (used for the muhurtakkal) should have an odd number of twigs. A twigless stem is never chosen, for twigs indicate the growth and spreading of the family" (Srinivas, 1942: 91-2).

The basic conception of the Tree, however, is three dimensional. It is supposed to grow towards the four points of the compass and to fill all four regions of the world. In this ideal representation the earth is seen as square. Squareness in India is considered to be "the mark of order, of finality to the expanding life, its form; and of perfection beyond life and death" (Kramrisch, 1946: I 22). Sometimes the sides of the square are subdivided, giving the compass more divisions. The ideal plan for a city in ancient India, for example, was a square with three main roads running from north to south and three more from east to west, thus dividing the city into sixteen sections (Auboyer, 1961: 158). However, the stem of the Tree is always understood to rise vertically through the node where the side branches originate. Thus the center of the square always remains prominent in architectural plans. From this scheme we understand why the important numerical divisions in classical Hindu cosmology are 4-5, 8-9, 16-17 and 32-33 (Bosch, 1960: 85).

As a result many of these numbers have a special significance in folk-belief. The ecliptic in Indian astrology, for example, is drawn as a square zodiac (Kramrisch, 1946: I 30). In addition, "to the Hindu the fourth day of the week is an

auspicious day, as is the fourth day of the lunar or solar fortnight" (Abbott, 1932: 295). Eight is also a lucky number. When blessing a woman a common good wish is "May you have eight sons and remain married until death". Eight is also common in the details followed in preparing a yantra. Such a holy verse is written with eight kinds of powder mixed with water on the eighth day of the second fortnight. A lotus figure with eight or sixteen leaves is also a very common design (Abbott, 1932: 303-4). Five is similarly auspicious.

> There are many sayings such as 'There is god in the mouth of five persons', 'Where there are five there is God', 'The fifth is the fruition of the act', and 'At five it ends'...There are groupings of gods in fives....The materials of worship are kept in a vessel of five compartments....An amalgam of five metals is credited with special sakti....There are five daily sacrifices. The five products of the cow are used for purification (Abbott, 1932: 295-6).

The sanctity of particular numbers is a developed science in India and many more examples could be given. Their importance is mentioned because these beliefs enter into the marriage ceremony at many points. We will refer to this later, but we can note here with new significance what has already been said; that marriage festivities always last an odd number of days and that a five-day duration is particularly common for those who can afford it.

For the same reasons each of the cardinal directions in India has a character of its own and is guarded by its own gods which are associated with this scheme. According to Jouveau-Dubreuil these are : Indra for the east, Agni for the southeast, Yama for the south, Niruti for the southwest, Varuna for the

west, Vāyu for the northwest, Kuvera for the north and Isāna for the northeast (Jonveau-Dubreuil, 1937: 107). The east and the north are generally considered to be the most favorable direction. In all auspicious ceremonies, and in particular at a marriage, the participants must face one of these two cardinal points. The east is usually preferred. Houses should face east or north and most temples face the east, (Abbott, 1932:529). In ritual circumambulation one walks clockwise or following the course of the sun if the occasion is auspicious, and counterclockwise or against the sun if it is inauspicious.

The south is associated with death and on death a lamp is lighted whose wick is turned towards this compass point. Plowing towards the south is avoided and folklore has it that a man should not sleep with his feet to the south (Abbott, 1932: 529). "Threshing floors are placed in the northwest corners of fields, cattle sheds to the southwest of a dwelling house, wells and bathrooms to the west and the hearth to the southeast" (Abbott, 1932: 529). There is some attention paid to the cardinal directions in all marriage ceremonies. However, as we shall see, the points of the compass and their subdivisions are more important in upper caste ritual and particular emphasis is laid on these details by the Brahmans.

(f) <u>Fire and Plant Life</u>

There remains one further aspect of the creation myth and the imagery associated with it for us to develop: the close connection between the god of fire, Agni, and the origin of

life. With this new information plus our discussion of the quincunx (square with a central point), above, we shall show how the same creation theme receives a significantly different symbolic expression in the Brahman and upper-caste non-Brahman marriage ceremonies.

To begin with, the great seed of life and fire share a common color. We will remember that the seed from which the Great Tree grew is called the hiranyagarbha or golden germ. The association of fire with gold is also familiar in mythology. There Agni is "variously compared with gold, attibuted with a golden body, called lord, father or maker of gold and represented in Vedic rites by a golden symbol" (Bosch, 1960: 58). Fire is also identified with water and there is said to be fire in water as there is fire in the sea (Abbott,1932: 174). The Vedic poets themselves set the stage for this when they being all three, seed, fire and water, together by saying: "When the great waters came, bearing all as the Germ and generating fire, then arose the one life-spirit of the Gods" (Rg. Veda X, 121 7 as quoted in Radhakrishnan, 1957: 24). Monier-Williams confirms that this idea that fire is produced from water is still prevalent in India today (Monier-Williams, 1891: 364). It cannot, therefore, be classed as merely a learned conception, an identification familar only to students of the ancient texts.

From this association of fire and water comes the idea that there is fire in trees. Sometimes tree sap is thought of as gold "just as Amrita (rasa) is gold and immortality is gold"

(Bosch, 1960: 63). Further, we will remember that the spreading mantle of the temple is associated with the growth of a Golden Purusa from a golden jar. In adition, the two great fig trees, the ficus religious and ficus bengalensis, are called in India vanaspati or 'lord of the forst', and this is a name they share with the fire god Agni (Bosch, 1960: 67).

And, just as great spreading trees are associated with fertility, so fire is associated with fertility. "Fire is the semen of the god Siva...and the human seed is produced by the fire latent in the human body" (Abbott, 1932: 175). What is more, the Laws of Manu say that "an oblation duly thrown into the fire, reaches the sun; from the sun comes rain, from rain food, therefrom the living creatures (derive their substance)". Thus, Manu too, clearly associates fire sacrifice with abundance of offspring and material prosperity (Muller, 1886: III, 81:89).

What is an even more important fact for our argument, however, is that fire is often directly identified with a piller. "The god of fire is said to separate heaven and earth by means of a piller (Rg Veda I 67, 5: VI 8,3) to support the firmament with his flame or piller of smoke (Rg Veda III 5, 10; III 4,6) or elsewhere is identified directly with a piller (Rg Veda IV 5,1" (Bosch, 1960 94) In addition there is also a myth in the populer Linga-Purana (I, 17, 5-52; 19,8 ff) called the Lingobhavamurtmyth of Siva which expresses this equivalence of god and piller in vivid terms.

> Once the gods Brahma and Vishnu quarreled over the question which of the two was the mightiest. Suddenly the god Siva appeared before them in the figure of the primeval linga, surrounded by thousands of flames, resembling hundreds of cosmic fires, having no beginning,

middle or end and being the origin of all things. Hereupon Brahma, transformed into a goose and Visnu assuming the figure of a boar, tried to get to the top and to the foot of that fiery pillar but after one thousand years of fruitless toil they had to admit failure. Realising then their humbleness they threw themselves down at the feet of the supreme god and meekly paid him homage (Bosch, 1960 : 187-8).

According to Bosch this identity of god and pillar is even more distinct in iconography than in literature. Here the primeval linga is often pictured "as a flaming piller having in its center as aperture through which the god in his four-armed figure is visible" (Bosch, 1960 : 189).

Even without this visual image of a four-armed god coming out of a pillar of fire, Agni has strong associations with the four directions and the square that contains them. The vessel in which the seed is placed under the center of the temple is, according to Krumrisch, "a counterpart to the Urna, the fire pan, the womb of the Fire, equal in size with the embryo, Agni" (Krumrisch, 1946: I 24). What is more, above the seed and concentric with the larger square which marks the periphery of the the temple there is a high alter, the center for Vedic fire sacrifice, which is also square.

To complete the substitution of fire for water, seed and the pillar-like stem of the Great Tree, we may recall that this plant was imagined to rise through the center of the temple in the form of a support for the golden jar. A second quotation from another page of Krumrisch supplies the complementary imagery of a piller of fire in the place of a vegetal support. "In supernal radience, the golden Purusa of the Vedic (fire) alter appears raised from the golden disc...within the bottom

layer of the Agni to the finial above the superstructure of the Hindu temple" (Kramrisch, 1946: II 360). Kramrisch, herself, does not comment on this substitution.

(c) The Nuptial Fire

According to the Grhya Sūtras or classical ritual handbooks, which the Brahmans follow in detail, a fire must be kindled at the beginning of every saṁskāra or life-cycle ceremony. The lighting of this sacred fire in the middle of the marriage pavilion is, therefore, a universal rite at the beginning of the Brahman marriage ceremony. It is mentioned by both Thurston and Dubois in describing the marriage of Tamil Brahmans, by Srinivas for the Kannada Brahmans, by Padfield for the Telugu Brahmans and by Stevenson for the Gujarat Brahmans. Fire plays an important part in the nuptial ritual for these groups and a sacrifice is made to its flames after each of the three rites, Kanyādāna, panigrahana and sapta-padi, which the Brahmans consider to be the crucial and binding events of the ceremony. These three rites are considered to seal a lasting contract between the couple, when they are executed before a fire as prime witness. At the same time that the fire is a witness it is also thought to serve as a messenger which carries news of man's doings and of his sacrificial offerings to the gods of heaven (Pandey, 1949: 61).

The building of a sacred fire and the making of oblations to it is also mentioned by Thurston for the castes of groups B and C. (No fire is noted for the Kammalan and the Kuravan,

but then Thurston's descriptions of their respective marriage rituals are so short that he does not even refer to the use of a pavilion for these two castes.) Groups B and C, we will remember, are those who habitually employ Brahman priests at their ceremonies. A fire is also included in the accounts of two of the castes in Group D (the group which occasionally employs Brahman priest at their ceremonies), the Ambattan and the Pattanavan. Interestingly enough these are the only two castes in this category where Thurston specifically mentions that a Brahman priest is present. In the other six castes of group D and in all groups below this one in the hierarchy a non-Brahman priest is employed according to Thurston's report. In only one of these later descriptions, a very elaborate and unconvincing report of a Paraiyan wedding by his Brahman assistant Rangachargi, is a sacred fire mentioned (Thurston, 1909: VI 99).

In these lower castes, however, Thurston does say that frequently one or more lamps are lit and placed on the marriage dais somewhere near the nuptial couple and the milk post. Although none of the ethnographers who have written about the area say that a sacred fire can only be lit and cared for by a Brahman priest, Thurston's material suggests that this is probably the case. Where there is no fire, a small lamp or pot light can be said to serve as a reminder of the symbolic importance of fire. However, these lights frequently seem to represent specific gods or ancestors, and nowhere are oblations to them mentioned. It is only those castes who employ Brahman priests who appear to circumambulate a separate sacred fire and to place sacrifices in it.

Thurston's data on our area indicates that when a non-Brahman couple make three clockwise circumambulations together (one of the important rites of the marriage which we will discuss fully at a later point) they go around the dais and milk post, and not just the sacred fire as is specified for Brahmans. This circumambulation of the entire pavilion is mentioned for the Agamudaiyan and Palli (who have a Brahman priest and a sacred fire) as well as for such low castes as the Konga Vellala, Pallan and Pariyan who have no Brahman present and no fire. All this would seem to imply that in the Brahman ceremony the sacred fire is the main witness of the contract and the center of ritual attention while among the lowest castes, on the contrary, it is muhurtakkal which receives offerings, witnesses the ceremonial union and is the object of encircling steps.

Among the Agamudaiyan cultivators, an upper non-Brahman caste who habitually employs Brahman priests, Thurston describes an unusual elaboration on the marriage setting (Thurston, 1909: I 13-14). Around the sacred fire on the four sides of a square are placed a number of people and objects. To the east, in the most prominent position, is a many-branched lamp representing Indra. The muhurtakkal is just beside this lamp and slightly north of it. The priest and a pot with a lamp balanced on its brim occupy the southeast corner and one or more women representing devatas (Niruti) are posted in the southwest corner. The bridegroom, said to represent Varuna, is seated to the west and presumably faces east. A 'best man' representing Vāyu is placed at the northwest corner and another man with a bag of money is seated to the north and said to be Kuvera, the god of

wealth. A grinding stone and roller representing Siva and Sakti are placed in the northeast along with a pan of seedlings.

The emphasis in this description on a square surrounding the fire and on the various gods which inhabit the four regions of the universe fits well with the cosmological ideas we have described. More interesting, however, for our argument is the fact that the many-branched lamp and the muhurtakkāl seem by virtue of their easterly position and elaborate construction to be equally as prominent as the sacred fire. In addition, the Agamudaiyans, in taking their three turns round the dais, break a coconut "near the grindstone" (Thurston, 1909: I 14), which, according to the author's description, would appear to mean at the milk post. A few minutes later the couple offer parched rice to the sacred fire. Thus, among the middle group of castes, the upper non-Brahman, the muhurtakkāl and fire appear to complete for eminence.

Let us now turn to some of the literature describing the use of fire and sacred pillars in ancient India. First, we find that in the Vedic texts trees are often considered to be endowed with magical virtues and that their essence is considered to be identical with the divine principle. The Great Tree of ancient mythology was thought to dispense super-terrestial benefits and to symbolize knowledge, life and fertility (Viennot, 1954: 2). The counterpart in ritual was the sacrificial post or yūpa. This post consisted of an uprooted tree, striped of its branches and replanted in the center of a sacred enclosure. The recitation of verse and ritual anointment which followed point clearly the fundamental divinity and transcendental properties of this

post in its ceremonial context (Viennot, 1954: 2).

The central theme of Vedic ritual is the offering to god of a divine elixir called soma. This oblation was the final achievement which followed upon complex preparations including the erection of a post necessary for tying up the animals destined to immolation. Viennot gives an excellent description of this sacred pillar.

> Au jour propice, accompagnés du bucheron, les prêtres, se conformant à un rituel rigoureux...s'en vont dans la forêt à la recharge de l'arbre qu'ils jugeront propre à la fabrication du yûpa. Mais les texte indiquent les actes propitiatoires qu'il convient de taire pour se concilier l'esprit de l'arbre qui va être abattu. Une herbe darbha, la pointe en haut est placée sur le tronc à l'endroit ou la hache va le frapper en disant, "O plant protège-le. O hache, ne lui fais pas be mal." Le premier éclat est soigneusement conservé, car il est la splendeur de l'arbre. Il faut alors prendre garde que le tronc n'ait pas d'écorchures, qu'il tombe pas au Sud, mais vers l'Est, sejour des dieux.
>
> Le fût est alors soigneusement ébranché a la hache et façonné en un pilier a 8 angles a l'exclusion de la base (upara) qui est laissée brute... L'arbre, maintenant réduit a l'etat de poteau, est conduit sur le lieu du sacrifice où l'officiant, assisté des brahmanes, va exécuter les rites de sacralisation et de mise en place. Tout d'abord il est étendu au sol, au bord de la fosse, la pointe vers l'est, on despose autour de lui un vase à eau, une botte d'herbe, du beurre fondu, une cuiller à libations et deux cordes faites d'herbe darbha...Puis le pilier lui-meme est dressé dans la fosse, bien preparée, en prononçant plusieurs stances par lesquelles le poteau sacrificiel... devient en outre un pilier cosmique. Le pretre oint alors le yûpa avec une cuiller à libations (Viennot, 1954: 41-3.)

The care taken over the erection of this pillar, the libations poured over it and the import of the verses recited all closely parallel the setting up of a muhurtakāl as we have described earlier.

Most important of all is the fact that the pillar is understood at once as a manifestation of the divine and as a source

of the elixir of immortality. It is at once the Tree of Life and the point of communion between god and man (Viennot, 1954: 47). It is a symbol of the Great Tree and the priest in addressing the post calls it Vanaspati, or "lord of the forest" (Viennot, 1954: 41). Furthermore it is referred to as the axis which separates earth and sky, the pillar which supports the sun and vessel of the liquor of life, soma (Viennot, 1954: 46). There is even a thread of darbha grass tied around the sacred post at the moment at which it is invoked as "impregnater of the world." After the thread is tied the post is poetically compared to "a well-dressed young man" (Viennot, 1954: 44). There is a similar thread tied around the marriage muhurtakkā. We will discuss the significance of these threads further in section 7c.

Viennot insists that the post or yūpa in the Vedic ceremony was not simply an accessory item, divinized because of its general association with soma oblations, but that it held a central place as a symbolic equivalent of the great, cosmic tree and was the means by which the soma was understood to be raised to the realm of the god Indra (Viennot, 1954: 53). H. Oldenberg in his famous work on the religion of the Vedic period concurs in this opinion of the post as a central item in the ritual. He indicates that this ritual in its most primitive form centered on vegetal imagery and that the accompanying fire was a magical accessory. Only later did fire become the center of the cult and acquire the role of messenger between man and god.

> L'ethnologie nous fait remonter à une forme absolument primitive du culte, qui comportait bien un sacrifice et un

feu sacré, mais où celui-ci n'était pas encore un feu de sacrifice. L'oblation prennait une autre voie que celle du feu pour se rentre auprès du dieu ou du genié. Quant au feu, qu'on n'avait point encore promu a l'office de messager entre les hommes et le mone surhumain, il n'était qu'un feu magique chargé d'écarter les demons...Ce feu magique, dans le culte védique, se confon avec l'incarnation plus récente du feu messager du sacrifice (Oldenberg, 1903: 267).

During the early historical period, the time at which the Śṛti or "remembered" literature was composed, we know that the Brahmans came to heavily emphasize fire and while vegetal imagery faded into the background. In these texts, composed solely by Brahmans, the family was, above all, identified with the domestic fire and its associated ritual (Auboyer, 1961: 241). Speaking of this literature Viennot says that the very trees which were indispensable to Vedic ritual, because now the objects of private cults which figure only vaguely in scholarly works which were unrepresentative of popular customs (Viennot, 1954: 88). Bosch observes a similar decline in the literary references to the tree and to vegetal symbolism during this period (Bosch, 1960: 241).

We do, however, find enough references to permit us to affirm that tree-symbolism was recognized by the Brahmanical scholars to exist at the popular level at this time (Viennot, 1954: 88). Auboyer, for example, tells us that horse sacrifices and the all-important post to which the horse was tied, remained vital for the installation of a king during the early historical period and that isolated examples of this rite have appeared as recently as the 19th century (Auboyer: 364). She and Viennot also mention the importance in the ancient

period placed on the erection of the central pillar of a new dwelling (Auboyer, 1961: 171, Viennot, 1954: 67) and both refer specifically to its cosmological association. In addition, a tall, isolated column used to stand outside of each capital city (Auboyer, 1961: 171, 157-8). Of this latter piller Auboyer says:

> C'était un monument fort important aux yeux des Indens: signe be victoire et de bienvenue, elle était dótee d'un double caractere imperial et cosmologique...Sa presence auprès d'une ville, d'un village ou d'un sanctuaire affirmait que la protection royale s'y exergait avec tous les privilèges conferes en pareil cas. Centre theorique du monde et symbole de la royauté universelle, cette colonne était l'object de la vénération populaire. Hommes et femmes l'honoraient volontiers en accomplissant autour d'elle la circumambulation rituelle. Ils en touchaient le fût du plat de la main droite; le frottement de leurs mains, de génération en génération l'a poli et foncé davantage a hauteur d'homme (Auboyer, 1961: 158).

Thus the interest in trees, posts and columns continued in popular ritual and in architecture while it was superseded at the textual level by an interest in the sacred fire, Agni. This point can also be made specifically in regard to the marriage ceremony. Auboyer, in describing the ceremony for this period, in as popular form as she is able to deduce from her sources, mentions the existence of a pavilion, similar to the wooden structure we have described in use at the present day. Yet the Gṛhya-Sūtra texts on marriage ritual which date from the same epoch nowhere mention such a construction. Instead they stress that the marriage is to take place on an elevated dais, which has been smeared with cow dung, sprinkled with water and in the middle of which burns the sacred fire (Müller, 1886: Vol. XXIX, 162, 276, 376-7 and 1892: Vol. XXX, 14, 138, 252). We have also

found in the comments of one of these sūtras a warning to the boy who has just taken a samavartana bath, ending his period of studentship and preparing him for marriage, not to touch a sacrificial post. "By touching it he would bring upon himself (the guilt of) whatever faults = have been committed at that sacrifice" (Muller: 1892: Vol. XXX, 181-2).

M. Charpentier, in studying the meaning of the word naicagakha, meaning worshipper of the nyagrodha (ficus bengalensis), in the ancient texts finds that it has a pejorative nuance in referring to the popular tree cults. (Charpentier as quoted by Viennot, 1954: 114-5). This observation only reinforces what we have said above. In addition, the Buddhists of the period, following their Brahman exemplars, express in numerous places their reserve about the worship of sylvan gods. Although there was a very extensive use of vegetal imagery in the Buddhist art of ancient India, it was always the personification of the plant, or tree, which was important. This is one of the most important conclusions of Viennet's study.

> L'arbre sacré boudhique tel qu'il se dégage de l'étude précédente est donc une forme évoluees de l'arbre brâhmanique puis qu'il est toujours conçu comme personnifié et, non plus seulement sous sa seule apparence de végétal sacré (Viennot, 1954: 127).

In the foregoing section we have attemtped to show how deeply imbedded in the cosmological imagery the marriage ceremony is. In addition, we have pointed to two complementary traditions used to express these conceptions at the two opposing ends of the caste hierarchy. We have further noted their differing association in the historical development of Hinduism. After considering

some of the other differences in Brahman and non-Brahman marriage ritual we will return in the conclusion to the question of these two significantly different but intimately connected symbolic traditions.

