

(26) You must not sell women (receive money for girls given in marriage).

(27) You must not fast in order to obtain fulfilment of your desires.

(28) Bathing is all that a woman should observe if she touches another in her menses. (A woman touching another who is in this state should, it is said, purify herself by bathing. A man should change his thread, and undergo sacred ablution. Women, during their periods, are not required to keep aloof, as is the custom among non-Malabar Brāhmans.)

(29) Brāhmans should not spin cotton.

(30) Brāhmans should not wash cloths for themselves.

(31) Kshatriyas should avoid worshipping the lingam.

(32) Brāhmans should not accept funeral gifts from Sudras.

(33) Perform the anniversary ceremony of your father (father's father, mother's father and both grandmothers).

(34) Anniversary ceremonies should be performed on the day of the new moon (for the gratification of the spirits of the deceased).

(35) The death ceremony should be performed at the end of the year, counting from the day of death.

(36) The ceremony to be performed till the end of the year after death (Diksha is apparently referred to).

(37) Srāddhas should be performed with regard to the stars (according to the astronomical, not the lunar year).

(38) The death ceremony should not be performed until after the pollution caused by childbirth has been removed.

(39) A particular mode of performing *srāddha* by an adopted son (who should do the ceremony for his adopted parents as well as for his natural parents. Among non-Malabar Brāhmans, an adopted son has nothing to do with the ceremonies for his natural father, from whose family he has become entirely disconnected).

(40) The corpse of a man should be burnt in his own compound.

(41) *Sanyāsis* should not look at (see) women.

(42) *Sanyāsis* should renounce all wordly pleasures.

(43) *Srāddha* should not be performed for deceased *Sanyāsis*.

(44) Brāhman women must not look at any other persons besides their own husbands.

(45) Brāhman women must not go out, unless accompanied by women servants.

(46) They should wear only white clothing.

(47) Noses should not be pierced.

(48) Brāhmans should be put out of their caste if they drink any liquor.

(49) Brāhmans should forfeit their caste, if they have intercourse with other Brāhman women besides their wives.

(50) The consecration of evil spirits should be avoided. (Otherwise said to be that worship of ancestors should not be done in temples.)

(51) *Sūdras* and others are not to touch an idol.

(52) Anything offered to one god should not be offered to another.

(53) Marriage, etc., should not be done without a burnt offering (*hōmam*).

(54) Brāhmans should not give blessings to each other.

(55) They should not bow down to one another. (Among non-Malabar Brāhmans, juniors receive benediction from seniors. The Nambūtiris do not allow this.)

(56) Cows should not be killed in sacrifice.

(57) Do not cause distraction, some by observing the religious rites of Siva, and others those of Vishnu.

(58) Brāhmans should wear only one sacred thread.

(59) The eldest son only is entitled to marriage.

(60) The ceremony in honour of a deceased ancestor should be performed with boiled rice.

(61) Kshatriyas, and those of other castes, should perform funeral ceremonies to their uncles.

(62) The right of inheritance among Kshatriyas, etc., goes towards nephews.

(63) Sati should be avoided. (This also includes directions to widows not to shave the head, as is the custom among non-Malabar Brāhmans.)

In connection with the foregoing, Mr. Subramani Aiyar writes that the manners and customs of the Nambūtiris differ from those of the other communities in several marked particulars. They go by the specific name of Kēralāchāras, which, to the casual observer, are so many anāchāras or mal-observances, but to the sympathetic student are not more perhaps than unique āchāras. A verse runs to the effect that they are anāchāras, because they are not āchāras (observances) elsewhere. (Anyatracharanabhavat anacharaitismritah.) Of these sixty-four āchāras, about sixty will be found to be peculiar to Malabar. These may be grouped into the following six main classes :—

(1) *Personal hygiene*.—Bathing.

(2) *Eating*.—The rules about food, either regarding the cooking or eating of it, are very religiously observed. Absolute fasting is unknown in Malabar.

(3) *Worship of the Gods and manes.*—The anniversary of a person's death is regulated not by the age of the moon at the time, but by the star, unlike on the other coast. Again, a birth pollution has priority over other observances, even death ceremonies. A son who has to perform the funeral ceremonies of his father is rendered unfit for that solemn function by an intervening birth pollution. An adopted son is not, as in other parts of India, relieved of the *srāddha* obligations to his natural parents. Sectarian controversies in regard to Siva and Vishnu are strictly tabooed. The establishment of Hinduism on a non-sectarian basis was the sacred mission of Sankarāchārya's life. A single triple string (sacred thread) is worn irrespective of civil condition. This is contrary to the usage of the other coast, where married Brāhman wear two or three triplets. Sprinkling water is an essential purificatory act after the use of the broom. An isolated rule requires dead bodies to be burnt in private compounds, and not in consecrated communal sites, as among the east coast people.

(4) *Conduct in society.*—Chastity is jealously guarded by the imposition of severe ostracism on adulterers. Formal salutation, and even *namaskāras* and *anugrāhas*, or prostration before and blessing by seniors, are prescribed. This is a striking point of difference between Malabar and the rest of India, and is probably based on the esoteric teaching of universal oneness.

(5) *Āśramas or stages of life.*—It is distinctly prescribed that a Brāhman should formally conclude the *Brahmachāri āśrama*, and that presents or *dakshina* to the gurus should be the crowning act. The *asura* or bride-sale form of marriage is prohibited—a prohibition which, in the case of the Nambūtiris, is absolutely unnecessary as matters now stand. An injunction in the

reverse direction against the ruinous tyranny of a bride-penalty would be an anxiously sought relief to the strugglings of many an indigent bride's father. The special law of Malabar, under which the eldest son is alone entitled to be married, has already been referred to. The anchorite stage comes in for regulation by the Manu of Kērala. The eyes of a Sanyāsin should never rest on a woman even for a second. This rule, which, if it errs at all, only does so on the side of safety, is not observed elsewhere, as the stage of a Sanyāsin is expected to be entered only after the complete subjugation of the passions. No āradhana (worship) srāddhas are performed for them, as is done in other parts. The soul of the Sanyāsin is freed from the bondage of Karma and the chance of recurring birth, and has only to be remembered and worshipped, unlike the ordinary Jīvan or still enslaved soul, whose salvation interests have to be furthered by propitiatory Karmas on the part of its earthly beneficiaries.

(6) *Regulation of women's conduct.*—Women are not to gaze on any face but that of their wedded lord, and never go out unattended. They are to wear only white clothes, and are never to pierce their noses for the wearing of jewelry. Death on the husband's funeral pyre is not to be the sacred duty of the Nambūtiri widow, who is advised to seek in the life of a self-sacrificing Sanyāsi a sure means of salvation.