6 MARRIAGE RITUAL AND THE SANSKRIT TEXTS

There are three consecutive rites described in the Gṛhya Sūtras or ritual handbooks which taken together finalize a marital union and make it legally binding. There are the kanyādāna (giving away of the virgin bride), pani-grahana plus Angi-pradaksina (taking her hand and circling the fire) and sapta-padi (the seven steps). These three traditional acts constitute the highlight of the marriage ceremony for Brahmans all over India. References to these rites are frequently made in works of fiction and they are as familiar to Brahmans as the words "I do" are to people in the West.

These three rites may be run together in various ways, as we shall see, but they are most commonly treated as three distinct acts and from the Gṛhya Sūtras it would appear that one should make a separate sacrifice to the sacred fire after each one (Pandey, 1949: 369-84). Usually the marriage is considered binding on completion of the third of the seven steps, but Brahmans in Cochin emphasize the importance of the second (Thurston, 1909: I 286), and Brahmans in South Canara the first (Thurston, 1909: I 282). In the following we shall discuss each of these three rites in detail and attempt to discover what parallels they have among the non-Brahman castes of our area. After this we shall examine some of the less important rituals mentioned by the texts in the same fashion.

(a) Giving Away the Bride

The first of these three central Brahman rites is called kanyādāna in Sanskrit but is referred to sometimes as dhare in the Tamil area. Pandey, generalizing from several different texts, describes the rite and the events leading up to it as follows :

> The maternal uncle of the bride brings her near the nuptial fire facing towards the east and a curtain is drawn between her and the bridegroom...Names of the ancestors of both the parties with Gotra and Pravara are announced loudly. (The bride is given to the groom with appropriate verses. He formally accepts her.)... Only the constituted authorities are entitled to make the gift of a bride... According to Yajnavalkya the father, grandfather, brother, caste people and the mother are authorized in descending order (Pandey, 1949: 370-72).

Prabhus, who also describes the ceremony as given in the Sūtras, confirms that the bride is given by her father (or other guardian in his place) and adds that a libation of water is poured out by him to symbolize his gift. Meanwhile several Sanskrit verses are recited to the effect that the daughter is being given to the groom (Prabhu, 1954: 166-7). Thurston's description of the ceremony for the Tamil Brahmans agrees with these other sources, but he adds a few very significant details.

> The bride sits in her father's lap and her mother stands at her side...The father places the hand of the bride on that of the groom and both he and the bride's mother pour water over the united hands of the contracting couple. The following śloka is repeated "I am giving you a virgin decorated with jewels to enable me to obtain religious merit" (Thurston, 1909: 281-2).

From these descriptions with the addition of others about Brahmans elsewhere in India we can draw several important

conclusions about the kanyādāna ceremony in general. First, the bride is always presented by her father with the mother standing by his side to indicate her participation in the act of giving. If the father is unable to preside then someone of his lineage, preferably his brother, replaces him. Her mother or other guardian is next in line. The mother's brother is not mentioned in this role. Second, the traditional religious reasoning telling us why a father should give away his daughters is well stated in the subsequent verses he is asked to recite. A daughter is married in order to secure marital felicity for her and to ensure a continuing abundance of offspring in the next generation. In marrying her the father makes a "gift" because the children born to her will belong to another lineage. "Giving" away a daughter is considered a great sacrifice on his part and religious merit is "earned" in return. With this added merit the father hopes "to obtain the heaven of Brahma" and at the same time to gain "salvation" for his ancestors (Padfield, 1896: 125).

This emphasis on human fertility and the need for continued offspring is evident in the ritual itself. The pouring of water over the joined fists reminds us of those waters of the original myth which lay over the golden seed, and the sap, rasa, elixir of life. Meanwhile, several verses are recited asking that the union may be fertile and which bring to mind the new life which is to spring from this symbolic joining grasp. The ceremony is followed by sacrifices to the fire, by the throwing of rice and by a request that the bride sit on

a heap of paddy (un-husked rice).

Srinivas mentions that a number of non-Brahman castes in Mysore include the kanyādāna (dhare)rite in their marriage ceremony (Srinivas, 1942: 20). It is most interesting to discover, therefore, that among the non-Brahman Tamils of the area we are studying this rite is not common. Thurston mentions the tying of the clothes of the couple in one upper non-Brahman caste, the Palli. Both Padfield and Stevenson mention this as a part of the kanyādāna rite among the Brahmans so this parallel of tying clothes and joining hands is easily defended. Thurston also mentions that three of the lowest castes, the Koliyan, Malayalai and Pallan, link the little fingers of the couple and pour milk over them. In all four instances, however, it is only the general symbolism of joining and of fertility which is repeated by the non-Brahman groups. In not one case does this ritual have the prominence of these descriptions that the kanyādāna has for the Brahmans. More important, yet, is the fact that nowhere among non-Brahmans in our area does the father symbolically "give" the bride away. By contrast, the mother's brother's role vis à vis the bride is emphasized.

(b) The Mother's Brother.

According to the Gṛhya Sūtras, it is the mother's brother who escorts the bride to the wedding pavilion (Pandey, 1949 : 369). After she arrives, however, it is her father who takes charge of her and attention centers on him as he gives her

away in the ensuing kanyādāna. The mother's brother is not even considered a suitable candidate to give the bride away if the father is incapacitated or dead. In this instance the responsibility evolves on someone in his male patrilineage, or as a last resort, on her mother, as we have seen. A similar pattern of maternal uncle as escort and father as guardian and giver of the bride is still common among the Tamil Brahmans in our area (Thurston, 1909: 280-82).

There is, in addition another traditional gesture made by the mother's brother at his niece's betrothal ceremony, which so far as we can gather, is required in the Dravidian-speaking region of India alone. We are referring to the fact that at the betrothal the maternal uncle must be first to accept betel leaves and areca nut from the hands of the father of the prospective groom. Thurston makes it clear that this acceptance is considered a sign that the mother's brother consents to the match. The wedding cannot proceed without his formal approval. A custom of this kind is mentioned for no less than eight of the castes in our area: Idaiyan, Palli, Kallan, Uppiliyan, Pattanavan, Valaiyan, Korava and Malayalai. Since the betrothal arrangements are not directly connected with the marriage ceremony itself, Thurston does not always include a paragraph about them. We may surmise that the consent of the maternal uncle is probably an even more general custom in the area than the available material would indicate.

When we learn that cross-cousin marriage is a general theme in the Tamil-speaking areas, we can begin to understand

why the maternal uncle is given such an important role in the decision about whom his sister's daughter should marry. The idea of cross-cousin marriage is, in fact, deeply imbedded in the Tamil words for close kin. Thus the word for mother's brother, mamaN, is also used for father's sister's husband and for father-in-law (Dumont, 1957: 276). In addition, there is a high general value placed on such marital matches. A good example of this traditional interest can be taken directly from the Pariyan marriage ceremony. Here Thurston says that the groom, on entering the bride's house, has his toes pinched by her brother until a promise is extracted from the groom that if a daughter is born of his marriage she will be given in marriage to the son of the brother (Thurston, 1909: VI, 101). Terminologically as well as culturally, the marriage of first cousins is expected in Tamilnad. Parents anticipate being given first choice on their nephews and nieces when arranging marriages for their own children.

A first cousin marriage, however, is often hard to arrange for one's children because of variability in the age, sex and number of offspring which any one sibling is likely to have. In regard to this problem Dumont's material supplies some most interesting information. He tells us that if the maternal uncle's son actually does marry his father's sister's daughter, that it no longer is this uncle which leads the girl to the pavilion. In such a case, he says that the mother's brother is replaced by one of his brothers, or failing this, by a more distant lineage agnate (Dumont, 1957: 223). This information

seems to imply that the several brothers of the mother, and to a lesser extent her more distant agnates, all have a certain claim on her daughter for their sons. The man who escorts the girl to the pavilion renounces his competing claim and as a representative of the lineage, the claim of geneologically more distant members, in favor of the man with whose son the marriage has actually been arranged.

By use of the same reasoning, when a girl is not, in fact, marrying her maternal uncle's son, he, by escorting her to the pavilion can be understood to be publically giving up the right to arrange her marriage in his and his lineage's own interest. He has given one sign of his approval at the betrothal. He now makes the final ritual gesture by acting as her escort to the very spot where she is to be married. Dumont, without commenting on it, gives an excellent example of this sentiment in his own ethnographic material.

> Ensuite l'oncle maternel, prenant ses mains dans les siennes, amène le fille au dehors et lui fait faire tois fois le tour be la plate-forme dans le sens auspicieux, puis il l'y fait monter per l'ouest du pied droit...Le bétel que tient dans ses mains la fiancée no droit pas être endommage a l'arrivée, sinon c'est que l'oncle a serré trop fort (Dumont, 1957: 223).

Thus the squeeze of the uncle's hand is equated with his interest in the girl and the difficulty he has in giving his full and sincere consent to her marriage elsewhere.

Among the non-Brahman castes of the region, however, Thurston does not once mention the ceremonial gift of a girl by her father, although he specifically refers to the mother's brother as escorting or carrying the bride to the pavilion on a number

of occasions. He records this latter gesture explicitly for five castes, the Idaiyan, Kallan, Pallan, Malayalai and Pariyan[a][1]. In several others, for example the Kammalan, he says that the bride is taken to the dais, although he does not specify by whom. It is likely therefore, that the mother's brother bringing the girl to the marriage pavilion, is a widespread custom among non-Brahmans in our area, as well as being traditional in the Brahman community.

There is an important difference in the significance of this rite in the two groups, however. The absence of kanyādāna among the non-Brahmans results in the bride's escort being brought into considerably greater prominence. He is now the only relative who has a specific ritual role vis-à-vis the bride during the climatic events of the ceremony. It would seem that we have an example here of a regional social ideal which has become increasingly important in the marriage ritual of the lower castes, while the larger all-India religious value associated with the 'gift of a daughter' has faded and is forgotten. The mother's brother has become the all-important relative in relation to the bride. Her parents may wash her feet or wave lightened lamps around her head, but these gestures are first made to the groom and are not intended to single out the bride in particular. They are meant, rather, to emphasize the importance of the couple as a couple. We will discuss these latters details further in another section.

The consent of the groom's mother's brother is also required by some castes before a wedding can take place. Thurston suggests that this is the case among the Idaiyan, Pattinavan

Valaiyan and Malayalai. In the same way among the Brahmans and the Malayalai the groom may be carried to the pavilion on the shoulders of his maternal uncle. The mother's brother of both bride and groom are therefore important. However, the role of the bride's mother's brother is stressed more and more frequently in the ceremony and therefore probably more strongly in the general culture, than is the role of the same relative vis-a-vis the groom. Residentially as well as culturally it is the daughters and not the sons who are "given" in marriage. It seems reasonable, therefore, that "permission" from the mother's brother to marry elsewhere is more important in the case of a girl.

There is a further problem, however, which we have thus far glossed over. Why, if the general cultural and linguistic ideal in the Tamil area is symmetic cross-cousin marriage, should it be the mother's brother rather than the father's sister's husband who is considered to have a "claim" on the girl? If a symmetric marriage has been made in the previous generation and the girl's mother's brother is, in fact as well as in speech, her father's sister's husband, then there are, of course, no problems. However, we know that for practical reasons this kind of marriage is not often carried out. Why, then, should the mother's brother and agnates have first say in the girl's marriage and the privilege of escorting her to the pavilion, rather than the father's sister's husband whose descendents, after all, are equally her cross-cousins.

The answer would seem to lie in the deeper reasoning which

lies behind the cross-cousin marriage ideal. The important consideration appears to be that cross-cousins are somehow purer, closer to the family and therefore better then outsiders as marital partners. If the marriage in the last generation was not symmetric and mother's brother did not marry the father's sister, then the man who did must be an outsider. The mother's brother has first claim on the girl for his son, because her father's sister's children, sired by an outsider, are no longer pure cousins.

There is one other point which we would make in this connection. It is the general cultural theme, with its emphasis on cross-cousin marriage, which prevails in the marriage ceremony. This appears to be true even where there is a marked preference in a particular caste for unilateral contracts. Such is the case, for example, among the Kallan who Dumont tells us place a strong value on marriage and consider the patrilateral cross-cousin less desirable. The latter marriage, they say, upsets the direction of the alliance established in the previous generation. It is better to give a daughter to the son of the man whom father's sister married and to reinforce the direction in which women have travelled in the past, than to receive a woman back for one's son from the house to which a sister went (Dumont, 1957: 188-96). Still Dumont says that it is the girl's maternal uncle who must give consent to the marriage, and the same man who is expected to escort her to the wedding pavilion (Dumont, 1957: 218).

This non-Brahman pattern in the Tamil area forms a clear

contrast with Brahman marriage traditions. In the first the emphasis is on the social expectations which focus around the mother's brother's responsibility towards, and interest in, the bride. It is a regional social ideal which triumphs over the particular customs of the small caste groupings within it. In the same way the Tamil Brahman ceremony looks to an all-Indian Brahman ideal. Among the Tamil Brahmans the mother's brothers do carry the bride and groom to the pavilion, but the emphasis shifts away from the mother's brother and his relation to a regional social ideal to the all-India religious texts on marriage. The important ceremony now is kanyādāna or dhāre, the gift of the bride by the father in order to secure added merit in the next world for himself and for his agnatic ancestors.

There is one last question to face. The Gṛhya Sūtras also mention that the mother's brother brings the bride to her wedding seat. We know that this is still the tradition at Jat weddings today (Lewis, 1958: 181-3). Mayer mentions something similar in Central India, the only change being that the bride is carried about by her father's sister's husband, or by her sister's husband, rather than by her mother's brother. Shah confirms that the same is true among one non-Brahman caste in Gujarat (Shah, 1958: 73, 75) and an Indian student at Oxford from Bombay has confirmed that this service may be performed in his area by either mother's brother or sister's husband.

Since there is no cultural ideal of symmetric cross-cousin marriage in the north, our reasoning about the importance of the mother's brother's consent to a marriage in Tamilnad cannot

hold true elsewhere. In fact, in north India marriage with a first cousin would be considered incestuous. Clearly a different interpretation must be laid on this aspect of the nuptial ceremony outside the Tamil area. Mayer, in his writing on Central India has suggested that the important idea is that the man who escorts or carries the bride be an affine, rather than an agnate (Mayer, 1960 231). Interestingly enough, the student from Bombay we interviewed at Oxford suggested the same reasoning without previous knowledge of Mayer and without prompting.

It is possible that in the north a close affinal relative is thought to have a certain immunity from evil or jealous eyes which may try to attack the bride or her agnates on this most important occasion. Perhaps the carrying of the bride by an affine is an suspicious gesture thought to shield the bride against supernatural attacks while moving from one important spot to another. While this role may be emphasized in the north, it is clear that the maternal uncle is not without suspicious associations in the south as well. In our area we find that he is sometimes the one to tie the <u>pattam</u> or protective charm on the wedded pair the second day (Thurston, 1909: 355).

Frequently it is also the maternal uncles who throw garlands of flowers around the necks of their niece and nephew (Thurston, 1909: VI 99). We will have more to say about these suspicious gestures and charms at a later point.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the mother's brother's role, however, stems from the fact that he is also considered to be a man who gives substantial gifts to the bride. Dumont,

in his ethnography on the Kallan, develops in some detail this aspect of the maternal uncle's hand in the marriage (Dumont, 1957: 232). Since Thurston provides us with so little information on gifts it is difficult to know whether this is a general pattern in our area or not. He does, however, mention a gift by the mother's brother in the case of the Pallan and the Paraiyan (Thurston, 1909: V 480, VI 100). This same tradition emerges more clearly from the ethnography on North India. According to Lewis, for example, at a Jat wedding the mother's brother provides the clothing required for the bride at her wedding as well as money and a ring. The groom also receives clothing from his mother's brother, money, and a crown to wear in the marriage ceremony (Lewis, 1958: 175). Shah reinforces this impression in describing a non-Brahman group in Gujarat, saying that the maternal uncle provides clothes for the bride, as well as a wedding reception (Shah: 1958: 74, 77).

Mayer, in writing of Central India, makes a similar point. He says that the maternal uncle is set apart from all other relatives by the type and the size of the presents he is expected to give. This author goes further, in fact, to give us some feeling of the kind of sentiment which is associated with this tradition.

> The mother's brother should give to the sister's son without thought of return and count it a meritorious (punya) act. The relation is closely connected to that of a man with his sister. Here the brother regards himself as his sister's protector and gives her more than she or her husband will give in return (for in many cases the brother

> will not accept anything from his sister and gifts must be made to his children instead). It is, in fact, an extension of this tie which covers the sister's son. I was told several times that the mother's brother takes more interest in the nephew whilst his sister is alive. 'When she is dead,' it was said, 'who is there for him to ask 'how are your little ones?"'. The primary interest thus lies in the sister rather than the people of her conjugal household. In this sense the mother's brother has the interest of an agnate, but shows it in terms of a uterine relationship. For the material expressions of the relation occur mainly when the nephews and nieces are married and have children (Mayer, 1960: 223).

Perhaps the escorting or carrying of the bride to the pavilion in other areas of India is understood as merely one more way in which the mother's brother indicates his willingness to be helpful and to serve her and her mother's family.

(c) The Three Circumambulations

The next of the three central Brahman rites which must be performed at a marriage consists of the groom seizing the bride's right hand in his own right hand and leading her three times clockwise around the sacred fire. The joined hands are basically a repeat and an affirmation of the father's gesture of placing them together in the previous rite, kanyādāna. There is an important shift, however, in that this time the groom takes the initiative and it is he who recites the accompanying verses which mention happiness, old age and offspring. According to Pandey, this time the grasp is a sign of the groom's taking full responsibility for the girl on himself (Pandey, 1949: 379). Sometimes, this ceremony and the kanyādāna are run together and there is no break for offerings to the fire in between. In this

case the groom simply takes the girl around the fire after her father has given him her hand (Thurston, 1906: 2).

In contrast to the kanyādāna, however, the three clockwise circles which the couple make together around the fire are also important in the marriage ceremony among non-Brahmans. The significant difference is that the non-Brahmans in our area appear always to circumambulate the entire pavilion or the milk post, rather than as the Brahmans do, just the fire. Thurston mentions this circumambulation for two of the upper castes (Agamudaiyan and Palli) one middle one (Pariyaran) as well as for three of the very low (Malayalai, Pallan and Pariyan). The Agamudaiyan, who Thurston says do have a sacred fire, still chose to go round the entire marriage dais, rather than just the fire in the center (Thurston, 1909: I 14). This makes the shift in emphasis in the ceremony from fire to pavilion and milk-post among the non-Brahman castes, which we argued for earlier, even clearer. From Dubois's general remarks about the pavilion among the low castes (Dubois, 1906: 232) this circumambulation by the couple is probably more common than Thurston's material would indicate.

It is interesting to note as well that the triple circumambulation of a sacred object fits very well in the larger pattern of folk ritual and religious belief in India. Circling an object clockwise is a very old and widespread tradition and is strongly associated with worship and propitious occasions. Just as in the West, the reverse direction or withershins has an inauspicious connotation. Many women walk round the household tulsi plant

several times in their daily devotions (Stevenson, 1920: 248) and circumambulation is a traditional part of temple worship. Indian temples usually have special corridors built around the central shrine for just this purpose (Harle, 1963: 21). One should walk round a site thrice, sprinkling water, before building a house and as the story goes "the pyre on which lay the body of the Buddha took fire of its own accord when the 500 disciples had walked round it three times (D'Alviella, 1910: 657).

The fact the couple, in their nuptial circumambulation, hold right hands is also not surprising. The right hand in India is associated with cleanliness and is always the hand used in ritual. Still more interesting are the strong general associations which the number three has with finality. "When finality is desirable three is delibrately chosen as a limit" (Abbott, 1932: 285). However, when finality is associated with disaster the number three is avoided. There is a most interesting custom, wide-spread in India, that if a man must marry a third time he marries an arka tree first, thus making the real marriage the fourth (Thurston, 1906: 44). In the marriage circumambulations the fire (or pavilion and milk-post substitute) is understood to be prime witness of the couple's life-time union and thus three is an appropriate number.

(d) The Seven Steps.

The third of the three rituals so important in the Brahman marriage is called sapta-padi or the seven steps. In this the bride is asked to step forward with seven strides to the north

or northeast. Sometimes the groom accompanies her. In any event he is asked to recite a traditional Sanskrit verse which mentions seven things associated with fertility and prosperity: sap, juice, wealth, comfort, cattle, the seasons and marital union. It is said that each step is taken with one of these objects in view (Pandey, 1949: 381). The sapta-padi can be linked to the preceeding ritual so that the couple is asked to do three sets of circumambulations, each one being completed with the seventh step (Padfield, 1896: 130). Some descriptions simply say that the bride is to lift her right* foot seven times (Thurston, 1909: I 286) or that she places it successively on seven little heaps of rice (Stevenson, 1920: 89).

This rite constitutes the culmination of the marriage ceremony according to most Brahmans and with the bride's seventh step the union becomes irrevocable. According to the Laws of Manu "The nuptial texts are a certain proof (that the maiden has been made a lawful) wife; but the learned should know that they (and the marriage ceremony) are complete with the seventh step (of the bride around the sacred fire)" (Müller, 1886: XXV 295, viii, 227). The number seven figures prominently in Hindu theology and the seven steps of marriage can be seen to

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* Thurston actually describes it as the left foot in 1909 (I, 286), but as the right foot in 1906 (p.2). In all other cases the sources say right foot. This rite may be run together with a following one where the bride is asked to tread on a millstone, by asking her to do this seven times. In treading on a stone the bride sometimes uses her left foot. Therefore Thurston's mention of the left is not inconsistent with the larger picture. For a further discussion of right and left in marriage ritual see section 7c.

correspond with the seven sages, the seven sacred rivers, seven sacred islands, seven principal centers of pilgrimage and the fact that the creative energy of the gods is personified as seven divinities (Abbott, 1932: 301).

Because these seven steps of marriage are so well known in India a reflection of them has become incorporated in other ceremonies and in folklore. Brahman students, for example, who want to swear life-long friendship will take seven steps around a fire together and there is a story in the Ramayana that when Rama formed an alliance with the monkey king Sugriva they sealed the contract with seven steps around a fire (Stevenson, 1920: 89). There is also a reflection of the sapta-padi in Brahman death ritual where the widow takes seven steps following the bier of her husband "as witness even in her sorrow that she has performed the vows promised in her gladness" (Stevenson, 1920: 148).

Because of this emphasis placed on the sapta-padi by Brahmans it is particularly interesting to note how little attention is paid to this rite by the non-Brahman castes, at least by those in our area. Thurston makes one passing reference to an Agamudaiyan couple going seven times round the pavilion (Thurston, 1909: I 14) and speaks one other time of a Malayalai pair taking seven steps together (Thurston, 1909: IV 482). The Agamudaiyan are a well-to-do agricultural caste and the Malayalai are fairly recent immigrants from the north. Thurston does not mention the sapta-padi for any of the other eighteen castes in our area for which he gives information on marriage ceremonies.

Since he was particularly interested in recording those aspects of Brahman ritual which had been "grafted" on to the lower castes this blank is more likely an accurate reflection of the facts than continual oversight on the part of the ethnographer.

marriage ceremony as they are conceived of by the Brahmans and as they appear in the ceremonies of the non-Brahmans? The heart of the first, kanyādāna, is the gift of the bride to the groom, by the father, with an emphasis on his sacrifice and his hope of acquiring religious merit for himself and his agnatic ancestors. Thurston does not mention anything corresponding to this "gift of the bride" for any of the non-Brahman castes in our area. The closest thing we find is an increased emphasis on the mother's brother and the importance laid to his gesture of consent to the match. The ritual associated with the mother's brother's permission appears to largely replace that associated with the father's gift. This contrast is even more striking when we consider the third and supposedly culminating rite, sapta-padi. For this traditional act as well, with the exception of two brief references, there is also no parallel among the non-Brahman castes of our area.

We are left, therefore, only with the second of the three crucial rituals: the pani-grahana plus Agni-pradaksina, or grasping the bride's hand and describing three circles clockwise. This rite, we have seen, is a traditional part of lower caste ceremonies, but with one important change: the couple circumambulate the entire pavilion and/or the muhurtakkāl

rather than a sacred fire. This is in itself an important difference. In addition, this is the only ceremony of the three which has important parallels in the general culture with which these castes are familar. In contrast to kanyādāna or the seven steps, three clockwise circumambulations of a religious object or piece of semi-sacred ground is an important and very widespread ritual tradition. Such a rite is frequently performed by villagers of all castes and is a gesture whose general significance is familiar to everyone. Let us now look at some of the other rites which surround these three central acts in a Brahman ceremony and examine to what extent they also can be or cannot be found in the marriage ceremony among the non-Brahman castes.

(e) The Lighting of The Domestic Fire

We have already mentioned that all Brahman marriages take place in front of a sacred fire and in the middle of a pavilion. No saṁskāra (life sacrament) is complete for the Brahman without making offerings to the fire's all-consuming flames. According to the sacred texts, a man should not only make offerings to Agni at his marriage, but his first purpose in taking a wife should be to establish a domestic fire so that he can perform the prescribed daily oblations in his own house. Only by such diurnal worship can a Brahman fulfill his religious duties (Kapadia, 1958: 167-8). For this reason the lighting of the domestic fire is considered another important rite and is included in all the Brahman marriage ceremonies.

The lighting of the fire is considered to remove any evil influence that may be lingering over the bride's person (Pandey, 1949: 389). Usually, nowadays, it is established after the wedding at the home of the bride, before the couple depart for the groom's home. Srinivas says that the Brahmans convert the marriage fire into a household fire by a short ceremony the first evening (Srinivas, 1942: 78), and Prabhu explains that it is carried along by the pair in the procession from the bride's house to the groom's (Prabhu, 1954: 171). Thurston describes it by its Sanskrit name, Sthalipaka, as a short ceremony at the end of the wedding day in which the groom offers an oblation of rice to the fire which has been previously cooked by his bride. He says that in practice uncooked rice is often used (Thurston, 1909: I 289). This ceremony is not mentioned by these ethnographers for a single non-Brahman group.

(f) The Ox Yoke

There is still another ritual mentioned in the ancient ritual handbooks on marriage which only the Brahmans in our area perform. According to Thurston's account the rite comes after the father's gift of the bride and before the three circumambulations of the fire, and it consists in holding a yoke made for a team of oxen over the bride. While the yoke is held over her water is sprinkled through one of the holes on to her head. Sometimes the tali or cord which will be tied around the bride's neck is also dropped through the hole and sprinkled. The sprinkling of water on something is generally an auspicious

and cleansing gesture. We will return to this symbolism in section 7e. As to the yoke, Thurston translates the Sanskrit verses which are recited simultaneously, which gives us the key to its significance. This mantra tells the story of an ugly woman, Abhala, who wanted to marry Indra. The great god finally consents, but he first transforms her into a beauty by pouring water on her through the holes in the wheel of his vehicle. The groom similarly says a prayer for purification, happiness, health, and long life at this point in the marriage ceremony (Thurston, 1909: I 284-5). Padfield mentions that this rite is performed by the Telugu Brahmans and Srinivas refers to it when talking of marriage in Mysore. Stevenson says that in Gujarat a yoke is merely placed beside the bride during the wedding events. This gives the impression that it is an awkward ritual and that it may not always be performed (Stevenson, 1920: 88).

The general impressions we have gathered is that the yoke is a traditional rite, described by the ancient writers on ritual, which is intended to beautify the wife and to increase the years of her life. It appears to be a rather learned procedure and not well known to the general populace. There are several other rites recorded in the Gṛhya Sūtras, however, which are practiced by the lower castes, and from the number of references to them, appear to be much more widely known. We will discuss these in the following three sections.

(g) The Mock Pilgrimage

According to the ancient texts, men of the three upper

varṇas (Vaisya, Kshatriya and Brahman) are expected to undergo a ceremony of second birth, called Upanayana, at which they don a sacred thread. With this ceremony they enter the stage of studentship and ideally are sent to study for several years with a guru. Furthermore, there is another saṁskara performed at the end of this period which signifies the end of a man's student life. At the Samavartana a man is given a staff and is expected to make a pilgrimage to Banares to bathe in the sacred Ganges. Since such a trip is not usually practical a ritual bath and a short walk to the east or north to pay reverence to the gods of these quarters is usually regarded as sufficient. This ritual is considered necessary before marriage can take place. It came to be advocated in the middle ages, therefore, that Samavartana be performed just before the nuptial rites themselves (Pandey, 1949: 253-60). Today it is one of the early events in the traditional sequence of Brahman marriage rites.

Thurston mentions the Samavartana in his descriptions of the Tamil Brahman ceremony. Soon after the wedding guests have gathered he describes the groom as leaving for the east with an umbrella, a fan and a bundle containing rice, coconut and areca nut. The bride's father is expected to run after him, beg him to accept the hand of his daughter and, finally, persuade him to return (Thurston, 1909: I 279). Dubois also mentions this mock pilgrimage in his description and Srinivas records a parallel custom among the Kanada Brahmans (Srinivas, 1942: 71-2). Pandey notes that when no real period of studentship is possible the donning of the sacred thread (Upanayana) and the pilgrimage which ends a man's studies, Samavartana, can be performed

together (Pandey, 1949: 253). It is interesting that in the marriage ceremony among Telugu Brahmans not only is the Upanayana performed, but it actually seems to serve as a substitute for a pilgrimage and to have the same symbolic purpose in that it provides a kind of licence for the marriage ceremony itself (Padfield, 1896: 123).

The initial listing of castes in the area we have chosen to study made it clear that the Brahmans are the only group who are generally accepted as twice-born. There are no traditional Kshatriya and no traditional Vaisya castes in the region. Only these three upper varṇas are supposedly entitled to a sacred thread and a period of studentship. It is most interesting to discover, therefore, how many of the lower castes in our area have either a Upanayana or a Samavartana rite at the beginning of their marriage ceremony. Thurston specifically mentions a mock pilgrimage for three castes (Kammalan, Agamudaiyan and Pallan) and a tying on of a sacred thread for three more [Pattanavan, Uḍaiyan (who are classed with Natteman*) and Urali*]. In addition, Thurston records that some or all male members of many more castes in the region wear a 'sacred' thread all of their adult lives, although he does not say when they actually tie it on. This adds eight other castes to the list : Chetti, Kammalan, Kusavan, Sembadavan, Valluvan, Vaniyan*, Occhan* and Malayalai*.

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* The reader will find these castes listed in the appendix as there was so little additional information on their marriage ceremonies available.

It is not clear whether men of the last named caste actually wear a sacred thread themselves, but they put forth the claim that their ancestors did (Thurston, 1909: IV 411). Some of these castes belong to the top, some to the middle and some to the bottom of the non-Brahman hierarchy.

It would appear that wearing a 'sacred' thread and the mock pilgrimage which is ritually associated with it have become general signs of status in the area and that they are rather freely adopted by castes of all social positions. Even though the Brahmans belong to the only caste which is generally accepted as twice-born (Govt. of India, 1901; 136) it would seem that a number of groups are concerned about this distinction. The adoption of a sacred thread is probably an indication that many castes are currently vying to establish some sign of association with one of the three upper varṇas for themselves. We will return to this question in the conclusion.

(h) The Grinding Stone and The Pole Star

Two short but interesting little rituals traditionally follow the climatic sapta-padi or seven steps. The bride, in the first of these, is asked to tread on a stone, often the household grindstone, and in the second she is asked to look at a star. Sometimes the groom joins her in these rites as well. Both gestures are explicitly intended to remind the bride and groom that they should be steadfast and faithful in married life. According to a verse of the Gṛhya Sūtras "the stone is a symbol of fixity and one who mounts it is

supposed to be invested with firmness in his or her character," (Pandey, 1949: 69) and while the couple touch it a little prayer is said to this effect. In addition, Thurston links the rite with a well-known story of Ahalliya, wife of a saint, Gauthama, who is cursed by her husband for her misconduct with Indra and turned into a stone. He says that "by placing their feet on the grindstone the young couple express a wish to keep in check unchaste desires" (Thurston, 1906: 73). The young student in his Upanayana or thread investiture ceremony is also required to step on a stone (Pandey, 1949: 69).

In addition, at the end of the wedding day the bride, and sometimes the groom, are asked to look at Arundathi, the "pole" star, (near the middle star of the tail of Ursa Major). This too, is taken as a suggestion of firmness and chastity in conjugal life. Arundathi is said to have been the wife of an ascetic, Vasishta, and a model of chastity (Thurston, 1909: II 360). There is a little verse which the couple recite, following the example of the priest, as they gaze at this star.

> The seven Rishis who have led us to firmness, she, Arundathi, who stands first among the six Krithikas (Pleiades), may she, the eighth one, who leads the conjunction of the(moon with the) six Krithikas, the first (among conjugations) shine upon us. Firm dwelling, firm origin, the firm one art thou, standing on the side of firmness. Thou art the piller of the stars. Thus protect me against my adversaries. (Thurston, 1909: I 289).

The bride is expected to affirm that she sees the star, whether it is visible or not, lest not finding it be an unlucky omen (Stevenson, 1920: 91).

Both these rites, according to Thurston's accounts, are

also observed by at least four of the non- Brahman castes in our area. Interestingly enough, however, three are castes who habitually employ Brahman priests, the Idaiyan, Agamudaiyan and Palli. The fourth group are the Valluvan, a low caste who act as priests for the Pallans and Pariyans. Unlike the sacred thread and the mock pilgrimage then, these two rites are not incorporated into the ceremonies of a great range of non-Brahman castes. Instead, they appear to be strictly limited to the uppermost of non-Brahman castes where the ritual is directed by a Brahman priest and to the Valluvans who have priestly pretensions with regard to the lowest castes. We will return to the significance of this observation in the conclusion.

There is one further point to be made. This is that the groom, in all cases but one, the Palli (Thurston, 1909: VI 20), is asked to use his right foot in stepping on the grindstone. The foot used by the bride, on the otherhand, is more indeterminate. The Gṛhya Sūtras specify that she should use her right (Müller, 1886: Vol. XXIX, 37, 282, 381), but Thurstons' descriptions seems to indicate a lack of uniformity on this matter at the present day, some castes requiring her left (Thurston, 1909: I 15, II 360, V 20). If we count Thurston's one reference to the groom's left foot as a mistake, whether by him or by his informants, then the other details on right and left are not as inconsistent as they would first appear. A Hindu always considers his right hand and foot to be purer and more appropriate than the left for use in ritual. Yet, at the same time, the left is frequently thought of as feminine and the right as masculine.

One interesting example of this is the famous iconographic representation, the Ardhanārisvara, a figure whose left side represents the goddess Pārvati and the right Lord Siva (Basham, 1954: 312 and pl LXIVa). It follows that there is a justifiable difference of opinion as to whether a woman should use her right or her left in a given ritual, while it is always considered correct for a man to use his right. We will refer to this again in section 7c.

(i) Worshipping Gods

According to the Gṛhya Sūtras a very popular all-India god Ganeśa, who is the ~~second~~ son of Śiva and Pārvati, must be worshipped before the beginning of any great ceremony (Stevenson, 1920: 29). He is considered to be "the remover of obstacles" and his good will is required to eliminate snags and hindrances in the proceedings. At the beginning of the Tamil Brahman ceremony, soon after the pavilion has been erected, a small image of this god is installed under the canopy and worshipped (Thurston, 1909: 280 and Dubois, 1896: 221). The bride and groom may both pay reverence to Ganeśa. However, traditionally, the girl ought to honor the goddess Gaurī (the wife of Śiva) or Lakṣmi (the wife of Vishnu) as well. Her choice of goddess is usually determined by whether her family is Shaivite or Vaiṣnavite. In her prayers the young bride asks for long life for her husband, prosperity and many children (Padfield, 1896: 123 and Srinivas, 1942: 70).

Thurstons also refers to the worship of gods at the

beginning of the marriage ceremony for a great many of the non-Brahman castes in our area, and it would appear that the reverence paid to them beforehand is nearly a universal tradition. Unfortunately the ethnography on this topic is not very detailed. Nevertheless, it is clear that there is a definite change of emphasis in this worship among the lower castes. Thurston mentions that respect is paid to Ganeśa at the commencement of the wedding by two of the upper non-Brahman castes, the Idaiyan and Agamudaiyan. Dumont also says the Kallan bride and groom stop in front of a village shrine dedicated to this god while parading around the village (Dumont, 1957: 218). Still, the descriptions place more emphasis on offerings presented to household gods and ancestors in the case of the lower castes. In writing about the Valluvan and Koliyan Thurston speaks of the marriage "pots" and the fact that they are worshipped. From his phraseology he seems to imply that the worship of "pots" at a marriage is quite a common phenomenon in the area (Thurston, 1909: VII 306 and III 304). We know from the general literature on India that pots can be used to represent the various gods of the universe, but we also know that they are frequently employed in the worship of manes and of lineage deities (Vidyarthi, 1961: 37; Thurston, 1909; II 385). Unfortunately, we cannot be sure how they are thought of when reverence is done to them in the context of a marriage ceremony.

In some respects, however, the picture is clearer. For example, Thurston says that the Malayalai go in procession to a

stone at some distance from the bride's house which is painted for the occasion and said to represent the king whose permission had to be sought in olden days before a marriage could take place (Thurston, 1909: III 408). He also says that the Paraiyan on the occasion of a marriage lays out a cloth in an open field and places offerings of cooked rice and vegetables on it. Puja is done and a goat is said to be sacrificed to the ancestors (Thurston, 1909: VI 99). Both these details remind us of the description of lineage cult ritual which Dumont gives us in his recent book on the Pramalai Kallar. Probably the gods revered at marriage among the lower castes are represented and worshipped in a manner which resembles these outdoor cults, a seemingly general phenomena among non-Brahman castes in the South, but which we, as yet, know little about. In addition, Thurston says that the Pallan of Coimbatore construct a figure out of cow dung, plantains, seven coconuts, paddy, a stalk of sorgum and betel. They then call it Ganesa and place offerings before it (Thurston, 1909: V 481). The name may be one of an all-India god, but it is clear that it is the materials of which the idol is constructed which are all important. Srinivas reinforces this conclusion when he writes that in Mysore "there is no similarity between the Brahman and Non-Brahman nagavali. The former is worship of the deities in the heavens, whereas the latter is worshipping the pandal (pavilion) posts with anthill mud" (Srinivas, 1942: 103).

When we remember the emphasis the lower castes place on the materials used in the construction of the pavilion and the muhurtakkal and the reverence they then pay to them, a genera-

pattern begins to emerge. The Brahmans, in their ceremony, look to all-India gods just as they attempt to adhere closely to a complex ceremony described in detail in the ritual texts. Those lower in the social hierarchy turn to the lineage deities for good will at the beginning of a marriage just as they look, on the whole, to a regional culture and folklore which emphasizes general social and cosmological themes rather than learned formulas. The castes of the middle range, more concerned with a textual standard of behavior and able to employ a Brahman at their wedding ceremonies enjoy some, if not all, of the Brahman rites. We will return to these generalizations in our conclusion. There we will consider how this detailed examination of marriage ceremonies and the conclusions we can draw from it can help us to understand some of the differences in world-view between the lower and the higher castes. This material will also give us a lead in our attempt to interpret and to modify a second important theme in Indian studies, that of "Sanskritization".

7 PURITY AND AUSPICE ON NUPTIAL OCCASIONS

(a) The Tāli

There is one important rite in the marriage ceremony which we did not mention in the previous section because, although it is universally included in south Indian wedding ritual, it is a regional tradition and not specifically described by the Sanskrit texts. This is the knotting of a string of some sort, often with a pendant attached, around the bride's neck. The tāli, as it is called, has become the honored badge of marriage throughout south India. Often it is the sole way to distinguish a married from an unmarried woman by sight (Dumont, 1957: 227). The tāli is frequently made of string and dyed yellow with turmeric or saffron. Sometimes the tāli is simply a string but often it has a pendant of gold or a bead attached. A very wealthy woman may have her chain made of gold as well. It is said that the tālis in the southern part of the Dravidian region tend to be yellow and pendulous while those to the north are tied more tightly around the neck and are sometimes dyed black or have a black bead on them (Cammiade, 1920: 159-60).

The tāli is always purchased or provided by the groom's family and among Brahmans it is always the groom who ties it to the bride's neck. Here the ceremony of knotting it on (usually with three knots) is important, but not as important as the three rites, kanyādāna, Agni-pradakṣina and sapta-padi

discussed earlier. It is customary for someone to make a great noise by playing instruments or blowing a conch shell while the tāli is being tied on. This noise is said to drown out any inauspicious sounds as for example sneezing that might otherwise be heard and do damage to the couple at this very important moment. With the death of her husband a widow must remove her tāli. It is usually thrown into the pyre, into water or at the trunk of a sacred tree.

Among the non-Brahmans the tāli can be tied by the groom or by the groom's sister. This seems to vary from caste to caste and to bear no particular correlation to a group's status in the social hierarchy. Dumont, in fact, reports the description of a Kallan marriage, as given by two different informants. One says it is the groom himself who does the tying while the other refers to his sister (Dumont, 1957: 227). Thus the custom appears to vary, even within one caste. A priest may also tie the tāli, and Srinivas mentions that among the Kannada it is sometimes a girl who has been dedicated to a temple god who does it as there is no danger of her becoming a widow (Srinivas, 1942: 75), for the non-Brahman castes in our area the knotting of the tāli constitutes the highpoint of the marriage ceremony. This, rather than the sapta-padi, is considered to be the moment when the bride and groom become legally and irrevocably joined. In general, it would appear that the further down in the hierarchy one descends, the shorter the marriage ceremony and therefore the more relative importance the tying of the tāli acquires. Among the nomadic Korava Thurston says "the

marriage ceremony...merely consists in tying a thread soaked in turmeric around the bride's neck, feasting the relations and paying the brideprice" (Thurston, 1903: IV 164).

When a widow is remarried, tying the tāli is again the most prominent rite of the occasion. In general, however, only the lower castes sanction widow remarriage. In all cases it is a much reduced ceremony with few guests and the tāli this time is just a string. Thurston says that among the Korava the knotting together of the couple's upper clothes is substituted for the tying of a tāli (Thurston, 1909: III 489). Srinivas adds some other details concerning widow remarriage in Mysore which indicate the general tenor of the occasion. He says that such a marriage must take place in the dark fortnight of the month and only after sundown. It is usually performed in a temple or unoccupied house and only twice-married women and widows attend the function. There is no band and the affair is quickly concluded after a caste dinner is served to guests. He adds that a bachelor who marries a widow is first asked to marry an arka plant, thus rendering him a widower in the eyes of society (Srinivas, 1942: 114).