In affairs of the world, time is reckoned by the ordinary Malabar kollam or solar year, the era beginning from the date of the departure of the last Perumāl, a sovereign of the western coast, to Arabia in 825. The months of the kollam year are Mēsha (Mētam), Vrishabha (Itavam), Mithuna, Karkkātaka, Sihma (Chingga), Kanya (Kanni), Tula, Vrischika, Dhanu, Makara, Kumbha, Mīna. In

affairs of religion, time is reckoned by the sālivāhana saka, or lunar year, the months of which are Chaitra, Vaisākha, Jēshta, Āshādha, Srāvana, Bhādrapata, Āsvavuja, Margasirsha, Paushya, Māgha, Phālguna. Every three years or thereabouts, there is added another month, called Adhika.

Some of the festivals kept by the Nambūtiris are as follows :—

(1) *Sivarātri*.—Worship of Siva on the last day of Māgha. Fast and vigil at night, and pūja.

(2) *Upākarma*.—The regular day for putting on a new sacred thread, after having cleansed away the sins of the year through the prāyaschittam, in which ceremony the five sacred products of the cow (milk, curds, ghī, urine, and dung) are partaken of. It is done on the 15th of Srāvana.

(3) *Nāgara panchimi*.—The serpent god is worshipped, and bathed in milk. On the 5th of Srāvana. This festival is common in Southern India.

(4) *Gōkulāshtami*.—Fast and vigil at night, to celebrate the birth of Krishna. Pūja at night, on the eighth day of the latter half of Srāvana.

(5) *Navarātri*.—The first nine days of Asvayuja are devoted to this festival in honour of Dūrگا.

(6) *Dipāvali*.—Observed more particularly in North Malabar on the anniversary of the day on which Krishna slew the rākshasa Naraka. Everyone takes an oil bath. On the last day of Asvayuja.

(7) *Ashtkalam*.—The pitris (ancestors) of the family are propitiated by offerings of pinda (balls of rice) and tarpana (libations of water). On the new moon day of Dhanu.

(8) *Vināyaka Chaturthi*.—The elephant-headed god of learning is worshipped. At the end of the

ceremony, the idol is dropped into a well. On the 4th of Bhādrapada.

(9) *Pūram*.—The god of love, represented by a clay image, is propitiated by unmarried girls with offerings of flowers seven days successively. The image is finally given, together with some money, to a Brāhman, who drops it into a well. The flowers which have been used to decorate the image are placed by the girls at the foot of a jāk tree. Contrary to the custom of other Brāhmans, Nambūtiri girls are under no disgrace, should they attain puberty while unmarried. In the month of Mīna.

(10) *Ōnam*.—The great festival of Malabar, kept by everyone, high and low, with rejoicing. It is the time of general good-will, of games peculiar to the festival, and of distribution of new yellow cloths to relations and dependants. It is supposed to commemorate the descent of Maha Bali, or Mābali, to see his people happy.

(11) *Tiruvadira*.—Fast and vigil in honour of Siva, observed by women only. In the month of Dhanu.

(12) *Vishu*.—The solar new year's day. A very important festival in Malabar. It is the occasion for gifts, chiefly to superiors. The first thing seen by a Nambūtiri on this day should be something auspicious. His fate during the year depends on whether the first object seen is auspicious, or the reverse.

The following festivals are referred to by Mr. Subramani Aiyar :—

(1) *Trikkatta or Jyēshta star*.—In the month of Chingam. Food is cooked, and eaten before sunrise by all the married male members, as well as by every female member of a family. Though not of the previous day, the food goes by the name of Trikkatta pazhayatu, or the old food of the Trikkatta day. The import of this

festival, when the specific ordinance of Sankara against food cooked before sunrise is contravened, is not known.

(2) *Makam or Magha star*.—In the month of Kanni. On this day, the cows of the house are decorated with sandal paste and flowers, and given various kinds of sweetmeats. The ladies of the house take ten or twelve grains of paddy (rice), anoint them with oil, and, after bathing in turmeric-water, consecrate the grains by the recitation of certain hymns, and deposit them in the ara or safe room of the house. If there are in the house any female members born under the Makam star, the duty of performing the ceremony devolves on them in particular. This is really a harvest festival, and has the securing of food-grains in abundance (dhanyasamriddhi) for its temporal object.

(3) *All the days in the month of Thulam*.—In this month, young unmarried girls bathe every day before 4 A.M., and worship Ganapathi (Vignēsvara), the elephant god.

(4) *Gauri pūja*.—In the month of Vrischigam. This is done on any selected Monday in the month. The ceremony is known as ammiyum vilakkaum toduka, or touching the grinding-stone and lamp. The married women of the house clean the grinder and the grinding-stone, and place a bronze mirror by its side. They then proceed to worship Gauri, whose relation to Siva represents to the Hindu the ideal sweetness of wedded life.

(5) *Tiruvatira or Ardra star*.—In the month of Dhanu. This is a day of universal festivity and rejoicing. For seven days previous to it, all the members of the house bathe in the early morning, and worship Siva. This bathing is generally called tutichchukuli or shivering bath, as the mornings are usually cold and intensely

dewy. On the day previous to Tiruvatira, ettangnati, or eight articles of food purchased in the bazār, are partaken of. Such a repast is never indulged in on any other day. The Tiruvatira day is spent in the adoration of Siva, and the votaries take only a single meal (orikkal). Night vigils are kept both by the wife and husband seated before a lighted fire, which represents the sakshi (witness) of Karmas and contracts. (Hence the common term agnisakshi.) They then chew a bundle of betel leaves, not less than a hundred in number. This is called kettuvettila tinnuka. As the chewing of betel is taboo except in the married state, this function is believed to attest and seal their irrefragable mutual fidelity.

(6) *The new moon day in the month of Karkātam.*—On the evening of this day, various kinds of sweetmeats are cooked, and, before the family partakes of them, a portion of each is placed in the upper storey as an offering to rats, by which their divine master, Ganapathi, is believed to be propitiated.