The same general symbolism, that of tying a thread round the girl's neck is resorted to in the case of ~~adultery~~ fornication. Thurston says that among the Pallan the woman must confess her guilt publicly and promise not to misbehave again. The waist thread of her paramour is then cut and he ties it around her neck as if it were a tāli. The couple then bathe in seven

special little pits dug near the village water tank. The caste messenger sprinkles some of this water over their heads as a sign of purification and they are obliged to give a general feast to friends and relations (Thurston, 1909: V 477-8). Thurston gives a similar account of how ~~adultery~~ fornication is handled among the Uralis and Valaiyans (Thurston, 1909: VII 243-5 and 277). In each case his description implies that an offending couple when caught are obliged to marry.

It is a most interesting fact that the area in which the tying of a tāli at marriage is an important event is practically concordant with that in which the four Dravidian languages are spoken. Within this area the custom is universal and sufficient prominence is attached to the tāli as a badge of marriage that it has been adopted by the non-Hindu communities of this region as well. According to Cammiade the Syrian Christians of Malabar retain the tying of a tāli in their marraige ceremony. The Jews who have formed colonies along the West Coast have similarly adopted the tāli as have the various early colonies of Arab settlers. In addition, "Portuguese and other Catholic missionaries have recognised the expediency of permitting their converts to ratify their marriage vows by the use of the Hindu tāli in preference to the European wedding ring" (Cammiade, 1920: 150).

Speaking in general terms, the tāli finds its limit in the East to the north of ~~Madras~~ Āndra Pradēsh in the Ganjam District where an Indo-Aryan language, Oriya, is spoken. Similarly in the West this custom reaches its furthest extent on the borders of

South Canara where Karanese gives way to the Aryan Konkani dialect (Caumiade, 1920: 151). This association with the area where Dravidian tongues are spoken fits with the fact that tying a tali is nowhere mentioned in the classical Sanskrit handbooks on marriage. The only reference is a passage in the Paraskara Grhya Sūtra where it is said that local customs may be inserted in the ceremony at a particular point, if desired. A commentary on this passage by Gadahara, giving examples of what may be done, mentions the tying of auspicious yarns as one possible addition (Pandey, 1949: 384). It is true that ornaments such as nose-rings, bangles and certain forms of necklace are worn by women in other parts of India as emblems of marriage, but nowhere else are they used sacramentally at the marriage ceremony as the tāli is in the South (Caumiade, 1920: 149).

On the basis of these facts L. A. Caumiade suggests that the tāli is a custom which survives from the time of "the great Dravidian kingdoms that ruled over Southern India from a remote period of history and that had a civilization of their own foreign in many respects to the civilization of Northern India (Caumiade, 1920: 151). We do not believe that there is enough evidence to determine the historical origins of the tāli-tying rite with any certainty. In addition, if we look round for other situations in which threads are ceremonially tied we can show that the custom in question is not as foreign to the general patterns of Sanskrit ritual as Caumiade would have it appear. In fact, we find that a tradition of tying threads

to the body is associated with each and every other important stage in the Hindu life-cycle. Our examples are drawn from the North of India as well as from the South.

First, we note that in a traditional Brahman family on the twelfth day after a birth the father's sister is asked to tie scarlet-colored threads to each wrist and ankles of the new-born child. She also ties two threads around its waist and one on the cradle. Tiny bits of gold may be added to any of these by the more wealthy. We are told that the threads around the waist and those on the cradle are the most important ones and that they are tied to bring luck to the new-born and as a protection against the evil eye (Stevenson, 1920: 13). At the opposite end of the social hierarchy, among the Korava or wandering gypsies of the south, we find that on the ninth day after confinement the mother's brother ties a string of thread around the baby's waist "to signify the child's entry into the Karava community" (Thurston, 1909: III 491).

Second, we are familar with the Upanayana ceremony where every boy of the three upper varnas receives a thread which is tied around his trunk during early adolescence, at the time when he traditionally becomes an adult member of the community. There is a similar rite for women after their first menstruation, at least for the Koliyan, a lowly caste of agricultural laborers in the south. Here, on the sixteenth day after puberty a girl is asked to bathe, and a loop made from a long creeper plant is passed round her body from head to foot three times by a barber. If this is not done it is believed that the girl is not freed from pollution (Thurston, 1909: III 302).

(page 120 not bound with this volume - by mistake)
B.B.

Just as in the previous instances, it would seem that in this last transition from one stage of life to another a man needs the spiritual protection provided by a thread.

The fifth and last example of thread tying comes from the ritual connection, not with a person, but with the construction of a new building. In a sense a building, just like a human, undergoes its one important transition when it passes from non-being into being. A building can also indicate an important social transition for the person in charge of its construction. We have already seen how a cord is wound round the four pegs which are driven into the ground to mark out the site of a temple. Similarly, with the laying out of a site for a house, and when the dwelling is completed "three separate untwisted cotton threads, which have been dyed yellow in turmeric, are now placed outside all round the roof of the house...The long, untwisted thread is supposed to wish for the family long life, long sojourn in the house they have built and long, unbroken prosperity (Stevenson, 1920: 359-60). Auboyer mentions a similar custom in her description of house building in ancient India (Auboyer, 1961: 172).

It is clear from the foregoing that the tying of a tāli fits in beautifully with a larger cultural pattern which is not specifically Dravidian but common to the entire sub-continent. It appears that threads are generally associated with good luck and protection from evil spirits. Further the tying of threads is frequently incorporated into a particular ceremony as a specific and very important ritual. And lastly the tying of threads

appears to be closely associated with those moments in life when a man undergoes an important change in his social and ritual status, in other words, a "rite be passage". It would seem reasonable to understand the tying of a tāli at marriage as a custom peculiar to the Dravidian-speaking South, but one which transcends regional differences in its general ritual and religious significance.

(b) The Tali and Sub-caste Names.

L. A. Cammiade in his article on "The Tāli In the Social History of Southern India", 1920, points out the interesting fact that a very large number of sub-castes in this region are referred to by names which distinguish detailed differences in the kind of tāli worn. He discovered this by reading through the 1781, 1881 and 1891 census reports on the area in which sub-caste names gathered by the census-takers were enumerated. Unfortunately sub-caste names were omitted from the census of 1901 because of a developing self-consciousness about caste on the part of some educated Indians. Sub-caste names have never been included in a census report on the area since. Because the topic is interesting and Cammiade's ~~Cammiade's~~ article so obscure we will list these sub-caste names and their translations essentially as he gives them. We will also chart the distribution by caste of some of the more important of these titles. The expression "tāli-katti" means one who knots or ties a tāli and the qualifying word indicates what kind of tāli is used.

LIST OF SUB-CASTE NAMES GIVEN IN THE 1781, 1881 AND 1891 CENSUSES

(Adopted from Cammiade, 1920: 152-59)

Sub-Castes Taking Their Names From The Kind of Tāli Worn

Perun-tāli-kaṭṭi	(Tying the great tāli)
Siru-tāli-kaṭṭi	(Tying the lesser tāli)
Tonga-tāli-kaṭṭi	(Tying the pendulous tāli)
Pottu or Bottu-tāli-kaṭṭi	(Tying the tāli with attached bottu
Sangu-tāli-kaṭṭi	(Tying the conch tāli)
Rasa-tāli-kaṭṭi	(Tying the mercury? tāli)
Toppa-tāli-kaṭṭi	(Tying the stomach tāli)
Urundai-mani-tāli-kaṭṭi	(Tying the tāli with large round bead)
Karum-tāli-kaṭṭi	(Tying the black tāli)
Jaga-tāli-kaṭṭi	(Tying the world? tāli)
Iru-tāli-kaṭṭi	(Tying two tālis)
Tāli-kaṭṭi	(Tying the tāli as distinguished from another badge of marriage)

Sub-Castes Taking Their Names From A Bead Necklace Worn By Women Which Probably Serves As A Tāli

Muthu-kaṭṭi	(Tying pearls)
Pavazham-kaṭṭi	(Tying corals)
Mani-kaṭṭi	(Tying beads)
Tambu-mani-kaṭṭi	(Tying the tambon bead)
Kannaka-mani-kaṭṭi	(Tying the kannaka bead)
Pāsi-kaṭṭi	(Tying beads)
Kokki-kaṭṭi	(Tying large, flat beads)
Koli-kaṭṭi	(Tying beads the size of marbles)
Kundu-kaṭṭi	(Tying ballet beads?)
Kallu-kaṭṭi	(Tying stone, e.g. Crystal beads)
Paling-kaṭṭi	(Tying crystal beads)
Pañcharam-kaṭṭi	(Tying the gold pañcharam neck ornament

DISTRIBUTION OF SOME OF THE MORE IMPORTANT SUB-CASTE NAMES

(Adopted from Cammiade, 1920: 152-59)

Perun Tali-Katti	Siru Tali-Katti	Sangu Tali-Katti	Tali-Katti	Pavazham Katti	Pasi-Katti	Kallu-Katti
Agambadiyan	Agambadiyan		Agambadiyan			Agambadiyan
	Ambattan		Ambattan			
	Chetti					
Idaiyan	Idaiyan	Idaiyan		Idaiyan	Idaiyan	Idaiyan
Kaikolan	Kaikolan				Kaikolan	
Kammalan	Kammalan	Kammalan		Kammalan	Kammalan	
	Korava					
	Palli					Palli
	Pallan					
	Pariyan	Pariyan	Pariyan			
	Sembadavan					
	Shanan					
	Uppiliyan					
Vellala	Vellala	Vellala	Vellala	Vellala		Vellala
Valaiyan	Valaiyan	Valaiyan	Valaiyan		Valaiyan	
Vaniyan	Vaniyan					
Vannan	Vannan					

There are several interesting observations to be made on the above tables. First, we may note simply that there is a surprising proliferation of sub-caste names based on various minor details of the kind of tali worn and that there appears to be great interest in distinguishing groups of people in this matter. Thurston also makes some brief references to this phenomenon and some of his examples show that other small details of the wedding ceremony are used in the same way. The Kurubas, for instance, have a sub-caste called the Attikankana indicating that these people tie a cotton thread round the wrist at marriages (Thurston, 1909: I 62), and the Jalaris are divided into two endogamous divisions called the people of the twelve poles and the people of the eight poles respectively, according to the number of poles or posts used to support the wedding pavilion (Thurston, 1906: 95). There may be a great many sub-caste names based on descriptive details of the tali worn, but the principle by which these names are formed is a broader one: it appears that any small difference in the traditional wedding ceremony may be seized upon, or possibly invented, when a new sub-caste name is required.

Second, we may note that there is no particular distinction between the high and low ranking non-Brahman groups in this matter. Both the landowners and the day laborers distinguish sub-divisions in similar fashion. We have not, however, found a reference to this means of naming endogamous sub-castes among Brahmans. It would appear that the latter tend to name their divisions after territorial associations or the rival

authority of various ancient commentaries. This difference is well-illustrated by Srinivas's material although he himself does not make reference to this Brahman/non-Brahman contrast (Srinivas, 1942: 22-31)

Third, and perhaps more surprising yet, is that the same sub-caste names are used in a number of different castes in the same area. The second of these above tables gives a selection of sub-caste names for castes whom we know from the census are represented in the South Arcot, Trichinopoly and Tanjore region. If we were to give the full list, however, of castes with these names in the Madras Presidency, it would be clear that Perun-tāli-kaṭṭi and Siru-tāli-kaṭṭi are both extremely common. Fifteen castes, in all, returned the first as the name of a sub-division, and twenty seven returned the second (Cammiade, 1920: 153-4). Thurston confirms the existence of Perun-tāli-kaṭṭi and Siru-tāli-kaṭṭi subdivisions in the case of the Kaikōlan and says that they actually do wear "big and little badges respectively (Thurston, 1909: III 33).

Cammiade carries the question further when he tells us that "in some castes Siru-tāli-kaṭṭi is known as the lesser form of marriage". He suggests that this refers to a shortened form of the marriage ceremony which is often used when a first cousin marriage is performed and that Suri-tali-kaṭṭi might refer to a sub-caste in which such a shortened form of nuptial ritual was permissible (Cammiade, 1920: 154-5). Yalman, in his article on Ceylon, confirms that this shortened form of marriage ceremony, used when marrying a cross-cousin, is probably a

common phenomena in the Dravidian region. "The reason why there are no formalties", he says, "is because, structurally speaking nothing happens" (Yalman, 1962: 565). We have already made this point about cross-cousin marriage clear in our earlier discussion of the role of the mother's brother in the marriage ceremony.

Dispite this interesting suggestion, however, we feel that Cammiade's reference to cross-cousin marriage is misleading. Why should one sub-division only, and only those of certain castes, be singled out and labelled by the fact that they permit cross-cousin marriage and its accompanying brief ritual?. Our impression from the ethnography is that this shortened ceremony is something sanctioned in a general way, by all the groups in the region. We also know that the use of a shortened ceremony is not just limited to cases of cross-cousin marriage. It also has the more general connotation of expediency, and may be elected as a way out for any family who cannot afford or does not want an elaborate affair. Thurston mentions the existence of this shortened ritual for no less than eight non-Brahman castes: Agamudaiyan, Valaiyan, Irula, Korava, Koliyan, Malayalai, Pallan and Pariyan. It even has a name and is referred to as "chinna kalyanam" or little marriage (Thurston, 1909: III 302), a title not so different from Siru-tali-katti. Dumont says that nowadays almost all Kallan use this simplified form (Dumont, 1957: 217).

All the above comments refer to actual shortened weddings, which it appears can take place in any sub-division of any

caste. In speaking of Siru-tāli-kaṭṭi as a sub-caste name, we prefer to interpret its meaning in a more figurative sense. Srinivas provides a hint in this direction when he says that the "Pedakante Reddis are divided into 'big' and 'small' groups. One of the Pedakante men committed the unforgivable sin of marrying a woman under kudike (a less respectable form of marriage prescribed for widows or a woman guilty of pre-marital licence) and so his descendents lost status and became the 'small' group" (Srinivas, 1942: 26). We know that the notion of superiority is at the basis of sub-caste and that endogamous groups are very often created by expelling several families for a mis-marriage thought to taint, in some way, the purity of those expelled. (For example, Dumont, 1957: 141-52).

If we expand on this suggestion we find that having to wear a small tāli could be one way to point to the ignominy and degraded status of such a group. We know that expelling members from the marriage community and forming separate endogamous sub-castes has been a very common occurence in the history of south-Indian castes. Our hypothesis accounts readily for the fact that entire sub-divisions have acquired the Siru-tāli-kaṭṭi name, regardless of what marriages are actually performed in the present, and also for the proliferation of this particular name is so many caste communities. A further point in this connection which Cammiade raises but does not solve is the fact that with one exception (Kongan) all fifteen cases where Perun-tāli-kaṭṭi appears as a sub-caste name, Siru-tāli-kaṭṭi appears as a sub-caste as well. There is by no means a 'perun'

division, on the other hand, wherever we find a 'siru' (Cammiade, 1920: 153-4). This can be explained by supposing that 'perum' is used to contrast the great with the small or 'siru' sub-caste in prestige and popular esteem. 'Perum' makes little sense if taken by itself, while 'siru' can be used to degrade from the general standard without any precise verbal opposition.

There is one final hypothesis which Cammiade puts forth in his article which we feel is worthy of discussion. This is the claim of the Iru-tāli-katti sub-caste to wear two tālis. He rightly assumes that the two talis cannot plausibly indicate widow remarriage.

> In the case of widowhood the tali is invariably broken and thrown away as a sign of the rupture of the marriage bond. A widow who remarries will only wear one tali. Hence a sub-caste among weavers that allows widow remarriage has appropriately called itself Aruthu-kattukira-Kaikolan, that is to say, the Kaikolan who breaks and then reknots the tali, while a Pariyan sub-caste aspiring to rise in the social scale by repudiating widow remarriage has returned itself as Aruthu-kattatavan meaning that these Pariyans do not again tie the tali, once it is broken (Cammiade, 1920: 156)

Instead he speculates that "the title of Iru-tāli-katti is... suggestive not of widow remarriage but of polyandry (Cammiade, 1920: 156). This is a most surprising conclusion since polyandry is a very rare phenomenon in South India. Instead, if we read Srinivas's descriptive material we find that among the Madigas two tālis are tied to the bride, one by her maternal uncle and the other by her husband (Srinivas, 1942: 99). Again, this author mentions that three tālis are tied by Madhva Brahmans, one by the bride's mother or sister, one by the groom

and the third sometime later by the new husband or by his mother. It is the second which is the most important and which is kept as the permanent emblem of marriage (Srinivas, 1942: 74). Dumont reinforces this possibility of variation on the basic, single tying, by saying that Kallan relations frequently do not follow the couple back and forth between their two villages. Therefore, it is quite reasonable that one tāli be tied for their benefit in each location (Dumont, 1957: 227).

To conclude this discussion of the relation of tāli-tying to sub-caste names we wish to stress one main point. This is the fact that such names seem to build, for the larger part, on minute details of the wedding ceremony of which the 'tali-katti' are only one example. To convince the reader of this we quote two more illustrations of the principle.

> The Gangadikaras... are divided into two endogamous groups, viz., those who carry the marriage articles to the bride's house in a box and those who use a covered basket for the same purpose....The box people omit certain important marriage rites such as the consecration of the Ariveni pots, the erection of the milk-post and the tying of the bhashinga. The basket people spend more money in performing elaborate ceremonies, including the Samskritic dhāre. The basket people feel that they are superior to the box people because their rites are more elaborate (Srinivas, 1942: 24).
>
> The Madigas of Mysore are divided into Telugu and Kannada Madigas. Each of these lingual groups has three endogamous groups based on the plate on which the bridal pair eat the common meal: those who eat on brass plates, those who eat on winnows (who are further subdivided into those who use one winnow and those who use two), and those who keep the food in baskets (Srinivas, 1942: 27).

In each case the argument used to form a splinter group is similar. Certain families are socially superior and it is

thought that their excellence ought to be preserved and passed on to descendants by not allowing any inflow of impure blood to occur by permitting marriages between them and an inferior community. This social fact of an endogamous sub-caste is expressed in linguistic terms by reference to minute details of the marriage ceremony employed by the different groups. The general culture appears to equate 'eligible marriage partners' with 'those people whose ancestors have used exactly the same form of marriage ceremony as our ancestors used'. Only one's own traditional ceremony is 'pure'. It would seem likely that those who are socially degraded are asked to change their ceremony slightly so as not to sully the ritual as it is performed by the superior group.

The Brahmans, by definition, have the purest and most elaborate ceremony of all. They are not particularly concerned, therefore, with social distinctions in these terms per se. Instead, they express their rivalry by emphasizing the 'purity' associated with a particular place of birth or the merit of referring for details to a particular inherited commentary on the ancient ritual texts. Since social status is so closely associated with ritual usage, people are often tempted to try imitating some easily observed elements of the marriage ceremony of those who are socially superior. For this reason, it seems, the Brahmans have tried to ban the non-twice-born castes from performing certain of the Vedic rituals at all (Srinivas, 1962: 45). Similar restrictions have also been invented by various castes of the non-Brahman group. The Beri Chettis, for example,

may not tie branches of plantain leaves to the posts of the marriage pavilion so that they touch the ground, otherwise the Pamiyans, who dispute the privilege, threaten to pull them down. This latter example shows that even the lowest caste retains certain individual traditions in regard to its marriage ceremony which it guards with jealousy. This is because the Paraiyans belong to the "right-hand" section, a larger grouping of castes whose origin is unknown but who consider themselves superior to the "left-hand" section in certain ritual matters (Thurston, 1906: 47-8, 96). This equation of marriage ceremony with social status and the consequent rivalry over the ritual details will have bearing on our discussion of Sanskritization in the conclusion.

(c) Other Threads and Pendants Used During the Ceremony

The tāli is not the only thread or cord used in the marriage ceremony. In addition, there is a custom of tying kaṅkaṇa or wrist threads on the bride and groom just before the kanyādāna or moment when the Brahman bride is given away by her father. Among the non-Brahman castes kaṅkaṇa are also tied. These groups, not having the kanyādāna rite, chose a convenient moment after the couple have been seated in the pavilion and just before the tāli is knotted. Often the threads are dyed yellow by having been dipped in turmeric and sometimes a lump of turmeric or saffron is suspended from the makeshift wristlet. This custom of tying kaṅkaṇa is of populer origin and not mentioned in the Gṛhya Sūtras (Pandey, 1949, 375). They are traditonally worn by both Brahmans and non-Brahmans in our area according to the

ethnography. Thurston mentions them for thirteen of the twenty non-Brahman castes in our sample. No correlation with position in the social hierarchy can be observed.

Stevenson, Mayer and Lewis do not mention the tying of wrist threads in their descriptions of the marriage ceremony, so it is possible that the kaṅkaṇa, like the tāli, is only a popular ritual south of the Vindhya mountains where a Dravidian tongue is spoken. The kaṅkaṇa are tied on the bride and groom just before the two are irrevocably united in marriage with the intention of keeping off the evil eye until the time of sexual union (Pandey, 1949: 375). In this they are similar to the other threads we have considered in that they are intended to protect during a period of transition from one stage of life to another. The kaṅkaṇa are like some of these threads, but different from the tāli, as they are not considered a badge of social position which is worn for years, but merely a protective gesture which has supernatural value for a brief period. Threads are also tied round the muhurtakāl or milk post by many castes. This would make it appear that the popular belief holds that a thread tied there may help safeguard cosmic fertility as well.

It is interesting to discover that all the sources agree on the fact that the kaṅkaṇa is tied to the groom's right wrist and to the bride's left. As we said in section 6h, the left is very frequently associated with what is feminine in India, while the right is similarly linked to what is masculine. In addition to the example from iconograph given earlier, we may quote a passage from the Kāma Sūtra where Vatsyayana says that

"a lucky omen or sign is the throbbing of the right eye of a man or the left eye of a women" (Burton trans., 1963: 82). We may reiterate that the kankana are tied before the couple are ritually united. The girl's wristlet is usually tied by the groom or his sister and the man's by the bride or her brother. Both these facts indicate that the two are separate persons, of two distinct families, about to be joined. A union of male and female is about to take place. It is appropriate to use the right-hand symbolism to highlight this confrontation of opposites.

The question is different when the father has joined the two, the tāli has been tied and the couple are about to circumambulate the fire of the pavilion and milk-post. Here the fact of the union of the two and the fact that they now face together any evil spirits of the outside world, is foremost in people's minds. Thus the gesture of holding right hands, the purer and more auspicious hand for ritual occasions generally, is not surprising. The third point at which the question of right or left becomes prominent is when the couple are asked to stand on a stone, near the end of the wedding ceremony. Here the groom always uses his right foot (except for Thurston's curious description of the Palli, 1909: VI 20 where he uses his left) and the bride may use her left or right. This is in keeping with the fact that the bride's role in this particular ritual is more ambiguous that in the foregoing ones. Here she may either be considered to be treading on the stone to remind herself and her husband of their general duty as a married pair to be faithful to one another or she may be meant to think much more

specifically of her role as a woman and the stone be intended to refer, in particular, to the model woman, Ahalliya. In the latter case her more feminine foot, the left, might be better. There is room to dispute the precise reference which treading on the stone is meant to have. Thus, whether the bride uses her right foot or her left does not seem to be a matter for which any uniform practice has been established.

There is one other rite involving the tying on of a charm to divert the evil eye which is often included in the marriage ceremony and therefore deserves mention. This is the fastening of a small gold or silver plate, called pattam or bhashinga, to the bride and groom's foreheads with a string. Thurston does not mention this detail in his description of the Tamil Brahmans, but Dubois does. He says that it is an ornament covered with gold leaf and tied on the second day to "divert the evil eye of jealous or ill-disposed people" (Dubois, 1906: 228). Padfield also mentions the use of pattam in his description of the Telugu Brahman ceremony, but he says these ornaments are put on soon after the tali is knotted, the first day (Padfield, 1896: 128). Thurston mentions the use of pattam in five of the non-Brahman castes in our area: Agamudaiyan, Palli, Sembadavan, Pattanavan and Paraiyan. There does not appear to be any correlation with the position of these castes in the social hierarchy. A pattam can also be tied to the forehead of an elephant. More generally, both in Tamil and in Sanskrit the word pattam is used as a title of distinction (Monier-Williams, 1899: 579).

More interesting, perhaps, is the shape of these ornaments.

Thurston remarks that the groom's is the shape of a large V and that the bride's has the oval outline of a pipal leaf (Thurston, 1906: 57). Srinivas is even more explicit about their sexual symbolism. He describes the plates worn by the Madhva Brahmans as follows :

> The bhashinga worn by the groom...has two marble-sized balls (made from the white, dry pith of jowari) at the bottom, crowned by a tapering bit of cardboard which is covered by a thin sheet of gold-colored paper. At the centre of the cardboard is a red streak of paper, tapering towards the top. The male bhashinga looks like the penis inverted.
>
> The female bhashinga is a square standing on one of its angles and with two discs flanking it. To the center of the square is pasted a round bit of red paper, perhaps representing the vermilion mark worn by the woman on the forehead: or it may represent the clitoris (Srinivas, 1942: 73).

To us the pattam appears to bring together in one small ritual three central themes which run through the entire ceremony: the tying on of threads and ornaments to help protect the couple from evil influence which may be abroad, the emphasis on an all-pervasive cosmic opposition of male and female, and the constant reference to the fertility, reproduction, and prosperity which results from their union.

(d) Purification and Annointment

Threads and ornaments are only one expression of the strong emphasis on purification, auspicious signs and protection from malevolent influences which appear to permeate all marriage festivities to their very core. First, marriages do not take place at all times. They are carefully planned in advance to coincide with a favorable month, favorable stars, and even, the

right moment of the day. There is a certain amount of general knowledge as to which months are most auspicious for such an occasion, but usually the astrologer is consulted in addition to fix the details of precise date and hour at which the tāli should be tied. Some castes, who cannot afford to pay for the services of a specialist for every detail, have certain general rules of their own. The Kallan, for example, always tie their tāli in the hour before sunrise, because this is said to be the auspicious hour when ascetics arise from sleep (Dumont: 1957: 226). Astrologers are also extensively consulted in choosing a bride. Vatsyayana in the Kāma Sūtra records a great many folk beliefs about auspicious marks on a girl's body which if found, augur well for a happy and prosperous marriage (See also The Laws of Manu in Müller, 1886: XXV 75). All this is too well known to require extensive examples. Furthermore, lengthy preparations are made in the houses of both parties to a marriage, including a ritual cleaning of the important rooms and the ritualized preparation of special foods. In addition, the two who are party to the marriage must have a special nuptial bath. The groom is specially shaved and his, as well as the bride's nails are paired. In all these events leading up to the marriage ceremony itself, the emphasis is on the ritual purification of all that will be associated with the event and the elimination or separation of, in so far as possible, all that is considered impure, degrading and contaminating.

Following their bath, the couple are carefully anointed with various scented oils, green gram or sandalwood paste,

yellow powder and turmeric. This tradition of anointing the nuptial pair is both very old and very wide-spread. It is mentioned in the Gṛhya Sūtras (Pandey, 1949: 363), and is now a well-known feature of marriage throughout India. Annointment is associated with bathing and is considered a cleansing process, a sort of extension of washing the body with water. In addition, however, there is a very noticable emphasis on coloring the bride and groom yellow or red. The oil used in annointment is often of sesamum or gingelly which is yellow in color (Drury, 1873: 389-90). Turmeric has a similar color, as does the powder made from several kinds of pulses.

We have already seen that yellow and red are associated to a certain extent with the color of rasa, the sap or fire which surges through the veins of the great Tree of Life. We have also noted that turmeric is smeared on the pavilion posts, and the muhurtakāṇḍ. Bhandari's material suggest how close the association between the two may be when he talks of turmeric being smeared first on a post, then on the bride and groom, then on a post again, then on the couple and so on to make the covering of the two, man and post, into one ritual (Bhandari, 1963: 104-5). Of course the parallel of the yellow or red sap in the great tree and the color of the blood in our own veins also suggests itself, nor have other writers overlooked this correspondence in other contexts (Vidyarthi, 1961: 30-31).

The most important reference, however, in terms of general folk culture, is that red and yellow are very strongly associated with marriage. We already know married women put red marks on

their foreheads and red sandalwood paste on their nails, palms and sometimes even on their feet. In addition "the use of water in which turmeric has been infused and by which the whole body is given a bright yellow color is prescribed to wives as a mark of the conjugal state and forbidden to widows" (Thurston, 1909: I 54). Turmeric is not only associated with marriage but is believed to have a certain supernatural efficacy in preserving that felicitous state. Thus women commonly smear their face with turmeric powder, thinking it will give their husbands an increase of years (Thurston, 1909: I 54).

From this general identification with red and the joys of the married man, red and yellow have become ~~over~~ recurring colors in the nuptial ceremony. One of the striking features of the present-day marriage festivities is that the groom paints the bride's forehead with red lead after they have taken the seven steps together. This rite is referred to as '<u>sumangali</u>' which means the rite of the married woman (Pandey, 1949: 382). The painting of the bride red seems to be particularly popular among the Tamil Brahmans and Thurston's description makes a special note of it. Here the groom shares in proceedings and turmeric paste reddened with lime and mixed with clarified butter is smeared over on the shoulders and foreheads of both parties, the fourth day (Thurston, 1909: I 290) We may also remember that the cord of the <u>tāli</u> and the threads for the <u>kankana</u> are dyed yellow with turmeric. Furthermore, formal invitations to a marriage are traditionally colored red (Abbott, 1932: 281).

The coloring of people and things red not only associate them with marriage and makes them more fit to be participants, but the color in its own right seems to contain some of the good fortune and prosperity which marriage brings. To color the bride and groom yellow-red signifies the great change in their social status which is occurring. In addition, their very application appears to give the couple a certain elevation from the mundane and protection from the evils which plague life. In this way red and yellow resembles the rasa of the waters for it too is thought to be "the negation of sickness, old age and death..(which) manifests itself in the fertility of women... and causes abundance" (Bosch,196 0: 81-2).

(e) Madhuparka

When a Brahman groom arrives at the east gate of the village on the day of his wedding, he is welcomed there by a party from the bride's family. As soon as the two groups meet, betel leaf is ceremonially exchanged and polite greetings are uttered. The groom may be presented by the bride's relatives with gifts of flowers and of cloth. He is then led to the pavilion and the groom ceremonially seats himself, traditionally on a couch of darbha grass (Thurston, 1909: I 282). Next he is brought water for sipping by the bride's father and presented with a very tasty mixture of curds, milk, ghee, sugar, cumin and honey in a brass bowl. This mixture is called madhuparka and to receive it is a signal honor. It is a gesture traditionally made only to gods and very distinguished men, such as kings (Srinivas, 1942: 72).

The groom is expected to partake of this royal food three times. It is most interesting that the elixir associated with Vedic sacrifice was also called madhu and that this "soma" drink was considered to be both the source of life and the one beverage appropriate to offer as an oblation to the gods (Oldenberg, 1903: 312). Madhu means "honey" in Sanskrit, but parka has no independent translation (Monier-Williams, 1899: 606, 780). The bride's father next brings water, washes the groom's feet and adorns his toes with rings. Sometimes the bride's mother helps in the washing and in some desciptions the girl's feet are rinsed as well. The parents may then apply some of the water used for this purpose to their own eyes (Stevenson, 1920: 79). In one of Thurston's descriptions the groom then returns the honor and washes the feet of his future father-in-law (Thurston, 1909: I 281), but in another place he makes it out that the groom simply accepts the gesture without return (Thurston, 1906: 223). This latter agrees better with the description of the rite in other areas.

In any case, it is always the father who washes the groom's feet first. As we know, in India washing a man's feet is a sign of great respect, almost of worship. The man who does so willingly places himself 'at the feet' of the man he serves. Placing a little of the washing water on his own eyes is simply a gesture, meant it would seem, to reinforce and magnify this general symbolism. The implications of the father's washing become even clearer when we realize that he is the older man and that what might have been the expected direction for the flow of honors has been strikingly reversed. The descriptions

go even further, saying that the father is supposed to imagine the groom as a manifestation of Siva and the bride as Pārvati, or if he is a Vaishnavite the groom as Vishnu and the girl as Lakemi, as the case may be (Thurston, 1906: 223 and Stevenson, 1920: 79). The tradition is a very old one and intimately associated with the whole conception of marriage in India. Madhuparka is not a regional custom, but is clearly mentioned in the Gṛhya Sūtras (Pandey, 1949: 366).

Thurston does not mention the offer of madhuparka to the groom by any of the non-Brahman castes in the area we are concerned with. However, he does frequently refer to the washing of the groom's feet by the bride's parents and the fact that rings may afterwards be placed on his feet to adorn them. Sometimes the couple are also presented with small coins and betel leaf, and the Koliyan father even gives the groom a coconut (Thurston, 1909: III 304). All these are gestures traditionally associated with puja or the worship of the various Hindu gods. There are several other examples of the treatment of the nuptial couple as royal or semi-divine which we will outline before seeking a general explanation of this important conception.

(f) Ālātti and Village Processions

When the groom arrives at the entrance of the village and again several times while he is seated next to the bride under the marriage pavilion, a lamp is waved in front of him and his spouse-to-be. Dubois gives an excellent description of this gesture, which is, in fact, a common ritual procedure

throughout India. Dubois's account provides an important hint as to its significance.

> A lamp made of kneaded rice-flour is placed on a metal dish or plate. It is then filled with oil or liquified butter and lighted. The women each take hold of the plate in turn and raise it to the level of the person's head for whom the ceremony is being performed, describing a specified number of circles with it. Instead of using a lighted lamp they sometimes content themselves with filling a vessel with water colored with saffron, vermilion and other ingredients. The object of this ceremony is to counteract the influence of the evil eye and any ill-effects which, according to Hindu belief, may arise from the jealous and spiteful looks of ill-intentioned persons.
> ...It is performed daily and often several times a day over persons of high rank, such as Rajas, Governors of Provinces, Generals and other distinguished members of society. (It)is also performed for idols and for the same purposes of turning aside malignant influences, over elephants, horses and other domestic animals (Dubois, 1906: 148-9).

Ālātti is also performed at the other life-cycle ceremonies of the twice-born castes. At a birth it is waved round the mother and baby; at the tonsure ceremony it is used; and again at the thread ceremony it is swung near the child. It is associated with fertility and prosperity and can be waved over standing crops, over grain piled on the threshing floor, over a river when it is worshipped and even in front of trees (Abbott, 1932: 182).

The use of ālātti is common at the marriage ceremonies of the lower castes, as well as among Brahmans. This short ritual occurs many times during the course of a marriage and can be swung in front of various relatives (Dumont, 1957: 224). In the main, however, it is used on the bride and groom themselves. Dumont gives a long list of relatives who perform ālātti over the couple, including mother's sisters, cross-cousins, parallel

cousins and the groom's sisters (Dumont, 1957: 224). Thurston mentions that the Palli and the Paraiyan in addition to alatti plece an odd number of little cakes on various parts of the couple's body, such as the head, arms and feet, soon after their bath (Thurston, 1909: VI 19, 98). Such cakes are also used in pūjā and it is likely that they have similiar associations with worship and with supernatural protection.

Not only are lamps of various kinds waved in front of the couple, but the bridal pair are sometimes sprinkled with water as well. This latter is a common feature of many rituals described in the Gṛhya Sūtras. There it is mentioned that water is sprinkled on the bride at two points in the marriage ceremony: after the seven steps and after the domestic fire has been established (Pandey, 1949: 381, 390). The Kanada and Gujarat Brahmans both sprinkle the bride after the sapta-padi (Srinivas, 1942: 77 and Stevenson, 1920: 90), and the Paraiyans are said to sprinkle water from a ficus religiosa leaf on to the couple after their bath (Thurston, 1909: VI 98). Pandey says that sprinkling the bride helps to free her from physical troubles and to sanctify her for married life (Pandey, 1949: 381). Sprinkling, furthermore, appears to be generally associated with the bride's reproductive capacity. A Kallan women, for example, in the seventh month of pregnancy is asked to bend down in a brief ceremony while her husband's sister pours milk from a betel or ficus religiosa leaf on her back (Thurston, 1909; III 81). Even more striking, perhaps, is the parallel with Bosch's material. He calls the Great Tree, infused with the

rasa of life, " a distributor of life-prolonging and life-giving powers, a 'sprinkler' of the elixir of life for the benefit of all creation (Bosch, 1960: 242).

Another interesting feature of the marriage ceremony are the processions which are made back and forth from the groom's house to the bride's. These are always noisy and a band is hired to play for them wherever the family can afford the fee. This is a time when people dress up to parade and crowds gather to watch. The procession always proceeds through the center of the village first and there are brief stops at the various important shrines on the way. If the marriage festivities last for several days a parade each morning and evening is one of the main features of the merry-making. Theoretically the groom in many of the lower castes is supposed to ride a horse to emphasize his royalty and possible military ancestry. This is true, for example, of the Kallan and Koliyan, although normally the family cannot afford such a gesture. The bride's brother may also ride on horseback to meet him (Thurston, 1909: III 80, 304). The Palli groom is supposed to wear a sword and to adorn himself with "all regal pomp" (Thurston, 1902: 142). Similarly the Kammalan groom arrives with a knife and stylus and the Āre groom, who prides himself on his Maratha origin, is expected to make a pretence of going to the battlefield to fight (Thurston, 1909: III 156 and I 57). In addition, the Malayalai husband-to-be places a sword and arrow in the marriage booth to typify the hunting habits of the Vedans and to indicate the subsequent Malayalai conquest of them and their country (Thurston, 1909: IV 408).

All these customs lend the groom military prowess and attribute him a regal, or at least, warrior status.

Interestingly enough, at the same time, these processions stress the divine or godlike qualities of a nuptial couple and they resemble in their general form the parades of the temple deities which take place on festival days. Those days when the gods are brought out and carried through the streets are the only times that these deities and all they stand for are readily accessible to everyone (Diehl, 1956: 179). Otherwise the great gods of the Hindu pantheon are housed in double shrines where members of the lowest castes rarely enter, and formerly could not go at all, because of their social disability. Thus many people tend to think of the more important gods of the Hindu pantheon as those gods which are seen and known through parades. Generally these gods are carried on men's shoulders through the streets.

In the same way, the bride and groom are usually carried, in the marriage procession, in a palanquin, on a horse, or most frequently on the shoulders of their mother's brothers. During the parade, newly-weds are similarly like gods. A band of music follows them and ārātti is waved before them. Most interesting of all is the fact that a bride and groom have the right of way, on the road, over all others. According to the Vasiṣṭha-dharmasūtra "the snātaka (one who has just returned from his stay with his guru) has precedence over the king and the bride has precedence over all when being taken in procession (Kane, 1941: 147). Thus it would seem that the bridal couple are treated almost simultaneously as kings and as gods. Why is this

so and is there any contradiction involved? Let us assemble the rest of the evidence before we attempt to answer.

(g) Mats and Darbha Grass

In his account of the Tamil Brahman ceremony Thurston says that the newly-weds are traditionally asked to sit together on a mat their first evening with a stick of ficus religiosa decorated with darbha grass lying between them. He notes that this is a feature of the marriage ceremony which is mentioned in the Gṛhya Sūtras, although it is today out of vogue with some Brahman groups (Thurston, 1909: I 289). Pandey says that this ritual was known even in Vedic times (Pandey, 1949: 350) while Stevenson and Srinivas confirm that the Brahmans in Gujarat and Mysore still practice a similar custom, the only difference being that the couple actually are made to sit on the darbha grass (Stevenson, 1920: 85 and Srinivas, 1942: 76). Of the darbha grass the Brahman groom is asked to say: "Oh darbha, thou art capable of giving royal powers and the teacher's seat". Then after being given a small pot of water he continues: "May this water destroy my enemies. May brilliancy, energy, strength, life, reknown, glory, splendour, and power dwell in me" (Thurston, 1909: I 282). A teacher's seat, presumably Brahman, is mentioned but the main weight of the text dwells on the groom's potentiality as a kshatriya or king. There is no mention of sitting on a mat or on darbha grass for the non-Brahmans of our area. They refer to the groom as a king by having him ride a horse, carry a sword, fight a mock battle and other obvious

imagery of this kind. The Brahmans associate the groom with a king by having him sit on a kingly mat and by asking him to recite traditional verses which refer to his kingly ambitions. Srinivas mentions a mat used in the marriage of the untouchable Holeyas of Mysore called the siṃhāsana (lit: 'lion seat', but usually understood to mean the throne on which the king sits) (Srinivas, 1942: 102). This mat may have a similar significance.

Darbha grass, in Indian ritual, also has a strong association with cosmic fertility which is worthy of illustration. There are two interesting legends connected with the origin of this herb. The first is that when the gods churned the famous milk sea which rested on Vishnu's back in his incarnation as a tortoise, a great number of hairs were pulled loose. These, nurtured in the milky waters and thrown ashore by the waves, took root and became the grass, darbha. The second legend is that the gods, drinking with great thirst the famous elixir of immortality which they extracted from the sea by the churning, let fall droplets which fell on the herb darbha and transferred to it the sanctity which it is now believed to enjoy (Dubois, 1825: II, 450-51). Both these legends clearly associate the moisture in this grass with the all-pervading rasa of the primeval waters.

According to J. F. Kearns, the Koreva of the Vizagapatam District drop a blade of this grass into a pot of water before the bridal pair at a marriage, and this gesture is considered "equal to a binding oath between them" (Thurston, 1909: III 487). The Tamil Brahmans, furthermore, pass a waist-cord made of this

grass round the bride just after the tali is tied while the groom says that he "binds her for good and wishes for health, wealth, strength and children". In these two cases the association appears to be with a union of the sexes and in general with human fertility. Lastly, darbha grass has a protective quality and is believed to help to prolong human life. After madhuparka the Tamil Brahman groom takes a blade of this grass and passes it between the eyebrows of the bride, saying: "With this darbha grass I remove the evil influence of any bad mark thou mayst possess, which is likely to cause widowhood" (Thurston, 1909: I 283). There is a similar passage from the Atharwana Veda which reads: "May this grass, which rose from the water of life, which has a hundred roots and a hundred stems, efface a hundred of my sins, and prolong my existence on earth for a hundred years" (Thurston, 1909: III 487).

(h) Eating Together

There is one additional moment during the wedding festivities when the bride and groom are asked to sit side by side in such a way that their royal status and super-human qualities are highlighted. This is the point, at the end of the wedding day, when the two eat their first meal together while seated facing east in the center of the pavilion. Every other day of her married life the bride will be expected to serve her husband first, and sit down to eat herself only when he has finished. This is the traditional household pattern, laid down as law in the Dharmaśāstras. The wedding night is the one exception to

this general rule. Pandey explains that this first meal "symbolizes the union of the persons of husband and wife" and therefore "entails no sin" (Pandey, 1949: 391).

To carry this interpretation further we need only point out that the very fact that the bride and groom eat together is a sign of their god-like super-social condition. The bridal pair, on this first evening, are treated in the same way as are ascetics, who having left behind the cares of this world, seek union with the ultimate truth which is said to lie behind reality. Like the sanyāsi or wanderer, the bridal couple are above the world's day-to-day concerns, and therefore, the ordinary restrictions on consumption of food do not apply to them. This common nuptial meal is mentioned in the Gṛhya Sūtras and its existence at the current time is affirmed by Srinivas for the Kanada Brahmans, by Padfield for the Telugu Brahmans, and by Dubois for the Tamil Brahmans. Thurston, however, does not mention this rite in his writings, nor is it clear why he (committed such an oversight) does not do so. We do not know, therefore, whether or not this is common practice among the non-Brahman groups in our area.