The Nambūtiri's business, which he has in hand, will be concluded to his satisfaction, should he on starting hear or see vocal or instrumental music, a harlot, a dancing-girl, a virgin, a litter, an elephant, a horse, a bull or cow tethered, curds, raw rice of a reddish colour, sugar-cane, a water-pot, flowers, fruits, honey, or two Brāhmins. Bad omens, which, if seen by a householder the first thing in the morning, mean trouble of some kind for the rest of the day, are a crow seen on the left hand, a kite on the right, a snake, a cat, a jackal, a hare, an empty vessel, a smoky fire, a bundle of sticks, a widow, a man with one eye, or a man with a big nose. A Nambūtiri, seeing any of these things, when setting out on a journey, will turn back. Should he, however, at once see a lizard on the eastern wall of a house, he

may proceed. To sneeze once is a good omen for the day; to sneeze twice is a bad one. An evil spirit may enter the mouth while one is yawning, so, to avert such a catastrophe, the fingers are snapped, and kept snapping until the yawn is over, or the hand is held in front of the mouth. But this idea, and the custom of snapping the fingers, are by no means peculiar to the Nambūtiris.

The Nambūtiris look on a voyage across the sea with horror, and no Nambūtiri has ever yet visited England.

A Nāyar should not come nearer than six paces to a Nambūtiri, a man of the barber caste nearer than twelve paces, a Tiyan than thirty-six, a Malayan than sixty-four, and a Pulaiyan than ninety-six. Malabar is, indeed, the most conservative part of Southern India. The man of high caste shouts occasionally as he goes along, so that the low caste man may go off the road, and allow him to pass unpolluted. And those of the lowest castes shout as they go, to give notice of their pollution-bearing presence, and, learning the command of the man of high caste, move away from the road. It is common to see people of the inferior castes travelling parallel to the road, but not daring to go along it. They do not want to. It is not because they are forced off the road. Custom clings to them as to the Nāyar or to the Nambūtiri. But even this is undergoing modification.

In connection with marriage, three chief rules are observed. The contracting parties must not be of the same gōtra; they must not be related to each other through father or mother; and the bridegroom must be the eldest son of the family. It is said that there are seven original gōtras, called after the sages Kamsha, Kāsyapa, Bharadvāja, Vatsya, Kaundinya, Atri, and Tatri; and that other gōtras have grown out of these.

Relationship is said by some to cease after the fourth generation, but this is disputed. The bride's dowry is always heavy. The wife joins her husband's gōtra, forsaking her own altogether. Women may remain unmarried without prejudice. Needless to say, this has the reverse of favour with Brāhmans outside Malabar. But the Nambūtiri girl or woman, who has not been married, is not allowed to disappear altogether from the world without at least the semblance of marriage, for, at her death, some part of the marriage ceremony is performed on her person. The tāli is tied. In like manner, a dead Toda girl is not allowed to go to her last rest unmarried. Infant marriage, which is the rule with other Brāhmans, is said to be unknown among the Nambūtiris. Mr. Justice K. Narayana Marar, however, writes* that he is "not prepared to assert that infant marriage is unknown among Nambūdriś, and that marriages are always celebrated before puberty. There are instances, though rare, of infant marriages among them." When a girl is ten years old, or a little more, her father thinks of finding a husband for her. Property alone is the real thing to be considered. Every detail bearing on advantage to the family through the alliance is carefully thought out. Among the Malayālis generally, the young man with University degrees has command of the marriage market, but to the Nambūtiri these are of no account. When the girl's father has fixed on a likely young man, he gets his horoscope, and confers with a Vādhyar concerning the suitability or agreement of the young man's horoscope with that of his daughter. Should the decision of the Vādhyar be favourable, the young man's father is invited to the house on an

* Malabar Quart. Review, I, 1, 1902.

auspicious day, and the two fathers, together with some friends, talk the matter over. In the presence of all, the Vādhyar announces the agreement of the horoscopes of the pair whose marriage is in prospect. The dowry of the bride is then fixed. Probably many days have been occupied already, before the fathers can agree as to the settlement of the dowry. When this has been done, the Vādhyar consults the heavenly bodies, and appoints the day on which the marriage ceremonies should be begun. There is then a feast for all present. A Nambūtiri would be in very bad circumstances if he did not give at least a thousand rupees with his daughter. He should give much more, and does, if he possibly can. The ceremonies connected with marriage are supposed to occupy a year, but they are practically completed within ten days. They open with a party leaving the bride's illam, to invite the bridegroom and his party to the wedding. At the house of the bridegroom, the Vādhyar is given about eight fanams* (money) by both parties. The return to the bride's illam is a sort of noisy procession composed of the bridegroom with his friends, Nāyar women under big cadjan (palm leaf) umbrellas, a number of Nāyars, some of whom indulge in sword play with swords and shields, and Nambūtiris versed in the Sāstras. The bridegroom, who is the chief figure in the crowd, has a string (the usual kan-kanam) tied round his right wrist to protect him from evil spirits, and carries a bamboo with sixteen joints symbolic of the married state, a mirror for good luck, an arrow to guard the bride against evil spirits, four cloths, and a tāli. At the gate of the bride's illam, the procession is met by some Nāyar women dressed as

* In all ceremonies, and indeed in all arrangements connected with labour in rural Malabar, it is the rule to reckon in the old, and not in the existing, currency.

Nambūtiri women, who, being unable to come out and welcome the bridegroom, do so by proxy. These women wave a light in front of his face, and offer ashtamangalyam—a plate on which are plantain, betel leaves, a cocoanut, and other articles. On this day, the aupāsana agni, or sacred fire, is prepared in the courtyard of the bride's illam. A square pit is made, and fire is made with a piece of wood of the jāk tree and of the pīpal. This fire is rendered sacred by some mystic rites. It is kept burning throughout the marriage, and is preserved until the death of the future husband and wife in one of two ways :—

(1) keeping a lamp lighted at the fire burning perpetually ;

(2) heating in the fire a piece of wood (plāsa or palāsa) or dharba grass. The wood or grass is put away, and, when the aupāsana agni is to be revived, is lighted in a fire of jāk and pīpal wood, while certain mantrams (consecrated formulæ) are repeated.