(i) The Marriage Pots

In addition to all of these specific rituals, we know, of course, that the couple are asked to sit under the pavilion and somewhere near its center, during the entire marriage ceremony. Here they are very near the fire and or muhurtakkal and inside the square, pillared hall of a makeshift temple. The

very construction of this enclosure has "made the ground sacred". The circular aspect of the everyday world has been left behind and the perfection of the heavenly world has been expressed by drawing a square (Kremrisch,1946: I 25). The couple are seated close to the center of this, the true universe and intimately associated with the primeval forces of nature whose union gave birth to the great Tree of Life and the fiery sap rasa which sustains the cosmos.

There can be no doubt about this basic symbolic equivalence of pavilion with temple, fire and muhurtakkāl with the tree of life and of the bridal couple with the primeval cosmic union of male and female. This imagery runs through the marriage ceremony at all levels in the caste hierarchy. And, in, some castes, this theme is carried further yet. The Kanada Brahmans, for example, on the fourth day of the marriage place thirty-two lights, representing the thirty-two crores of gods, around the four sides of a square drawn on the dais of the pavilion. In the center are placed two more said to represent Śiva and Pārvati. A thread soaked in turmeric is passed round the outside of these pots as if to form a fence. The couple perform a pūjā (short offering) and than cut the thread and take a seat inside. The groom proceeds to tie a tāli around the bride's neck (Srinivas, 1942: 84). The Gujarat Brahmans have a similar ceremony, only the pots are arranged in a tier rather than a line, on each of the four sides of the enclosure (Stevenson, 1920: 87). Padfield mentions something resembling this square of pots for the Telugu Brahmans as well, but it is not clear whether the

couple actually step inside it (Padfield, 1896:137). Thurston does not record any such square of pots fenced off with string for the Tamil Brahmans but he does say that when the couple are seated in the pavilion "A few married women go round them three times carrying water, light, fruit and betel in a tray" (Thurston, 1909: I 280). This reminds us of the Kanada Brahman ceremony where the bride's mother circles the couple, spilling liquid to enclose them in a circle of safety which the evil spirits cannot enter (Srinivas, 1942: 71).

We need only remember that the formal way of laying out a square for a temple site is to drive four pegs in at the corners, corresponding to the intermediate directions of the compass, and to stretch a cord round their circumference. The Mahānirvāna Tantra directs the builder to "fence all quarters so that no obstructions proceed from them", and Kramrisch adds that "the pegs are the turning points and require to be marked... thus is the site taken possession of on all sides...closed and given its measure" (Kramrisch, 1946: I 40). This picture resembles, as well, a traditional representation of the lotus pond in Hindu and Buddhist iconography. We will quote Bosch as he describes a painting taken from the Picture Section of the Chinese Tripitaka :

> We notice here in perspective a square lotus-pond whose vertical sides, appearing in a level position in the picture, at regular intervals are buttressed by branches or beams presented in the picture by small parallel strokes. On the corners of the square the guardians of the Quarters are posted with their attendants and in full attire, while from the center of the pond rises the Cosmic Tree, in the shape of a tall lotus plant, with on its summit the Wheel of Law (Bosch, 1960: 168).

The couple in the marriage ceremony sit inside just such an enclosure, with gods, represented by pots, guarding the four directions. Similarly, the bridal pair can be identified with the eternal lotus plant which sprung from the rasa of the waters to support the tree of life. Thurston, in describing the marriage ceremony of the Uppiliyans (salt workers) says that the couple not only sit inside a wall made of piled-up water pots, but that the women present pour the contents of the pots over them (Thurston, 1906: 101). Similarly Abbott records that the Haransikaris of Gujarat place four water pots in a square and wind a string around them. They then upset the pots "so as to form a ring of water within which the bridal pair take the surgi bath" (Abbott, 1932: 163). Thurston gives us a brief hint that the use of such a square of pots may be fairly common among the non-Brahman castes of our region, but unfortunately he nowhere describes this practice in detail (Thurston, 1909: VII 307). We have found, however, that he mentions a square of water pots fenced in by a thread for the Bedar of Anantapur District and the Bhondari of Ganjam (Thurston, 1909: I 201, 235).

All of this imagery, the square, the gods which stand on its circumference and the waters which they enclose, remind us of the primal lotus pond and identify the bridal couple with the golden germ of life which rose from its muddy bed. There is one further detail we may add in this connection. Thurston mentions at two places that during the marriage ceremonies the bridal couple are asked to sit together on a pestle (Thurston, 1909: I 202, and 1906: 75). Presumably this is the same pestle which functions as the muhurtakkāl or milk post. We are reminded

immediately, of course, of the union of male and female, in the iconographic representations of the creation myth, which takes place on top of a pillar or idealized lotus stem. Mrs. Stevenson's mention of placing a bride's ivory bangle on top of the muhurtakkāl may be a symbolic substitute for the request that the bridal couple actually re-enact the age-old story by sitting on so uncomfortable a perch (Stevenson, 1920: 61).

Our interpretation of this request to sit on a pestle gains probability when we note the parallel with several myths. For example, the divine marriage of the gods Paramaśiva and Devī is supposed to take place on top of a tower. In addition Bosch tells us that a 13th century Khmer legend speaks of a marriage which takes place on top of a golden tower where the king sleeps, and there is a third story from Java which recounts the story of " a marriage of two divine beings, one from heaven and the other from the realm of the waters, a marriage which is made on the top of a tower and is intended to ward off disaster" (Bosch, 1960: 92-3). Thus marriage on top of a pillar is a familiar image in Hindu mythology and folklore. It is generally reserved, it would seem, for kings and divine beings.

(j) The Bridal Couple As Kings or Gods

It is clear from the foregoing that the bridal couple are in the wedding ceremony sometimes identified with kings, and sometimes with gods. This regal imagery is explicit and cannot be denied. Among the lower castes it is frequently said that

the groom ought to ride a horse, even if, in fact, he only rides the shoulders of his mother's brother. In addition he may carry a stylus, knife or a sword, and even be asked to fight a mock battle. It would appear that many more castes include such gestures in their marriage ritual than actually make a claim to martial ancestry. Among Brahmans the groom's kingly state is expressed by the throne-mat on which he and his bride sit and by many express verses which extoll his splendour, renown, and power. These verses are recorded in the Grhya Sūtras and therefore cannot be out of keeping with the most orthodox views on marriage,

At the same time, however, the bride and groom are treated as gods. Their feet are washed and ārātri is waved in front of them. Small gifts of coin and betel may be laid at their feet, and madhuparka, the beverage of the gods, is offered to them. Srinivas says that the groom is "regarded as the representative of Vishnu and a honoured guest", while Stevenson boldy tells the reader that he "must grasp the idea that on their wedding day and for at least three days after, the little bride and groom represent the god Śiva and his wife Pārvati" (Srinivas, 1942: 72; Stevenson, 1920: 68). Both these writers are thoroughly acquainted with the marriage ceremony as well as with India generally and there can be no question that their interpretation here is correct.

How are we to reconcile these two associations? Is it consistent to understand the groom as simultaneously a king and a god? Dumont does not let the matter rest here. In his

discussion of the problem he says :

> Si certains traits supposent que le fiancé est exposé aux influences néfastes (fard de protection, alatti), il y en a bien davantage qui marquent son éminente dignité...Tout cela n'est pas simple métaphore, mais est à prendre sérieusement, et correspond à un trait profond du mariage indien en général. La difference est que, dans des forms ce mariage plus orthodoxes, le marié est assimilé non pas à un roi, mais à un brahmane, et, si'il est brahmane, à un dieu.
> (Dumont, 1957: 225-6)

We cannot agree entirely, with Dumont on this point because in even the most orthodox marriage the traditional Sanskrit verses recited explicitly indicate that the groom is to be regarded as a king as well as a god. It would appear that Dumont over-stresses the faet that in Hindu culture at its most erudite level there is a marked opposition between the conception of Brahman and of Kshatriya and that a hierarchy of functions favors the former (Dumont, 1962: 48-77). With this general conclusion we are in complete accord. How then can we reconcile the fact that no striking opposition or hierarchy of these conceptions appears in the ritual associated with marriage?.

For the lower castes in the social scale the answer is not difficult. As Dumézil pointed out clearly in 1948, priest and Kshatriya collaborate in their position of power and in the dominion they are understood to enjoy over mankind (Dumézil, 1948: 76).

This solidarity vis-a-vis the rest of humanity is well documented by Indian literature. As Manu notes, the former are Lord over all creatures, the latter, only over the cattle (Müller, 1886: XXV 400, IX 327). For the low caste man there is no important opposition between Brahman and Kshatriya. Instead, they

blend together as one large group of superior beings and identification of the groom with both simultaneously makes sense.

This does not answer the question, however, why the Brahmans themselves should stress that a groom resembles a prince as well as a god. We would argue that this identification occurs because the emphasis in a marriage ceremony is on the groom as a husband and householder, and not merely on his priestly duties as a Brahman. The latter, of course, are not neglected as a householder's first duty is to establish a sacred fire and offer daily sacrifice. However, this is not seen as an obligation which stands in opposition to his function as lord of the home and provider of wealth. In his role as a husband the Brahman is expected to pursue <u>artha</u> and <u>dharma</u> hand in hand, just as the roles of priest and king complement one another in their dominion over humanity. In the context of the marriage ceremony, then, there is no necessary conflict and no striking hierarchy between these two conceptions with which the groom, and secondarily his bride, are identified.

Prominent as this dual theme is in the nuptial ceremonies, our descriptions indicate that it is entwined with another of equal importance. We have in mind the continual reference made to a need for protection from evil influences and the complementary emphasis on continued fertility and prosperity. There is first of all the anointing of the couple with red and yellow substances which serve both to purify and protect them and to hail their new role as householders and parents. Second we may mention the <u>darbha</u> grass and its intimate association with the

rasa of the waters and human longevity. Then there is the tāli, an emblem of the state of marriage which is tied amidst loud noises intended to keep off the evil eye, and the wrist threads which protect the couple until the time of sexual union. Furthermore, we may remember the magical effects of waving ālātti and its general associations with gods and persons of great rank. Also important are the preliminary consultations with the astrologer. And lastly, of course, is the general setting, under a pavilion and close to fire and muhurtakkāl, with their abundant reference to creation and the fertility of the cosmos.

We have not tried to separate out these two themes of protection and procreation for treatment under separate chapter headings, nor have we attempted to disentangle their associations with regal pomp and godliness. Indeed, these themes are so closely associated in Indian thought that to treat them independently would do violence to the descriptive material. Only taken as a whole do they lead us toward an understanding of the riddle why the bride and groom should be treated like kings and gods.

The key lies in seeing behind each new marriage in human form, a re-enactment of the primordial union of male and female from which all creation springs. According to Hindu tradition, the nuptial couple are the most important manifestation available to mankind of this essentially duality and its eternal reproductive potential. This is why we find the constant embellishment of the ceremony with fertility symbolism and the continual obeisance paid to fire, the muhurtakkāl and other symbols of the source of life. This is also why the marriage of gods and the

marriage of plants in the vegetal kingdom have such a prominent place in Indian ritual. Furthermore we can understand, by reference to this conception, why protection from evil influences is emphasized during the marriage ceremony. Misfortune, sickness, death and decay are the negation, for a Hindu, of the source of life, of that elixir "sprinkled" by the Great Tree which brings in its wake new birth and prosperity. The force behind creation wages a never ending battle against these shadowy forces of destruction and darkness which surround it. The source of life, therefore, needs to be defended, hedged in by a "safety circle" at each crucial stage on the road to growth and maturation, and particularly at its moment of regeneration : marriage.

The same key answers our question of why the bridal pair should be treated as kings and priests. The partners to a marriage stand for something much more than the marital union of two human beings. Because they represent the great union of forces behind all existence, they become themselves superior creatures. Because of their association with divinity in its primordial form, the bridal pair are themselves deified. Since the entire conception of caste rests on the notion that those above one in the social hierarchy are purer and more godlike than those below, the bridal pair are naturally treated like people at the very pinnacle of the social order, kings, and Brahmans. Further, we know that there is no contradiction in understanding the bride and groom to be at once superior social beings, and a manifestation of god, for the worship of great men, saints, and others possessing unusual powers has been a

familiar phenomenn in India since the earliest period in history (Monier-Williams, 1891: 257). And lastly, as we have already pointed out, the bride and groom are associated with these two highest varnas because what are considered the leading concerns of a married man, artha and dharma, are identified, in their most ideal and concentrated form with the complementary responsibilities of these two classes: the kings and the priests.

8. GIFT-EXCHANGE AND THE MARRIAGE FESTIVITIES

(a) Gift-Exchange

The question of gift-exchange between the families of the bride and groom at the time of marriage and the expectation of continued presentations in the future is clearly an important theme which runs through the entire wedding proceedings. Dumont, in his recent monograph, has provided a wealth of material on this question for the Kallan, but a comparative picture of gift-exchange in the area as a whole must largely await further research. Unfortunately, Thurston gives us very little information on this topic. However, we will summarize here what inferences can be drawn from the present sources.

First, it is clear from the traditional texts on marriage that a Brahman is expected to provide a dowry for his daughter when he gives her away in marriage. Dowry is mentioned even by the Vedic sources (Pandey, 1949: 348), and according to Thurston the classical verse a father is asked to repeat during the kanyādāna is "I am giving you a virgin decorated with jewels to enable me to obtain religious merit" (Thurston, 1909: I 282). According to the ritual text books the appropriate gesture was for the father to give a fatted calf to the groom for use at the marriage feast (Padfield, 1896: 125), as well as gifts of clothing and other articles. These are supposed to immediately follow the gift of the bride (Pandey, 1949: 373). Nowadays the gift of a cow is omitted but the bride's family are still expected to provide the wedding feast and to ceremonially present her and the groom with fine cloths. There does not appear to be any important general contrast between the Brahmans and non-Brahmans in this matter, except that both the gifts and the food supplied are limited by the financial resources of the family.

Second, according to the classical texts, the groom was expected to present a garment to the bride. This gift of a cloth in the opposite direction is clearly mentioned in the Vedas and in the Gṛhya Sūtras as well (Pandey, 1949: 349, 370). A present by the groom of a fine piece of material is noted by Thurston for the Tamils and by Padfield for the Telugus as still a traditional part of the Brahman wedding at the present day (Thurston, 1909: I 285 and Padfield, 1896: 124). It is also familiar among the non-Brahmans, for example the low caste Pallan (Thurston, 1909: V 480). The difference is that in the non-Brahman ceremony this gift of cloth is usually made before the wedding begins and it becomes incorporated in a much larger gift of money or goods to the bride's family which is explicity paid as bridewealth.

Thurston mentions this payment by the groom's family for nine of the twenty non-Brahman castes in our area: Iḍaiyaṉ, Kammāḷaṉ, Kusṷavaṉ, Palli, Valaiyaṉ, Vaṇṇāṉ, Korava, Valluvaṉ and Pallaṉ. There does not appear to be any selection in this matter according to position in the non-Brahman social hierarchy for these castes are drawn equally from both ends of the scale. Dumont also mentions that bridewealth is paid among the Kallan (Dumont, 1957: 228). Furthermore, several of Thurston's comments lead us to believe that the custom is more universal yet, in our area, and that he has simply overlooked the matter in some of his descriptions (Thurston, 1909: II 108, IV 188). Srinivas records that there is a similar custom in Mysore and he adds that, in the past, Brahmans have paid brideprice as well. "My mother tells me that some fifty years ago girls were frequently sold among the Brahmans," Srinivas has written, and to back up his assertion he quotes some South Indian inscriptions which indicate that Brahmans were paying a brideprice as long ago as the 14th century (Srinivas, 1942: 20-21).

It is interesting to discover that despite the fact

of bridewealth, especially among the lower castes, the general cultural emphasis on the gifts provided by the bride's family appears to remain strong. Thurston makes several references to this effect. He indicates, for example, that the bride's family try to provide some kind of dowry among the Vallamban, Korava and Paraiyan (Thurston, 1909: VII 301, III 478, VI 99). There is also the general fact reappearing in all his descriptions, that the bride's family ought to provide the feast. (The only exception to this is a very elaborate and unsatisfactory description of a Paraiyan wedding provided by K. Rangachari which appears to take place in the groom's village. Rangachari was a Brahman and one of Thurston's assistants. Because of his social position he probably did not have much opportunity to observe or even to talk with Paraiyans in person (Thurston, 1909: VI 96)). Our suspicion that an emphasis on the gifts of the bride's family remains in force among the lower castes, even if not borne out in fact, is reinforced by Dumont's recent material on the Kallan. He writes that the father who receives the brideprice, ought, in principle, to spend twice that amount on jewelry for the bride, despite an agreement, in reality, to split the cost between the two families. In addition, he says that the smaller gifts carried from the groom's to the bride's village are explicitly doubled when the couple return. The same principle operates when the couple come to the bride's village for a short ceremonial stay some weeks later, and when they return finally to settle near the groom's family (Dumont, 1957: 228-9). This emphasis on gifts from the bride's family is apparently still more evident among the Kallan if we look at the exchanges between the two families over a period of years. Dumont says that the presentations from the feminine side outweigh the masculine gifts more and more heavily with the passage of time (Dumont, 1957: 231).

Srinivas finds that in Mysore many of the castes which

pay bridewealth also include in their marriage ceremonies the dhare or kanyādāna 'gift of the virgin' rite and makes the interesting judgement that these two customs are incompatible. He inveighs against the first as "reducing marriage to a bargain and equating woman to a chattel". He also argues that brideprice is probably a Dravidian custom and the dhare ceremony something borrowed from the Aryan conquerers and says that the non-Brahmans "care little for the meaning of the [Sanskritic] rites they so meticulously observe" (Srinivas, 1942: 20). Even though the dhare ceremony is not common among the non-Brahman castes of the area we are most concerned with, we cannot accept that the payment of brideprice is as incompatible with traditional Hindu notions about marriage as he would make out.

There are two arguments to support our position. The first is that, as we have seen, some gifts by the groom's family are considered appropriate by the ritual texts in even the most orthodox marriage. In a sense, then bridewealth is only an increase in the amount that his family is expected to give. The second point is that actual payment for the bride is one of the four "generally approved" forms of marriage permissible to Brahmans mentioned in many of the ancient writings. There is evidence that brideprice existed, even in Vedic times (Basham, 1954: 168-9). We know that this form of marriage was looked on with some disfavor and was not considered "pure". Nonetheless, it was clearly sanctioned by extant social custom. It would appear, therefore, that the best way to understand the tradition of bridewealth among the non-Brahman castes is not to view it as a custom which contradicts the classical conception of marriage, but is rather, only a somewhat lower or less pure form perpetuated, at least in part, for economic reasons. Even where a brideprice is paid, our material would seem to indicate that the ideal of a disproportion of gifts, dominated by exchanges directed from the bride's

family to the groom's is current. Furthermore, if we generalize from the Kallan data, it is the ideal which finally triumphs even among the lower castes when we follow the cycle of gifts through a number of years.

(b) The Marriage Games

In addition to the formal presentations just described which are frequently haggled about beforehand and have a definite economic significance, each guest is expected to make a small gift to the bride and groom. Presumably these are given in equal numbers by both families and are somewhat like wedding presents in the West. Thurston mentions this tradition specifically for the Tamil Brahmans, and also for the Agamudaiyan (Thurston, 1909: I 291, 14). In speaking of the Kammalan and the Pallan he says that the guests each contribute a few annas to the cost of the feast (Thurston, 1909: III 156, V 782). Abbott also mentions a small gift in coins by the guests at a wedding, and it is likely that this is a widespread custom (Abbott, 1932: 94). The feasting itself, is an important part of the festivities and may last for several days. Thurston mentions it for a number of the lower castes and it appears to be a universal tradition, continuing over as many days as the family can afford. This entertaining and general merriment is, of course, one important way in which the new bond created between two families is affirmed.

Among some of the lower castes, however, it would seem that very few of the groom's relatives accompany him to the bride's home for the wedding, and few of the bride's relatives accompany the procession back to his village. Probably this tradition arises out of the expenses of entertaining that would otherwise result. Dumont affirms that among the Kallar it is only the principal actors that travel back and forth and although Thurston gives very little information on the subject of wedding guests it would

seem that this is the pattern, at least among the Vallamban and the Koliyan (Thurston, 1909: VII 301 and III 426). Where such is the case the joint feasting of the two families is replaced by the coming and going of the bridal pair, accompanied by general polite greetings and formal presents. These ritual presentations are sometimes called 'box presents' because they are carried to and fro in a box. They consist of such things as a lamp, a brass vessel, an ear ornament, cakes, coconuts, a grass mat, a toe-ring, rice, betel and areca nuts (Thurston, 1909: VI 96). Dumont translates the Tamil word for them as presents of 'beauty and prosperity' (Dumont, 1957: 228). Their general significance would appear to combine a show of polite exchanges with the hope for a prosperous and fertile union of the families concerned.