The body of the bridegroom (and, I think, of the bride should she die first) should be burnt in the aupāsana agni prepared on the first day of the wedding. The aupāsana agni is, as it were, a witness to the marriage. In the courtyard, the nandimukham ceremony is performed for propitiation of the minor deities and the pitris (spirits of deceased ancestors). A pot containing sacred or consecrated water, a piece of sandalwood, a piece of gold, flowers, raw rice, and some fruits are the apparent object of adoration. It is called kalas—the kalasam of the Tamil and Telugu countries—and is a common symbol of the deity. According to Monier Williams,* it should be worshipped thus. "In the

* Brahmanism and Hinduism.

mouth of the water-vessel abideth Vishnu, in its neck is Rudra, in its lower part is Brahma, while the whole company of the mothers are congregated in its middle part. O! Ganges, Yamuna, Godāvari, Saraswati, Narmada, Sindhu and Kāveri, be present in this water." A part of the aforesaid ceremony (*nandimukham*) is called the *punyāhavachana*, for which the bridegroom repeats certain hymns after the *Vādhyar*, and is sprinkled with water from the *kalas*. While all this is being done in the courtyard, the very same ceremony is performed within the house in the presence of the bride, whose father does inside the house what the bridegroom is doing outside. At the conclusion of the ceremony, the *tāli* is tied on the bride's neck. Then two of the cloths brought by the bridegroom are sent inside, and are touched by the bride. After she has touched them, they are again brought out, and the bridegroom puts them on. He touches the other two cloths, which are taken inside, and worn by the bride. A feast (*ayaniūm*) is the next item. The bride and bridegroom eat their share of it in separate rooms. Then comes the marriage proper. The bride's father washes the bridegroom's feet, while a *Nāyar* woman waves a light (*ayiram tiri* or thousand lights) before his face, and conducts him to the hall prepared for the wedding. In this is a *mantapam*, or sort of raised seat, having four pillars and a covering roof. The pillars of the *mantapam*, and the ceiling of the hall, are covered with red cloth (red being an auspicious colour), and there are festoons of mango leaves. To one side of the *mantapam* is a screen, behind which stand the *Nambūtiri* women of the household, looking at the scene in the hall through holes. The bride and bridegroom are led to the *mantapam*, the former following the latter screened from the general gaze by a big

cadjan umbrella. She hands him a garland, and, in doing so, she should not touch his hand. He puts on the garland. Vēdic hymns are chanted, and the pair are brought face to face for the first time. This is called mukhadarsanam, or seeing the face. The bridegroom leads the bride three times round the fire and water jar, moving round to the right, repeating a mantram, which is rendered as follows by Monier Williams.* "I am male, thou art female. Come, let us marry, let us possess offspring. United in affection, illustrious, well disposed towards each other, let us live for a hundred years." Each time the bridegroom leads the bride round, he causes her to mount a mill-stone, saying "Ascend thou this stone, and be thou firm as this rock.†" Then, at a moment supposed to be auspicious, water is poured on the hands of the bridegroom, signifying that the girl and her dowry have been handed over to him. The Nambūtiri women behind the screen, and the Nāyar women in the hall, utter a shrill cry "like that of the Vaikura." The fire here mentioned is probably taken from the original aupāsana agni. Holding the bride by the hand, the bridegroom leads her seven steps—one for force, two for strength, three for wealth, four for well-being, five for offspring, six for the seasons, and seven as a friend. He tells her to be devoted to him, and to bear him many sons, who may live to a good old age. This ceremony is called the saptapadi (seven steps). A hōmam is then performed. It is said that the fire used on this occasion must be preserved until the death of the bridegroom, and used at the cremation of his body. A feast is the next thing. When it is over, the bride's father takes her on his lap, asks his son-in-law to treat her well,

* *Op. cit.*† *Ibid.*

and formally hands her over to him. The bridegroom promises to do so, and takes his wife by the hand. Then there is a procession to the bridegroom's illam, the bride being carried in a litter, and the bridegroom walking and carrying the sacrificial fire. So ends the first day. It seems that the newly-married couple live apart for the next three days, during which the bride is initiated into household duties. The only daily ceremony is the hōmam, which is done by the pair after bathing, and before taking food. On the fourth day there is a ceremony, in which the bride plants a jasmine cutting, by way of symbolising help to her husband in the performance of his religious duties. At night the couple are conducted to the bridal chamber by the Vādhyar. The bed is merely a grass mat, or a common country blanket, covered with a white sheet, and having a little ridge of rice and paddy, signifying plenty, round the edge. The Vādhyar withdraws, and the bridegroom shuts the door.* The Vādhyar outside cites appropriate passages from the sacred writings, which are repeated by the bridegroom. On the fifth day, the bride and bridegroom anoint each other with oil, and the latter combs the hair of the former. Then, before bathing, they catch some little fish called mānatt kani (eyes looking up) which are found in pools, with a cloth used as a net. While this is being done, a Brahmachāri asks the bridegroom "Did you see a cow and a son?" Pointing to the fishes caught in the cloth, the bridegroom replies "Yes, they are here." This is said to be suggestive of progeny, fishes being emblematic of fertility. Hōmam is then done. At night, the bridegroom adorns the bride with flowers, and makes her look into a mirror, while he

* The Nambūtiris take objection to a statement of Mr. Logan, in the *Manual of Malabar*, that the Vādhyar shuts the door, and locks it.

recites mantrams suitable to the occasion. From the sixth to the ninth day there is practically nothing in the way of ceremonial. And, as that proper to the tenth day is invariably done on the sixth day, the ceremony may be said to conclude on the night of the sixth day. A few Brāhmans are fed to please the pitris, and the couple go to a jāk tree, under which some rice, curds, and ghī are placed on kūsa grass, and an offering is made of flowers and sandalwood or powder. The kanka-nam, bamboo staff, arrow, and mirror are given to the Vādhyar, and the wedding is over.

Sir W. W. Hunter* speaks of the Nambūtiris as "a despised class," they having had fishermen ancestors. The little ceremony of catching fish, which is a very important item in the marriage rites, may look like preservation in meaningless ceremonial of something real in the past, but it only shows that, in an endeavour to interpret ceremonial, we must be far from hasty. Among the Shivalli Brāhmans of South Canara, the marriage mat is taken to a tank in procession. The bride and bridegroom make a pretence of catching fish, and, with linked fingers, touch their foreheads. It is recorded, in the Manual of South Canara, that "all Tulu chronicles agree in ascribing the creation of Malabar and Canara, or Kērala, Tuluva, and Haiga, to Parasu Rāma, who reclaimed from the sea as much land as he could cover by hurling his battle-axe from the top of the western ghauts. According to Tulu traditions, after a quarrel with Brāhmans who used to come to him periodically from Ahi-Kshētra, Parasu Rāma procured new Brāhmans for the reclaimed tract by taking the nets of some fishermen, and making a number of Brāhmanical threads

* Crissa. Annals of Rural Bengal.

with which he invested the fishermen, and thus turned them into Brāhmanas, and retired to the mountains to meditate, after informing them that, if they were in distress, and called on him, he would come to their aid. After the lapse of some time, during which they suffered no distress, they were curious to know if Parasu Rāma would remember them, and called upon him in order to find out. He promptly appeared, but punished their thus mocking him by cursing them, and causing them to revert to their old status of Sudras."

A more detailed account of the marriage ceremonial is given in the Gazetteer of Malabar, which may well be quoted. "The first preliminaries in arranging a Nambūdiri marriage are the inevitable comparison of horoscopes, and the settlement of the dowry. When these have been satisfactorily concluded, an auspicious day for the wedding is selected in consultation with the astrologer. On that day, the bridegroom, before he starts from his illam, partakes with his relatives and friends of a sumptuous repast called the ayani un. A similar feast is held simultaneously at the bride's house. On leaving the illam, as he crosses the threshold, and indeed on all occasions of importance, the bridegroom must be careful to put his right foot first. He also mutters mantrams of an auspicious nature, called mangala sutrangal. As he passes out of the gate, he is met by a bevy of Nāyar ladies, carrying the eight lucky articles (ashtamangalyam). These are a grandha, a washed cloth, a cheppu or rouge-box, some rice, a vāl kannādi or metal hand-mirror, some kunkumam (crimson powder), chānthu (ointment of sandal, camphor, musk and saffron), and mashi (bdellium or any eye salve). On his journey to the bride's illam, he is preceded by a noisy procession of Nāyars, armed with swords and lacquered shields, who constitute his

agambadi or body-guard, and by Nambūdri friends and relatives, one of whom carries a lighted lamp. At the gate of the bride's illam he is met by a band of Nāyar women, dressed like antarjanams, and carrying the ashtamangalyam and lighted lamps. The bridegroom enters the inner court-yard (nadumittam), and takes his seat in the usual eastward position. The bride's father comes and sits opposite him, and, clasping his right hand, formally invites him to bathe and wed his daughter, an invitation which he formally accepts. After his bath, he returns clad in fresh clothes, and wearing a ring of dharba or kusa grass (*Cynodon Dactylon*), and takes his seat in the room adjoining the porch (pūmukham), called purattalam. He then makes an offering of a few fanams (money) to his family deities, performs Ganapathi puja (worship of the elephant god), and presents four or five Nambūdris with a few fanams each, and with betel leaf and areca nut. This is called āsramapischētha prayaschittam, and is in expiation of any sins into which he may have been betrayed during his bachelor days. Similar gifts are also made first to two Nambūdris of any gōtra considered as representing the deities called Visvadvās, and then to two others of different gōtras representing the deceased ancestors or Pitris. The last gift is called Nāndimukham. Meanwhile, within the house the bride is conducted to the vadakkini room, veiled in an old cloth, and carrying a piece of bell-metal shaped like a hand-mirror (vāl kannādi). Her father, after washing his feet and putting on a darbha ring, comes and performs Ganapathi pūja, and repeats more or less the same ritual that has been performed without. The bride is then sprinkled with holy water by her father and four other Nambūdiris. The tāli or marriage symbol is brought in a brass vessel containing holy water,

and laid near the idol to which the daily domestic worship is paid; and, after further offerings to Ganapathi, the bridegroom is summoned to enter the illam. Before doing so he purifies himself, taking off the darbha ring, making the 'caste marks' with holy ashes (bhasmam), washing his feet, replacing the ring, and being sprinkled with holy water by four Nambūdiris—a form of ritual which recurs constantly in all ceremonies. He enters the nadumittam, preceded by a Nambūdiri carrying a lighted lamp, and takes his seat on a wooden stool (pidam) in the middle of the court where the bride's father makes obeisance to him, and is given four double lengths of cloth (kaccha), which the bridegroom has brought with him. They are taken to the bride, who puts on two of them, and returns two for the bridegroom to wear. The bridegroom then goes to the kizhakkini, where he prepares what may be called the "altar." He smears part of the floor in front of him with cow-dung and then, with a piece of jack-wood (*Artocarpus integrifolia*), called sakalam, draws a line at the western side of the place so prepared, and at right angles to this line five more, one at each end, but not actually touching it, and three between these. He then places the pieces of jack-wood on the altar, and ignites it with fire brought from the hearth of the bride's illam. He feeds the flame with chips of plāsu or chamatha (*Butea frondosa*). This fire is the aupāsana agni, regarded as the witness to the marriage rite. It must be kept alight—not actually, but by a pious fiction*—till the parties to the marriage die, and their funeral pyre must be kindled from it. Three pieces of plāsu called paridhi, and eighteen pieces called udhmam, tied together by a string of darbha, are placed

* By keeping a lamp lighted at the fire perpetually alight, or by heating a piece of plāsu or darbha grass in the fire, and putting it away carefully.

on the northern side of the altar on two pieces of jack-wood; and there are also brought and placed round the altar four blades of darbha grass, a small bell-metal vessel, an earthenware pot full of water, a pair of grind-stones (ammi and ammikuzha), a small winnowing fan containing parched paddy (malar), and a copper vessel of ghee (clarified butter) with a sacrificial ladle made of plāsu. Meanwhile, the bride's father ties the tāli round her neck in the vadakkini, and her mother gives her a garland of tulasi (*Ocimum sanctum*). She is conducted to the kizhakkini, preceded by a Nambūtiri carrying a lamp called āyyira tiri (thousand wicks), and is made to stand facing the bridegroom on the north or north-east of the altar. This is called mukha-dharsanam (face-beholding). She gives the garland to the bridegroom. Now comes the central rite of this elaborate ceremonial, the udaga-purva-kannyaka-dhānam, or gift of a maiden with water. The bride and her father stand facing west, and the bridegroom facing them. All three stretch out their right hands, so that the bride's hand is between those of her father and the bridegroom, which are above and below hers respectively. A Nambūtiri Othikan or ritual expert pours water thrice into the father's hand. The latter each time pours it into his daughter's hand, and then, grasping her hand, pours it into the bridegroom's hand. The dowry is then given to the bride, who hands it over to the bridegroom. She then passes between him and the fire, and sits on an āmana palaga* on the east of the altar, while the bridegroom sits on another palaga on her left, and burns the udhmams (except one piece of plāsu and the darbha string used to tie the bundle), and

* An āmana palaga or āma palaga, literally tortoise plank, is a low wooden seat of chamatha wood, supposed to be shaped like a tortoise in outline.