The Brahmans and the wealthier upper castes who can afford to get together in one house for extensive festivities also have a number of traditional games and songs to pass the time. The associations of these games appear to be similar to the box presents in character. The songs are described as "bawdy" and "Rabelaisian", and they make fun of the various tensions that may arise between the two families. There are also many jokes played at the expense of both groups. These jokes emphasize the new roles the relatives have acquired and often refer openly to the bargaining over financial details which took place at the time of betrothal. The guests are expected to take all of this in good humor (Srinivas, 1942: 80). The games, furthermore, include a burlesque of domestic life and the dressing up of the bride as a man and encouraging her to make rude remarks to her husband (Thurston, 1909: I 290-1). The newly-weds may also be asked to speak each others' names, something they will be expected to studiously avoid in the future (Padfield, 1896: 133).

These songs and games, with their obvious reference to the new household and the classical tensions which may

result, are accompanied by the frequent rolling of coconuts or flower balls back and forth between the two families (Thurston, 1909: I 291 and Srinivas, 1942: 80). The milk of coconuts is associated with the elixir of life churned from the original milk-sea as well as with the rasa or sap of the Great Tree. Coconuts are for this reason further identified with semen, and with blood (Bosch, 1960: 59), and the nut as a whole is refered to as "the fruit of the goddess of prosperity" (Monier-Williams, 1891: 339). The symbolism here of the sharing of the blood and semen of two families, and the new life which it is hoped will result is so clear as to hardly require comment. Srinivas reinforces this interpretation when he says in another context: "Milk is a very valued commodity and the ritual giving of milk indicates thst solidarity is, or ought to be, prevalent between the giver and the recipient. It is also a symbol of pleasure, luxury and happiness and consequently mourners abstain from it while they offer it to the spirit of the departed person" (Srinivas, 1952: 94).

We have already mentioned the 'box presents' which go back and forth between households during the marriage festivities in the lower castes. These usually include coconuts and it would seem that the symbolism implied in the exchange is similar. The bride and groom are also asked to exchange flower garlands at least once during the marriage ceremony, each one placing their wreath around the other's neck. This seems to be as common among the Koliyans, Paraiyans and others of low caste as it is among the Brahmans. Dumont stresses the significance of this exchange of garlands among the Kallan in the shortened form of their ceremony and gives it a ceremonial importance next to that of tying the tāli itself (Dumont, 1957: 227). Thurston, in describing the Agamudaiyan, says the couple first exchange garlands three times and immediately following they roll flower balls back and forth (Thurston, 1909: I 15). These two rites of exchange to our mind,

closely resemble one another in their general associations and social significance.

(c) Rice

This general emphasis on the fertility and prosperity which is hoped will result from the marriage union and the necessary participation of two families for its creation is brought out in several other ways. The first is the fact that the guests are asked to throw rice over the couple after the tying of the tāli. This tradition is as common to the low castes as to those at the top of the social hierarchy and Thurston frequently refers to it in his descriptions. In speaking of the Korava he says that the rice may be mixed with turmeric, coconut, dates, jaggery and even with gold and silver coins (Thurston, 1909: III 479). All these items have a general association with the golden seed, the rasa of the waters and with offspring and material wealth generally. It is interesting to note that rice is also traditionally thrown following the birth of a child and the new mother is expected to stick rice, colored red with turmeric, to her forehead (Stevenson, 1920: 18).

There is a similar use of rice when the bride enter's her husband's house for the first time. Srinivas tells us that among the Kanada Brahmans the bride must step over the threshold right foot first and kick a measure of rice containing a coral bead and a bit of gold. Thus she is understood to scatter wealth on the floor. "Her coming into the house is synonymous with the coming in of plenty" (Srinivas, 1942: 85). Thurston describes a similar custom among the Palli and the Pariyan, castes who stand at either end of the non-Brahman hierarchy (Thurston, 1909: VI 20, 98).

(d) The Planting of Seeds

There is still another way in which this emphasis on new life and good fortune is expressed in the marriage ritual. On the day before the wedding (or sometimes on the 3rd, 5th, 7th or 9th day before) a group of married women set out to the northeast of the village to fetch earth from the hillocks of white ants in which to plant the nuptial seedlings. Usually there are women from both families in this party. They are also responsible for getting the pots from the potter which will be used to hold the water used for the seeds (Srinivas, 1942: 94). The earth of white ant hills is preferred for many ritual purposes, because, as we have noted previously, the hillocks of these ants are always expanding. The earth from them is thus considered to be especially fertile.

Next nine kinds of seeds are planted in trays which have been filled with this special soil and placed in the northeast corner of the marriage pavilion. The water pots are sometimes set gently on the trays, (Srinivas, 1942: 94) presumably where the water will seep through slowly into the seedbed. The trays may be placed in a line (Padfield, 1896: 122) or in a quincunx formation with a tray at each of the four corners of a square and a fifth at the center (Thurston, 1909: 280). Srinivas specifies the nine kinds of grain used as: greengram, horse gram, black gram, bengal gram, dal, avare (dolicos lablob), paddy, gingelly and wheat (Srinivas, 1942: 69). On the last day of the wedding the seeds are taken in procession to a tank, pond or river. They are either thrown in to the water directly or there is a short plowing ceremony and they are laid in the newly turned earth next to the source of water (Thurston, 1909: I 294, VI 21). At a Idaiyan wedding the groom digs up three baskets of mud from the bottom of the tank with a hoe and throws them behind him. Presumably the seeds are then

planted in the mud (Thurston, 1909: II 395). The planting of seeds at the marriage is another ritual which is common to all levels of the caste hierarchy. Thurston mentions it for eight of the twenty non-Brahman groups we have selected and it is probably performed by a great many more. The Idaiyans sometimes put bits of gold in with the seedlings (Thurston, 1909: II 395), and the Pariyans simply dig a hole and put the seeds in along with a little milk and water (Thurston, 1909: VI 98).

Srinivas, in discussing this custom, chooses to emphasize its agricultural significance. "This rite gives us the picture of a mode of life in which agriculture is the mainstay of the people....(Grain, earth and water) are essential for the growth of plant life, and plant life, in turn, is indispensable to human life"(Srinivas, 1942: 95). We do not dispute the importance of these associations but prefer to stress the direct parallel with human life which is implied. In addition we cannot miss the numerous references to the initial golden seed and the Great Tree of life that rose from the mud at the bottom of the waters. In the planting of the marriage seeds we would see a preparation for new seeds of human life, just as the architect sows grain in the anticipation of the completion of a new shrine.

One final custom we may mention in this connection is the drawing of a tree on the side of the house where the marriage is to take place. Thurston gives a most interesting description of this in connection with the Madhva Brahmans:

> A quaint ceremony called rangavriksha (drawing) is performed on the morning of the second day. After the usual playing with balls of flowers (nalagu or alangu) the boy takes hold of the right hand of the bride and, after dipping her right forefinger in turmeric and lime paste, traces on a white wall the outline of a plantain tree, of which a sketch has previously been made by a married woman. The tracing goes on for three days.

> First the base of the plant is drawn, and on the evening of the third day, it is completed by putting in the flower spikes (Thurston, 1906: 4).

Dumont has a picture of a similar drawing in his ethnography on the Kallan (Dumont, 1957: pl 26a) and various other brief references make us suspect that the painting of these designs very commonly accompany the festivities such as marriage (Gupte 1916: 238-45 and Bonnerjea 1933: 163-4). Again and again we are brought back to the theme of creation, the great union of male and female forces and the Tree of Life which lies at the root of all procreation and material abundance.

(e) Marriage to Gods and the Marriage of Gods

The emphasis on offspring, and particularly on male offspring, is an extremely important motif in Indian culture generally. It is so strong in the South that it has produced some interesting variations on the basic marriage pattern. There are many castes in this region, and in particular in the Western taluks of Bellary, the adjoining parts of Mysore and still further south in Coimbatore and Madura, where a family will dedicate a daughter to a temple god if there has been no male issue (Thurston, 1909: I 129, III 37-8, IV 121). By her marriage to a god the girl becomes, in fact, a public woman. Contrary to ordinary Hindu Law, she may inherit the property of her father and carry on the family line, so to speak, until a male child is born at which time the property and family name descend on him. If the daughter were to be married in the traditional fashion, her family line would die out and her children would belong to her husband's lineage. This custom is not limited to the traditional caste of temple prostitutes, but is mentioned again and again by Thurston in his writings.

The actual ceremony in marrying a girl to a god is

interesting, and resembles in many particulars the marriage of two human beings. The girls are decorated with jewels and made to stand on a heap of paddy. They are seated facing the idol and the officiating Brahman ties the tāli, which has been lying at the feet of the god, around her neck. The priest is considered "the representative of the idol," for the duration of the ceremony (Thurston, 1909: III 38-9). Ālātti is waved in front of the girl and she may be offered sandalwood paste and flowers. "It is said that when the man who is to receive her first favors joins the girl, a sword must be placed at least for a few minutes by her side" (Thurston, 1909: III 39). According to Srinivas the girl is asked to sit beside a dagger and to pour rice over it. She is also asked to sleep in the temple her first night. Srinivas also specifies that a kaṅkaṇa or protection cord is tied to the girl's right wrist (Srinivas, 1942: 179), rather than her left as in marriage to a man. Thurston gives no information on these matters. The Kuṇuvan of Madura appear to have a tradition which is similar in most particulars, except that they marry the girl to a door-post of the house (Thurston, 1909: IV 121).

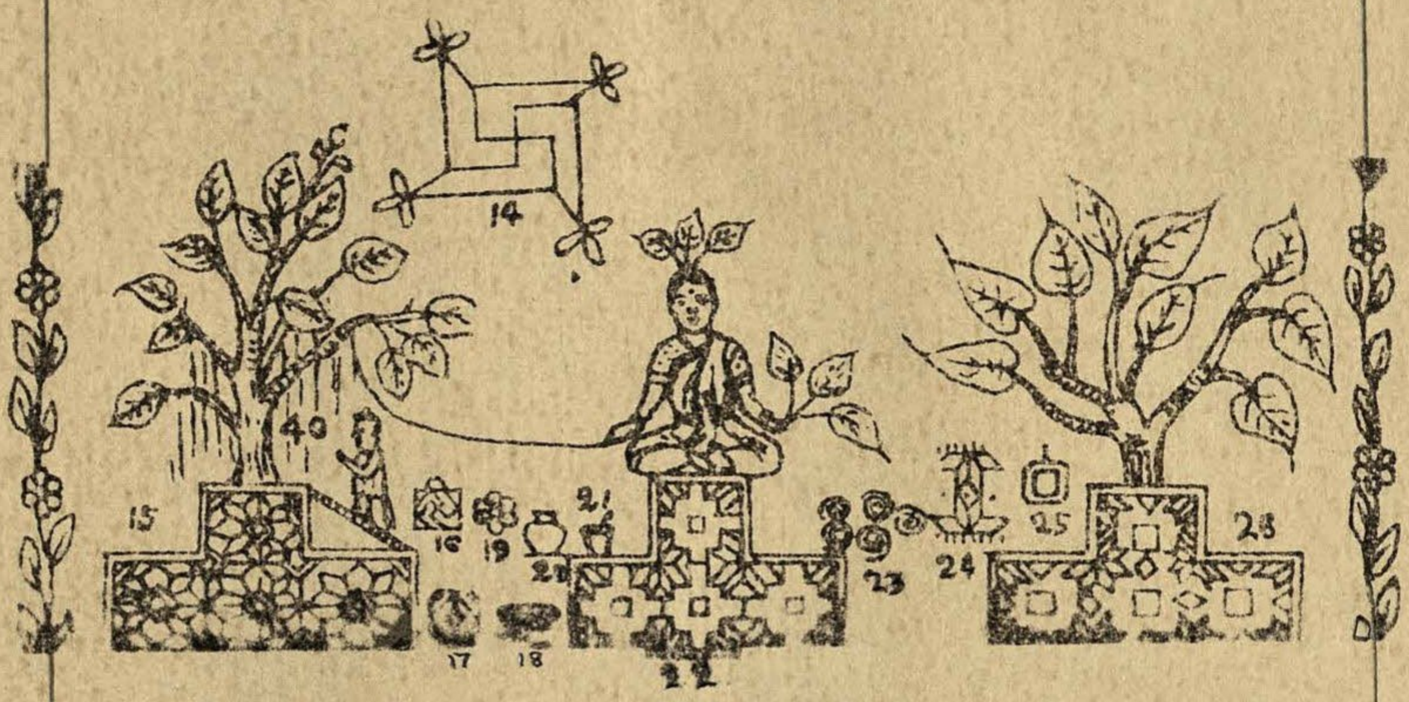
Not only are the gods sometimes married to human beings, but they also marry among themselves. In many temples the principal god is taken to his bedroom each night where he is thought to join his wife or wives (Basham, 1954: 336). One of the most famous of the marriages among the great gods is that between Siva and Pārvati. This marriage has become a favorite theme in art and in sculpture. In their classic pose the couple face east and grasp right hands while Brahma, seated in the foreground, officiates at a small fire. Vishnu stands behind the couple ready to blow the conch and holding a pot of water to pour on the united fingers. Lakṣmi and Bhūmi stand next to him, behind the bride, and act the part of parents in giving their daughter. In the background a host of other gods are portrayed, each with

their respective goddess. They stand "with their arms folded and with the feelings of pleasure, happiness and wonder portrayed in their faces" (Gopinatha Rao, 1916: 338-41). All this forms an exact parallel with the classic Brahman marriage as we have described it.

Pandey explains the marriage of gods by saying that the hold of the saṁskāras or life sacraments on the personality is considered so strong that even the deities are considered to have to undergo them (Pandey, 1949: 480). Dumont makes a similar point when he says that the marriage of gods would not be one of the most important ceremonies of religious cults, if the marriage of people was not a fundamental human institution (Dumont, 1957: 226). We entirely agree and only wish to add that the marriage of gods not only reflects human marriage, but like it, in the eyes of a Hindu, it helps to strengthen and regenerate the life-force behind all things. This is why, we would argue, that the marriage of trees and plants is also so frequently celebrated as a kind of religious rite or offering in India (Monier-Williams, 1891: 334-5 and Kincaid, 1908: 1-8).

We will comment on one example of tree-marriage to make our point. As we have noted earlier, the actual marriage of two trees is often performed by planting them ceremoniously side by side and entwining their branches. However, a pictorial marriage, performed by tracing an auspicious drawing of two trees on the wall or floor of a house for an important occasion is also frequent.
A reproduction of such a drawing is given below.

Auspicious Drawing Showing The Marriage Of The Ficus Religiosa And Ficus Indica Or, Equally, Of The Gods Vata-Savitri And Satyavan.



(Taken from B. A. Gupte, Hindu Holidays And Ceremonials: pl. 15

An Indian author, B.A. Gupte, provides us with the following interpretation of this scene (Gupte, 1916: 238-45).

Fig. 15: The tree represented on the far left is a Ficus Indica, a plant supposed never to die. Its aerial roots support new branches and by this means it can continue to grow almost indefinitely. Climbing the steps to the tree and identified with it is the god Satyavan. He is the personification of the Fructifying Force, eternal and ever-green, which is understood to reside within the tree.

Fig. 28: The tree represented on the far right is the Ficus Religiosa, the gigantic tree which is called king of the forest.

Fig. 22: The deity represented in the center is Mother Earth, daughter of the sun. She is named Vata-Savitri after the gigantic Ficus Religiosa and is identified with it. In her left hand she holds a leaf of this tree and a second branch of it rises from her head. In her right hand she holds an aerial root of the Ficus Indica in sign of her marriage to it. (In the classical marriage pose, we remember, Siva and Parvati hold right hands).

Fig. 14: A fylefoot cross, a Svastik, or symbol of the four quarters of the earth and the four winds. It is a good luck emblem.

Fig. 16: A cylindrical box for keeping kunkum, the red powder applied by women (except widows) to their foreheads.

Fig. 17: A box which contains a preparation of bee's wax, the adhesive medium for the red powder.

Fig. 18: A tabak or tray for holding flowers, moistened rice and sandalwood paste.

Fig. 19: A panahpale or five-partite box for keeping turmeric powder, kunkum, scented abhir (a dark brown fragrant powder used in worship), gulal (a red powder used in worship), and red sendur (an oxide of lead used in puja or worship).

Fig. 20: A tambya or lota to hold water and which represents Varuna, the god or rain.

Fig. 21: A water-cup and sacrificial spoon which are toilette requisites of the bride.

Fig. 23: A group of bamboo trays in which the bride's requisites are put together and distributed among married women. These trays are also used for winnowing. Their coil-like shape lead one to think of the symbol of the celestial serpent, the emblem of the awakening forces of spring.

Fig. 24: A comb belonging to the bride's toilette.

Fig. 25: A looking-glass belonging to the bride's toilette.

We have, here, a picture of the marriage of two trees personified as gods, or of two gods represented as trees.

The ficus religiosa is the male aspect of the divine with aerial roots representing its nature as truth and light descending from above. The ficus indica is the female aspect of the divine growing up from the earth as a lotus rises from the waters. Around the couple are numerous auspicious signs and objects associated with good fortune and marital felicity. It is not important whether the drawing represents the marriage of trees or the marriage of gods, for in fact it can be thought of as either. The point is that any marriage, be it of humans, of plants or of gods, or a cross between the three, reflects the great and primal union between opposed forces which created the world. Every subsequent marriage which is performed, even if only a sketch, helps to reinforce and perpetuate the vital energy thought to lie at the heart of the universe.

9. CONCLUSION

There are three important, inter-related themes which underlie the ritual associated with the marriage ceremony at all levels in the caste hierarchy. The first is the idea that the immensity of the universe is rooted in a ground-principle of male-female duality and inspired from within by the life-force which springs from their union. We have argued, with Bosch, that this conception finds its base in the Vedic myth of creation and noted the classic form which its visual expression has taken over the centuries in art, architecture and sculpture. Furthermore, we have attempted to show how plant and animal life in any one generation are understood to stand in relation to this essential principle as small episodes in the working out of an immense cosmic process whose full scale man can never intellectually grasp. Marriage, as we have seen, is the highest form of expression for this theme. It is both the arch-representation of that primodial conjunction and the means by which man can participate in and rejuvenate the vital energy which was its result. We have seen how this conception is embedded in the very form of the ceremony by the construction of a pavilion and a fire or muhurtakkāl, and how the couple is associated with this symbolism by their movements, by where they are seated, and by numerous smaller gestures such as planting of seeds, sitting on grass, rolling coconuts and throwing rice.

Second, we have discovered that this fundamental life-force is identified with health, fertility and prosperity and understood that it stands in opposition to all that brings disease, ill-fortune and death. This life-force surrounded, as it is, on all sides by the powers of decay and destruction must be protected. Just as a seedling must be guarded from harm when its first shoots push through the soil, protection is most important at those vital points

where new human growth is to start. Thus we have seen the significance at marriage (as, of course, at other life-cycle occasions) of the ritual purification as well as of the numerous charms and semi-magical substances employed to ward off the influence of evil. This is the general theme which underlies the consultations with an astrologer, the use of threads such as the kaṅkaṇa and tāli, the ritual bathing and repeated anointment, and the waving of ārātti by relatives.

Thirdly, the combination of the couple's association with the great life-force and the fact that they are purified and protected by a special array of supernatural safe-guards makes them more god-like than the ordinary mortals who surround them. This brings the theme of hierarchy into the marriage ceremony as well. The bride and groom are treated like superior human beings, like those at the zenith of the social world: the kings and priests. For the duration of the marriage festivities, the nuptial couple over-step the normal boundaries which separate the various castes and rise, in theory, to the very top of the graded ladder of groups, so that as Manu writes, they claim precedence over all other men in procession to the groom's home. This is because the newly wedded pair enjoy precisely the protection from inauspicious influences, the added purity and, the special affinity with god which are the basis of that rationale on which the hierarchical opposition of social units is based.

These three basic themes of opposition, purity, and hierarchy lie, of course, at the very root of the religio-social order as the Hindu traditionally conceives it. The interesting point is that the marriage ritual highlights this inseparability of religious ideas and social reality in the Indian scene so well. Marriage is a re-enactment of the great cosmic union of male and female which helps to perpetuate the life-force of the universe. But marriage is at the same time the union of an ordinary mortal man

and woman which will lead to the regeneration of family and increased material well-being for particular people at a particular moment in human time. The two are not separate occurrences but part and parcel of one celebrated event. For this reason we cannot entirely agree with Dumont when he says that Thurston probably passed by the essential point by stressing the orthodox rituals performed on this occasion and that, the Kallan ~~the~~ ceremony is much more of a social than a religious affair (Dumont, 1957: 217, 221). No doubt Thurston is weak in his description of the guests who attend and the gifts which are exchanged at weddings, but his persistent description of the pavilion, the muhurtakkāl and the planting of seedlings at the weddings of the lower castes make it clear that a marriage is equally a social and a religious event at any level of the caste hierarchy. It must be regarded as such in order to understand why so much trouble is taken over the setting in which it is performed, and why the couple themselves are persistently venerated as superior beings.

Nonetheless, our material has also shown that there are important differences between the marriages performed by the high castes and those performed by the low. We have discovered the very general contrast between a focus on the sacred fire and the sacrifices made to it, by those who employ Brahman priests, and the emphasis on details of pavilion and muhurtakkāl construction and the subsequent obeisance to these which is so common among the lowest castes. There is also a shift in the gods worshiped from the great deities of the Hindu pantheon to local divinities sacred to the specific lineages concerned. Furthermore, we find that two of the great Brahman rites, associated directly with marriage, kanyādāna or the gift of the virgin and sapta-padi or the seven steps, are almost unknown in the non-Brahman ceremony. Only the third, the circumambulation of a sacred object is familiar among the

low castes, where, of course, it is the marriage booth and milk post which receive the attention. Circumambulation, unlike the previous two rites, is a familiar gesture associated very generally with worship and quite specifically with prayers for fertility. In compensation for the absence of some of the central Brahman rituals, the tying of the tāli becomes increasing prominent. Among the lower castes it is, in fact, the high point of the proceedings and the legal criterion of union.