makes an oblation of ghee called agharam. The next rite is called Panigrahanam. The bridegroom rises from his seat, turns to the right, and stands facing the bride, who remains seated, holding the mirror in her left hand. She stretches out her right hand palm upwards, with the fingers closed and bent upwards. He grasps it, and sits down again. A brother of the bride now comes and takes the mirror from the bride, puts it on a palaga, and professes to show her her own reflection in its surface. Then the bridegroom pours a little ghee into her joined hands, to which the bride's brother adds two handfuls of paddy from the winnowing basket, and the bridegroom then brushes the paddy from her hands into the fire. This is called the Lajahōmam. At its conclusion, bride and bridegroom perform a pradakshinam round the fire, passing outside the water-pot but not the grindstone and fan. Next comes the important piece of ceremonial called Asmārohanam, symbolising immutability. The bride and bridegroom stand west of the grindstones, and the bridegroom, taking her feet one by one, places them on the stones, and then grasps feet and stones with both hands. Lajahōmam, pradhakshinam, and asmārohanam are each repeated thrice. Then comes the rite called Saptapadi or seven paces. The bridegroom leads his bride seven steps towards the north-east, touching her right foot with his right hand as he does so. They then pass between the grindstones and the fire, and seat themselves on the west of the earthen pot facing east, the bride behind the bridegroom; and the latter performs a somewhat acrobatic feat which it must be difficult to invest with any dignity. He bends backwards, supporting himself by placing the palms of his hands on the ground behind him, until he can touch with the top of his head that of the bride, who

bends forward to facilitate the process. After this, the bridegroom sprinkles himself and the bride with water from the earthen pot. They then return to their seats west of the altar, and face north, ostensibly looking at the pole star (Druvan), the star Arundati, and the Seven Rishis (Ursa Major), which the bridegroom is supposed to point out to the bride, while he teaches her a short mantram invoking the blessing of long life on her husband. The bridegroom then makes two oblations, pouring ghee on the sacred fire, the first called Sishtakral-hōmam and the second Darmmihōmam. He then places on the fire the paridhis, the remaining udhmams and dharba grass, and the rest of the ghee. A start is then made for the bridegroom's illam, the bridegroom carrying the chamatha branch used in making the aupāsana agni in the bride's house. On arrival, an altar is prepared in much the same manner as before, the chamatha branch is ignited, and darbha and ghee are offered. The bride and bridegroom next spend a few moments closeted in the same room, she lying on a skin spread over a new cloth on the floor, and he sitting on an āmana palaga. In the evening, aupāsana hōmam, or offerings of chamatha in the sacred fire, and Vaisya-dēva hōmam, or offerings of boiled rice, are made. These, which are known as a second hōmam, may be postponed till next afternoon, if there is no time for them on the actual wedding day. They have to be performed daily for ten months. The first three days on which these hōmams are performed (viz., the wedding day and the two following it, or the three days after the wedding as the case may be) are regarded as days of mourning (diksha), and clothes are not changed. On the fourth day, the newly married couple have an oil-bath, and the diksha is considered to be at an end. After the usual

hōmams and worship of Ganapathi, the bride is led to the bridal chamber at an auspicious moment. Her husband joins her, carrying two garlands of jasmine, one of which he puts on the lamp placed in the south-east corner of the room, and one round his wife's neck. He then smears the upper part of her body with the ointment known as chānthu, and she herself smears the lower part. *Tum vir penem suum fæminæ ad partes pudendas admovit, vestibus scilicet haud remotis.* They then bathe and change their clothes, and sit near each other, the wife screened behind an umbrella. Her husband gives her water, and after some further rites they eat from the same plantain leaf. Actual cohabitation commences from that night. The pair are conducted to the bridal chamber by the Vādhiyār. The nuptial couch is but a grass mat or a common country blanket covered with a white sheet, with a little ridge of rice and paddy signifying plenty around the edges. The final ceremony is the hōmam called stālipagam. It is performed on the day after the first full moon day after the second hōmam. If the moon is at the full $\frac{3}{4}$ nazhiga before sunset or earlier, the ceremony may be performed on the full moon day itself."

It will have been seen already that the Nambūtiris are not strict monogamists. Some stated that a man may have four wives, and that the same ceremony as that described must be performed for wedding all four wives. Moreover, there is no restriction to the number of Nāyar women, with whom a man may be associated.

Hamilton, writing concerning Malabar at the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth century, says that "when the Zamorin marries, he must not cohabit with his bride till the Nambūtiri or chief priest

has enjoyed her, and, if he pleases, may have three nights of her company, because the first fruit of her nuptials must be an holy oblation to the god he worships: and some of the nobles are so complaisant as to allow the clergy the same tribute; but the common people cannot have that compliment paid to them, but are forced to supply the priest's place themselves."

Of ceremonies after marriage, and those performed during pregnancy and subsequent to the birth of a child, the following may be noted:—

(1) Garbhādhānam, performed soon after marriage. There is a hōmam, and the husband puts the juice of some panic grass into his wife's nostrils.

(2) Garbharakshana secures the unborn child from dangers. It is not considered important, and is not always done.

(3) Pumsavana, performed in the third month of pregnancy for the purpose of securing male offspring. The desire of the Hindu for male rather than female children need not be dilated on. Putra (a son) is the one who saves from hell (put). It is by every religious text made clear that it is the duty of every man to produce a son. The Nambūtiri may have practically any number of wives in succession, until he begets a son by one of them, and he may adopt a son through the sarvasvadānam form of marriage. On the day devoted to the pumsavana ceremony, the wife fasts until she is fed by her husband with one grain of corn, symbolising the generative organs of the male.

(4) Sīmantonnayana is the next ceremony performed for the benefit of the unborn child. It is done between the sixth and eighth months of pregnancy, and consists in a burnt sacrifice to the deity, and the husband parting the hair of his wife's head with a porcupine quill, or with

three blades of the sacred kṛṣṇa grass, repeating the while Vēdic verses.

(5) Jātakarma is the name of the birth ceremony, and is performed by the father of the child. Honey and ghī are introduced into the mouth of the infant with a golden spoon or rod, to symbolise good fortune. Then the ears and shoulders are touched with the spoon or rod, while Vēdic texts are recited.

(6) Mēdhājananam, rarely done, is for inducing intelligence.

(7) Āyusha, for prolonging life, is the next in order. The father gives the child a secret name, having an even number of syllables for a male and an uneven number for a female, which is never revealed to any one except the mother.

(8) Nāmakarana is the ceremony, at which the child is named, and is said to be done on the tenth day after birth. The naming of a child is an important religious act, which is supposed to carry consequences throughout life. The parents, assisted by a Vādhyān, make a burnt sacrifice to the deity.