In this last respect, the absence of the Brahman rites of kanyādāna and sapta-padi among the lower castes, our material differs quite strikingly from Srinivas's data on Mysore. There, and probably further to the north as well, these two features of marriage ritual are quite frequently met with among non-Brahman groups. Yet there is little reason to call Thurston's accuracy into doubt on these matters as he was so explicitly interested in recording examples of the "grafting" of Brahman ritual on to non-Brahman ceremonies (Thurston, 1906: 1). One reason for this difference in the data on Mysore and on our area, of course, is the fact that Thurston wrote in 1909 and Srinivas in 1942. Srinivas gives the impression that there has been a lot more pressure from the lower castes to "imitate" Brahman ritual in the last thirty to forty years than previously (Srinivas, 1952: 29-30, 227). It is quite likely, therefore, that there has been some change in this direction in our region since Thurston collected his data. There is no published material, as yet, with which to check this speculative guess.

A second reason is the attempt which Brahmans all over India have made to ban the performance by the non-twice-born castes of those rituals which are authorized and described by the ancient texts (Srinivas, 1952: 46). The Tamil speaking districts of South Arcot, Trichinopoly and Tanjore, partly because of their historical continuity

and freedom from extensive invasion and migration, tend to be religiously and socially conservative in comparison with regions to the north. It is possible, therefore, that the process of circumventing the Brahman ban may have been slower here than in other areas. Both these considerations point to the fact that Thurston's data reflect variations in the marriage ceremony at a place and time when the general pattern was less influenced by modern social trends than it certainly is today. As mentioned in the introduction, our analysis of his material should provide a useful starting point for consideration both of contemporary work and of information on marriage from other areas of the south.

Despite the fact that we found no significant imitation of two of the central Brahman rites by the lower castes we did discover certain indications of an attempt by these groups to raise themselves in the social hierarchy by other ritual means. At all levels of society there are men who claim to wear a "sacred" thread and marriages preceded by a "mock" pilgrimage to Benares. Both of these are clear attempts on the part of those generally associated with the Sudra varṇa to raise their status to that of "twice-born" men. The fact that there are no castes in the area we have studied who are of undisputed Kṣhatriya or Vaishya origin suggests that there is a large gap in the social order as traditionally conceived. This empty space, so to speak, between the Brahmans and the Sudras may be one reason why so many of the castes in the area appear to vie over the outward signs of twice-born status.

A second indication the material provides of an intense concern with ritual position is the nature of the sub-caste names. These emphasize even more clearly the interest in minute differences in the marriage ceremony, and in the kind of tali tied. Following the hints provided by Srinivas and Dumont in their material on areas bordering ours, it is

likely that these names are the result of historical disputes related to the determination of a finely graded social hierarchy of endogamous communities and that they illustrate the expression of this superiority/inferiority in ritual terms. From the general cultural context we know that such separation is usually motivated by a concern with familial purity and that arguments for ritual supremacy "both precede and set the seal on social mobility" (Srinivas, 1962: 58).

A third indication of interest in orthodox ceremonial is that those castes who can do so attempt to get a Brahman priest to officiate at their weddings. Such attempts are limited by a Brahman's willingness to preside only at those weddings where the social contact will not irreparably pollute his own ritual status, and, of course, by the demand by his Brahman to be paid well for the service. Having a Brahman priest at a wedding is an important sign of social status. With his presence certain rites are added to the ceremony such as the building of a sacred fire, stepping on a stone and looking for the pole star. As late as 1909, however, it appears that the Brahmans in our area were only willing to direct those rituals at a non-Brahman marriage which did not require extensive recitation of Sanskrit mantras. They reserved for themselves the two crucial rites, kanyādana and sapta-padi and the accompanying utterances which are considered the most sacred of the nuptial verses.

We will notice that in each of these ways in which the lower castes have tried to imitate the ceremonies of those above them, and thus raise their own position, the emphasis has been laid on doing things specifically described in the ritual handbooks, or Gṛhya Sutras. This agrees well with Srinivas' more general characterization of the phenomena he calls "Sanskritization." In his recent book of essays in which he tries to pin-point what he means by this term, Srinivas says the following:

> Sanskritization results in adopting the sex and marriage code of the Brahmans...(it) results in harshness towards women. Sanskritization has significant effects on conjugal relations...a wife is enjoined to treat her husband as a deity, (and) monogamy is held up as an ideal.
>
> In the sphere of kinship, Sanskritization stresses the importance of vamsha, the patrilineal lineage of Brahmans. The dead ancestors are apotheosized and offerings of food and drink have to be made...thus increasing the importance of having sons...(and) at the same time...lowering the value of daughters... because parents are required to get them married before they come of age.
>
> Sanskritization means...exposure to new ideas and values which have found frequent expression in the vast body of Sanskrit literature...(such as) karma, dharma, pāpa, māyā, saṃsāra and mōksha (Srinivas, 1962: 46-48).

Srinivas also mentions elsewhere that Sanskritization is often expressed by becoming vegetarian, by refusing alcholic beverages and by campaigns against blood sacrifice to the village deities. All these are values expressed in the Smṛti literature.

Students of Indian civilization repeatedly refer to the concept of Sanskritization and it has proved useful in many contexts. Yet it is frequently criticized as vague, and Srinivas himself admits that it might better be treated as a bundle of distinct concepts (Srinivas, 1962: 59). Nonetheless, neither he nor any other has succeeded in actually breaking the term down and still retaining its utility. We would argue that the term needs to be tightened up so that its reference is more specific, rather than split into two or three interlocking ideas, and believe that our material on marriage ceremonies points in this direction.

First, we would argue that Sanskritization ought not to be confused by the use of the term Brahmanization. It is to be expected, since Brahmans are the group most familiar with the ancient texts and also the ones to place

the highest value upon them, that Sanskritization of the lower castes is faster when the Brahmans dominate a region and slower when the prominent caste is Kshatriya or Vaishya (Srinivas, 1962: 62). Yet the Lingāyats have been a powerful force in persuading the low castes of the South to introduce puritanical standards in food and drink while, at the same time, their movement has been markedly anti-Brahmanical in other respects (Dubois, 1906: 114-16). In addition, of course, in Vedic times the Brahmans themselves performed animal sacrifice and in Saraswat, Kashmir and Bengal they still eat meat. Srinivas recognizes these facts and rejects the term Brahmanization for the process he is concerned with (Srinivas, 1962: 42-3). Yet he persists in talking about the "adoption of Brahmanical customs" (Srinivas, 1962: 44, 62), thus contradicting and confusing his own earlier arguments.

Second, Srinivas has clouded the attempt at definition by his repeated references to "economic betterment, the acquisition of political power, education leadership and a desire to move up in the hierarchy" (Srinivas, 1962: 57). Sanskritization ought not to be equated with the universal process we call "social climbing", the fact that some part of those people who have a low status in any social order, when given a chance, will begin to imitate the values and traditions of those above them. This is a point which Srinivas does not sufficiently clarify (Srinivas, 1962, 44). We think the term should be reserved in its use to refer to a highly selective adoption of particular theological ideas, values and ritual acts which are considered desirable because they can be consciously traced to the authors of the ancient Smṛti texts, whether or not they are practiced by a high caste with which the people concerned actually come into contact.

The third point at which the definition of this important concept is unclear is in determining which body

of literature the term "Sanskrit" refers to. At times Srinivas makes reference to the Vedas, at times to the Epics and at times to the other Smrti texts. We entirely agree with his emphasis on the authority of the written word in his discussion of the question of Sanskritization, but we would single out the Sūtras and Śāstras as the body of literature which is paramount in this context. Certainly in regard to marriage ritual we would limit Sanskritization to mean the introduction of specific rites and verses whose desirability stems from their authoritative description in the Gṛhya Sūtras. Vegetarianism, the purity of women and the importance of metaphysical doctrines such as pāpa, saṃsāra and mōksha, although having roots in the earlier hymns, also are not clearly articulated by writers until this period.

The importance of clarifying the term Sanskritization in the above ways is brought out by our detailed examination of the marriage ceremony among the various castes in the heart of the Tamil region. Here we have seen that at all levels in the caste hierarchy the ceremony, the setting and the ideas surrounding it are intimately associated with the Vedic hymns of creation and the later expression of this nucleus of conceptions in art, sculpture and folklore. These notions appear to be the joint possession of all Indians and only very slightly influenced by the Brahmanist, Buddhist or Jainist traditions (Bosch, 1960: 93). They have at their base an intuition expressed as an imagined, semi-visible event, not an abstract notion embroidered upon by academic scholars.

In post-Vedic times these ideas were elaborated upon and given an entirely new tone. The classical writings which form the greater body of Smṛti literature take the form of ritual and legal texts labelled Sūtras and Śāstras. These are entirely the work of Brahmans, and Basham stresses how thoroughly they record the priestly point of view

(Basham, 1954: 113). They also appear to have remained in the hands of Brahman scholars throughout the medieval period and we have seen that an intentional ban was placed by them on the use of these textbooks in Śūdra ceremonies. Because these texts and the ideas contained in them are so closely associated with Brahman pre-eminence, efforts have always been made by the lower castes to circumvent the ban and share in the social and religious elevation which they represent. These efforts appear to have been stepped up and also to have met with increasing success in recent years (Srinivas, 1962: 45-6).

The confusion over the term Sanskritization lies in the fact both the Smṛti literature and the earlier Vedic verses are recorded in Sanskrit. Both are thoroughly Hindu in conception but it is the later writings, with their scholarly tenor, which have been associated with the ritual purity and religious eminence of the upper castes. To us the essence of Sanskritization appears to be that effort made by non-Brahmans to share in this distinction and elevation by adopting precisely those rituals, values and abstract ideas for which this body of literature stands, and which the Brahmans have historically claimed for themselves. This social process should be distinguished from education, economic betterment, or imitation of the dominant caste. At the same time it cannot be called Brahmanization, for many Brahmans today, influenced by European ideas, are beginning to turn away from the precepts of these ancient texts towards shorter marriage ceremonies and to place less emphasis on food restrictions and other details of personal habit. Sanskritization, we think, should be defined as an attempt to follow out a set of specific ideas in daily life, as they are understood to exist in the textbooks of the classical period. These ideas may be identified with the customs of a particular group of people, but should not be confused with the imitation of a class of people per se.

Our material, then has provided a useful base for the study of ritual in other parts of South India. It has also helped us to recognize the central conceptions which may serve to delineate and somewhat clarify Srinivas's useful term, Sanskritization. Finally, the data show how ancient and yet how vital are these ritual traditions of the lower castes. The persistent references to the nucleus of conceptions current in India since Vedic times are striking in their clarity. Certainly the importance given to the ceremonial idiom and the material substances which are its vehicle has been an important factor in preserving "contact", for those at the bottom of the social order with the fundamental Hindu intuition of creation and of our cosmos as world "inspired from within by life itself" (Bosch, 1960: 231) over centuries of Brahman exclusiveness in regard to certain ritual and philosophical texts.

10 APPENDIX OF TABLES

(a) TABLE 1 AREA AND POPULATION TOTALS FOR SOUTH ARCOT, TRICHINOPOLY AND TANJORE IN 1902 (Summarized from Govt. of India, 1901, Table 15)

District	Area in Sq. Miles	Total Population (1901)
South Arcot	5,217	2,349,894
Trichinopoly	3,632	1,444,770
Tanjore	3,710	2,245,029
Area Totals:	12,559	6,039,693

TABLE 2

CASTES REPRESENTED IN SOUTH ARCOT, TRICHINOPOLY AND/OR TANJORE WHICH W. FRANCIS MENTIONS IN HIS RANKING BUT FOR WHOM LITTLE OR NO INFORMATION ON THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY IS AVAILABLE

(The castes under each group heading are listed in strict alphabetical order)

Population in 1901 (in these three districts)

GROUP A: Brahman and Allied Castes

None

GROUP B: Sat or Good Sudras

60,159 Chetti: A go-ahead trading and merchant caste. Many are quite wealthy. A few profess to be vegetarian. They favor infant marriage and forbid widow remarriage (Thurston, 1909: I 212-15).

11,698 Kanakkan: Village accountants. They are sometimes attached to landlords. They take food prepared by the higher castes and by Kammalans (Francis's group B). They are found, for the most part, in South Arcot and the other Telugu provinces where some lay claim to be Kshatryas and even Brahmans. In our districts they pollute Kammalans and Vallans at a short distance (Thurston, 1909: III 150-58). For our study they ought, perhaps, to be classed with a lower group.

16,229 Pandaram: Name used to denote a non-Brahman priest. Many villages have a Pandaram as the priest of the shrine of the local deity. Many are respectable people who have settled down as land-holders and some Pandaram manage richly endowed temples. A great number are Lingayats. Some are mendicants and quite poor (Thurston, 1909: VI 45-49).

469,260 Vellala: Large farming caste. Some are educated and employed in government service

APPENDIX

TABLE 2 continued

GROUP B: continued

but the majority are peasants. W. Francis writes that by general consent they are first in esteem among the Tamil Sudra castes. None will drink alcohol and they will eat outside their caste only in the houses of Brahmans. There is a Tamil proverb that a Maravan (Francis's group C) may by slow degrees develop into an Agamudaiyan (Francis's group C) and finally become a Vellala (Thurston, VII 361-87).

GROUP C: Sudras Who Habitually Employ Brahmans as Priests And Whose Touch Pollutes to A Slight Degree

9,360 Andi: Beggars who are inferior to Pandaram beggars. Some do bricklaying, agricultural labor or are employed in temples when animal sacrifices are made. They, themselves, however, employ Brahmans at their ceremonies. They are recruited from all classes of Sudras and thus have several subdivisions. All of them eat meat and drink alcohol. Widow remarriage is allowed (Thurston, 1909: I 45-6).

88,320 Kaikōlan: Weavers. Some are now in agriculture and in trade. They deny their connection with the Deva-dasi's or temple dancers, but they will take food in their houses and dedicate one girl of each family to temple service (Thurston, 1909: III 31-7).

6,637 Maravan: Agricultural sub-tenants for wealthy landowners for whom they cultivate in return for a share of the crop. Some act as village policemen. They are famous for the military prowess of their ancestors and are still said to be a fierce and turbulent caste with a predilection for thievery. Thurston says they have been little affected by Brahman influence. However, there is a local proverb that a Maravan may develop by slow degrees into an Agamudaiyan (Francis's group C) and finally become a Vellala. Widow remarriage is usually allowed) (Thurston, 1909: V 22-39)

APPENDIX

TABLE 2 continued

GROUP C: Continued

109,522 Nattaman: Thurston equates this group with the names Malaiman, Sudarman and Udaiyan. He treats them all under the last of these headings. They are generally cultivators, but some are watchmen and some have become money lenders. They employ a low subcaste of Brahmans at ceremonies and forbid widow remarriage (Thurston, 1909: VII 206-11).

106 Occhan: A class of temple priests who usually officiate at grama devata or "village" temples. Some act as dancing masters for the Deva dasis. Another name for Occhan is Nattuvan. They employ a low subcaste of Brahmans at marriages (Thurston, 1909: V 419-20).

53,310 Vaniyan: They are oil pressers who are said to be similar in customs to some Chettis (Francis's group B). They employ Brahmans as priests and decline to eat in the houses of any other caste. They forbid widow remarriage. However, all followers of the oil-presser occupation are held in low esteem. Because they light the lamps in the temples some are now beginning to rise in status. In Tinnevelly they are not allowed even this menial task, because to fulfill their duty would take them inside sacred precincts (Thurston, 1909: VII 312-13).

GROUP D: Other Sudras Who Occasionally Employ Brahmans As Priests And Whose Touch Pollutes

134,072 Ambalakaran: A class of cultivators and village watchmen found chiefly in the Trichinopoly district. Some employ Brahman priests. However, the consumption of liquor is allowed among them and they willingly eat mutton, pork and fowl. Widow remarriage is also permitted. The Ambalakaran admit their inferiority to the Pallis (Francis's group C) as well as to the Uppiliyans, the Uralis and the Valaiyans (Francis's group D) (Thurston, 1909: I 25-28, Govt. of India, 1901: Glossary, Part 1, 141).

APPENDIX

TABLE 2 continued

GROUP D; Continued

737 Panikkar: A caste of weavers, agriculturalists and traders. They employ Brahmans as priests, but these are apparently not received on terms of equality with other Brahmans (Thurston, 1909: VI 54).

42,567 Urali: Found only in Trichinopoly District where they are agricultural laborers and cultivators. There may be a historical connection between them and the Ambalakarans (Francis's Group D) and/or the Valaiyans (Francis's Group C). However, Thurston says that in social position they come below the Kallan (Francis's Group D). The Urali drink alcohol and eat fowl, mutton, pork, fish and rat (Thurston, 1909: VII 242-44).

GROUP E: Sudras Who Do Not Employ Brahmans As Priests And Whose Touch Pollutes

54,918 Vannān: The washermen. They are regarded as low and unclean. They are always poor and in social standing they are placed below the barbers (Francis's Group D). They eat flesh, and drink liquor. Divorce and remarriage are permissable (Thurston, 1909: VII 315-16).

3,055 Vēdan: Hunters and laborers who live largely in the hills. They are considered to have fought as soldiers for the early Hindu kings but are now a poor and degraded group. Some employ Brahman priests. Their widows may remarry (Thurston, 1909: VII 331-2).

489 Vettuvan: Found only in the Trichinopoly District. The name means hunter and they were probably originally associated with the Vedans, although they now consider themselves to be superior to this group. According to tradition, they once fought as soldiers for the Chera kings. They have their own barbers, eat meat and drink alcohol. Some, however, are attempting to raise their status and have taken to vegetarianism and forbid the remarriage of widows. (Thurston, 1909: VII 394-5).

APPENDIX

TABLE 2 continued

GROUP F: Castes Which Pollute Even Without Touching But Do Not Eat Beef

15 Mondi: Beggars "who lay no claim to a religious character". The caste is considered so low that Brahmans will not officiate at weddings. Divorce is easy to obtain (Thurston, 1909: V 71-73).

54,839 Shānan: A caste which Francis classifies separately because its members do eat beef but do not pollute except by touch. They are toddy-drawers who extract juice from the Palmyra palm (Thurston, 1909: VI 363).

APPENDIX

TABLE 3

CASTES REPRESENTED IN SOUTH ARCOT, TRICHINOPOLY AND/OR TANJORE WHICH W. FRANCIS DOES NOT MENTION IN HIS RANKING AND FOR WHOM LITTLE OR NO INFORMATION ON THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY IS AVAILABLE

181 Nattan: Some report them to be a main caste, others a sub-caste of the Vellala. Most of them are probably cultivators (Thurston, 1909: V 249).

4,949 Nokkan: A class of mendicants who beg from Pallis (Francis's Group C). They attend Palli marriages and are drummers and flag bearers in processions (Thurston, 1909: V 416).

5,726 Melakkaran: The name means musician. They are said to have "adopted" the Deva dasi dancing girls in Tanjore. Daughters of dancers by them become the wives of other Melakkarans. The daughters of the dancers by other men become dancers themselves and are married only to the temple gods. A sub-section called Nattuvan sing chorus music to the accompaniment of a pipi and cymbals. They also instruct the dancing women. Nowadays the better musicians hold themselves aloof from the Deva dasis (Thurston, 1909: V 59-60).

43,607 Muttiriyan: Village watchmen. Formerly they were employed as soldiers for the Vijayanagar kings. They eat flesh, drink liquor and are usually esteemed by others to be a low caste (Thurston, 1909: V 127-8).

2,894 Panisavan: The traditional occupation is to carry news of a death to the relations of a deceased and to blow the tharai or long trumpet. The name may be a synonym for Nokkan in South Arcot and Tanjore. In Madras they rent palanquins for the conveyance of corpses to the burning or burial ground and at funerals are expected to follow the procession blowing a conch shell. They

APPENDIX

TABLE 3 continued

employ Brahmans as priests, but eat flesh and drink liquor freely. They often engage in cultivation and are considered a temperate, respectable class (Thurston, 1909: Vi 55-7).

7,431 Senaikkudaiyan: Betel vine cultivators and betel leaf sellers. Their priests are Vellalas and occasionally Brahmans (Thurston, 1909: VI 360).

APPENDIX

TABLE 4

CASTES REPRESENTED IN SOUTH ARCOT, TRICHINOPOLY AND/OR TANJORE ACCORDING TO THE 1901 CENSUS WHO ARE SUBSUMED BY THURSTON UNDER OTHER NAMES

5,588 Kavandan: A title of Malayalais, Anappans, Kappiliyans, Pallis, Sembadavans, Uralis and Vettuvans (Thurston, 1909: III 263).

3,092 Kuttadi: An occupational name meaning rope dancer. It is often used in reference to Dommaras, Pariyans or Koravas. The title also occurs as the name of a class of beggars attached to the Kaikolans (Thurston, 1909: IV 197).

8,818 Muppan: A term meaning elder, the headman of a class or business. In the census it was returned as a title by many classes including Ambalakaran, Pallan, Paraiyan, Kudumi, Alavan and Tandan (Thurston, 1909: V 118).

69 Pujari: An occupational title meaning priest or performer of pūjā. It is a name applied to priests who preside in temples in the villages dedicated to female deities. It has also been returned in the census as a title of Billavas and Kusavans (Thurston, 1909: VI 225).

330 Seppiliyan: Reported to be a distinct caste, but probably a sub-caste of the Kallan (Govt. of India, 1901: Vol. XV, 177).

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