(9) Annaprāsana is the ceremony at which food other than that from nature's fount is first given. It is done in the sixth month after birth. The father carries the child to a group of friends and relations. The Vādhyān or purōhit is present and repeats Vēdic texts, while the father places a little rice and butter in the child's mouth.

(10) Chaula is the ceremony when the hair is cut for the first time in the Nambūtiri fashion.

(11) Karna vēdha is the occasion on which the ears are bored.

On the Vidyādasami day, the tenth of Āsvayuja, when a male child is five years old, the father goes

through the form of initiating him into the mysteries of the alphabet.

The following details of some of the above ceremonies are given in the Gazetteer of Malabar. "The chief ceremonies connected with pregnancy are Pumsavanam or rite to secure male offspring, at which the husband puts a grain of barley and two beans, to represent the male organ, into his wife's hand, and pours some curds over them, which the wife then swallows, and also pours some juice of karuga grass into her right nostril; and Simantham, a ceremony usually performed in the fourth month of pregnancy, at which the husband parts the wife's hair four times from back to front with a sprig of atti (*Ficus glomerata*), a porcupine quill which must have three white marks on it, and three blades of darba grass, all tied together, after which mantrams are sung to the accompaniment of vīnas. The first ceremony to be performed on the birth of a child is jāthakarmam. A little gold dust is mingled with ghee and honey, and the father takes up some of the mixture with a piece of gold, and smears the child's lips with it, once with a mantram and once in silence. He next washes the gold, and touches the child's ears, shoulders and head with it, and finally makes a gift of the bit of gold and performs nāndimukham. The ceremony of naming the child, or nāmakarmam, takes place on the twelfth day. The father ties a string round the child's waist, and marks its body with the sacred ash (bhasmam). Then, after the usual 'gifts' he pronounces thrice in the child's right ear the words 'Dēvadatta Sarmmasi,' or if the child be a girl, 'Nili dāsi.' He then calls out the name thrice. Then, taking the child from its mother, he again calls out the name thrice, and finally gives the child back to its mother, who in turn

calls out the name thrice. Gifts and nāndimukham complete the ceremony. In the fourth month, the child is ceremonially taken out of doors (nishkramana or vittil purapāttu) by the father, who carries it to a cocoanut, round which he makes three pradakshinams."

The death ceremonies of the Nambūtiris are commenced shortly before death actually takes place. When death is believed to be unmistakably near, some verses from the Taittiriya Upanishad are spoken in the dying man's ears. These are called karna mantras, or ear hymns. A bed of kūsa grass, called darbhāsana, is prepared in the verandah or some convenient place outside the foundations of the house, and the dying man is placed on it. When life is extinct, the body is washed, dressed in a new white cloth, and placed on a bier made of bamboos covered with a new white cloth. The bier is then carried on the shoulders of four of the nearest relatives to the place of cremation within the compound of the illam, and laid on a pile of firewood, which must include some sandalwood. This should be done by brothers or sons if there are such; if not, by more distant relatives or friends. The pyre need not of necessity be prepared by Nambūtiris. Properly speaking, according to the sacred texts, which govern almost every act of the Nambūtiri's life, relatives and friends, male and female, should accompany the bier to the place of cremation, but, as a rule, women do not join the little procession. The bier is laid on the pyre, and the corpse is uncovered. Rice is scattered over the face by the blood-relations present, and small pieces of gold are thrust into the nine openings of the body, while mantras are recited by the Vādhyāyar or priest. The gold is said to be used on this occasion as part of the offering in the yāgam—the last sacrifice, as the burning of the body

is called—and not in any way to assist the deceased in his journey to “the undiscovered country.” Soon after the bier is laid on the funeral pyre, a *hōmam* is made. Fire taken from it is placed on the chest of the deceased, and then the pyre is lighted in three places. The performer of the crematory rites carries an earthen pot round the pyre. The officiating priest punctures the pot with a knife, and receives the water in another pot. He throws this water on the pyre, and the pot is then smashed and flung away. This part of the ceremony is said to symbolise that the deceased has had his ablution in the water of the Ganges, and the fire god, Agni, represented by the *hōmam*, was witness to the same. The fire god is supposed to witness every ceremony enjoined by the *Vēdas*. After the body is burnt, those who attended go away and bathe. The disembodied soul is supposed to enter a body called *Sūkshma Sarīra*, and eventually goes to heaven or hell as it deserves. But, before it can reach its destination, certain ceremonies must be performed. These consist chiefly of oblations on each of the ten days following death, for the purpose of causing the *prēta* (spirit) to grow out of the *Dhananjaya Vāyu*, which causes deformities and changes in the deceased after death. Each day's ceremony completes a limb or part of the *prēta*, and the body is complete in ten days. On the third day after death, the ashes of the deceased are collected in an urn, and buried at the place of cremation or close to it. This is called *ēkoddishṭa*. On the eleventh day, all the members of the family go through a purificatory ceremony, which consists in swallowing the *pāṇchagavya*, and changing the sacred thread. They then perform a *srāddha*, offering balls of rice, etc., to the deceased and three of his ancestors, and give a dinner and presents of money and cloths

to Brāhmans. Twelve *srāddhas* must be performed, one in each month following, when water and balls of rice (*pindas*) are offered to the spirit. The twelfth *srāddha* is the *sapindi karana*, which elevates the spirit of the deceased to the rank of an ancestor. Following this, there is only the annual *srāddha*, or anniversary of death, calculated according to the lunar or astronomical year, when not less than three Brāhmans are fed, and receive presents of money and cloths.

Concerning the death ceremonies, Mr. Subramani Aiyar writes as follows. "After death, the blood relations of the deceased bathe, and, with wet clothes on, place two pieces of the stem of the plantain tree, one at the head and the other at the feet of the corpse. The hair of the head and face, is shaved a little, and the body is bathed with water in which turmeric and *mailanchi*, a red vegetable substance, are dissolved. The Vaishnavite *gōpi* mark is drawn vertically, as also are sandal paste marks on various parts of the body, and flowers and garlands are thrown over it. The corpse is then covered with an unbleached cloth, which is kept in position by a rope of kusa grass. It is carried to the pyre by Nambūtiris who are not within the pollution circle of the deceased, the eldest son supporting the head and the younger ones the legs. A cremation pit is dug in the south-east portion of the compound, and a mango tree, which has been felled, is used as fuel. In all these ceremonies, the eldest son is the *karta* or chief mourner and responsible ritualist, with whom the younger ones have to keep up physical contact while the several rites are being gone through. When the body is almost reduced to ashes, the principal performer of the ceremonies and his brothers bathe, and, taking some earth from the adjoining stream or tank, make with it a representation

of the deceased. Throughout the funeral ceremonies, the Mārān is an indispensable factor. The handing of the kusa grass and gingelly (*Sesamum*) seeds for the oblation must be done by a member of that caste. Sanchayanam, or the collection and disposal of the burnt bones of the deceased, takes place on the fourth day. On the eleventh day the pollution ceases, and the daily *srāddha* begins. A term of *dīksha* or special observance is kept up for three fortnights, but generally for a whole year. On the twelfth day is the *sapinda karana srāddha*, or ceremony of what may be called joining the fathers, after which the dead person passes from the stage of *preta* to join the manes or spirits. There are then the monthly ceremonies (*māsikas*) and *ashta srāddhas* (eight *srāddhas*). The *ābdika* or first anniversary, known in Malabar by the name of *māsam*, is a very important ceremony, and one on which unstinted expenditure is the rule."

A further account of the death ceremonies is given in the Gazetteer of Malabar. "When death is believed to be near, the dying man is taken to the west of the hearth of the sacred fire (*aupāsana agni*), and laid with his head to the south on a bed of sand and *darbha* grass, while the *ōttu mantram* is whispered in his ear. When life is extinct, the body is washed and covered with a plantain leaf. The mourners dress themselves in *tāttu* fashion, and tear up a new cloth breadthwise into pieces called *sesham*, which they each wear round their waist. The body is then dressed in an undercloth; the forehead is smeared with the pounded root of the creeper *mēttōni*, and *tulasi* flowers are put on the head; the *kudumi* (hair knot) is untied, and the *pūnūl* (sacred thread) arranged to hang round the neck in front. The body is tied on to a bamboo ladder and covered with a new

cloth, and then carried by four of the nearest relatives to the place of cremation within the compound of the illam. A trench is dug on the north-east of the pyre, and some water put into it, which is sprinkled on the pyre with twigs of chamatha and darbha. The body is then laid on the pyre with the head to the south, and the fire is kindled. The ladder is thrown away, and a hōmam performed of ghee and darbha grass made to represent the deceased, while mantrams are recited. Then comes the ceremony called kumbhapradakshinam. The mourners go round the pyre three times, the eldest son leading the way, carrying an earthen pot of water on his left shoulder. The water should run through the bottom of the pot, one hole being made for the first round, two for the second, and three for the third, and other mourners should sprinkle it on the pyre. At the end of the third round the pot is thrown on to the pyre, and all the mourners come away, the eldest son leaving last, and being careful not to look back. After bathing and shaving, the sons and other persons entitled to celebrate the obsequies, each perform an oblation of water (udagakriya) to a piece of karuga grass stuck up to represent the spirit of the dead, concluding the ceremony by touching iron, granite, a firebrand, cow-dung, paddy and gold three times, throwing away the sesham, and receiving a clean cloth (māttu). They then return to the nadumittam, when they make offerings (bali or veli) of rice balls (pindams) to a piece of karuga grass. Both these ceremonies have to be repeated twice daily for ten days. On the fourth day after death, provided it is not a Tuesday or Friday, the ceremony of collecting the bones (sanchyanam) is performed. The eldest son goes to the pyre with a pāla (pot made of the spathe of an areca palm) of milk, which he sprinkles on the pyre

with a brush of chamatha tied with karuga grass. Three pālas are placed on the west of the pyre parallel to the places where the feet, waist and head of the corpse rested, and bones are removed from the feet, waist and head with tongs of chamatha, and placed in the respective pālas. The bones are then washed in milk, and all put into an earthen pot (kudam) with some karuga grass on the top. The pot is covered with a cloth, taken to a cocoanut tree and buried in a pit, the cloth being removed and the top filled with mud. A plantain is planted in the trench that was dug near the pyre. On the eleventh day, all the members of the family purify themselves, and perform oblations of water and balls of rice. This constitutes the first sraddha, which must be repeated on each anniversary of the eleventh day."

"The funeral rites of women are similar; but, if the woman is pregnant at the time of death, the body has first to be purified seven times with pounded kusa grass, cow-dung, cow's urine, ashes and gold, and to receive mātṭu. The belly is cut open four inches below the navel, and, if the child is found alive, it is taken out and brought up; if dead, it is put back in the womb with a piece of gold and some ghee. Children not more than ten days old are buried with little ceremony, but all others are burnt."*

When a Nambūtiri is believed to have been guilty of an offence against the caste, or when there is a caste dispute in any grāmam, the proper course is to represent the matter to the king (in Malabar the Zamorin), who refers it to the Smarta having jurisdiction over that particular grāmam, ordering him to try the offender after holding a proper enquiry. Minor offences are punishable

* The accounts of marriage and death ceremonies in the Gazetteer of Malabar are from a grandhavari.

by infliction of penance, fasting, or doing special pūja to the gods. Graver offences are dealt with by excommunication from the caste. Against the decision of the Smarta there is no appeal. Adultery between a Nambūtiri woman and a man of inferior caste is perhaps the most serious of all caste offences.

The enquiry into cases of adultery is described as follows by Mr. Subramani Aiyar. "It is conducted by the Smarta, and hence arises the name (*smartavichāram*) by which it is known. Whenever a Nambūtiri woman's chastity is suspected, she is at once handed over to society for enquiry, no considerations of personal affection or public policy intervening. The mother or brother may be the first and only spectator of a shady act, but feels no less bound to invite, and generally pay very heavily for a public enquiry by society according to its recognised rules. The suspect is at once transferred to an isolation shed in the same compound, variously called by the name of *anchampura* or fifth room (outside the *nalukettu* or quadrangle), or the *pachchōlappura*, a new shed with green thatch roofing put up for the occasion. She may be seen here by her husband, his father and uncles, her father, father's father, father's maternal grandfather, and their sons, but by none else. Once a prohibited member sees her, the brand of infamy indubitably settles on her, and the *smārtavichāram* is considered foreclosed. For beginning a *smārtavichāram*, the sanction of the ruling Rāja has to be obtained. The matter is carried to his ears, after a preliminary enquiry, called *dāsivichāram*, has been gone through. For this, the woman's male relations, in conjunction with the Brāhmanas of the neighbourhood, interrogate the Dāsi or Nāyar maid-servant attached to the suspected woman. Along with the application for

royal sanction in Travancore, a fee of sixty-four fanams or nine rupees has to be sent in, and is credited to the treasury of Śrī Padmanābha Swāmi, as whose deputy the Mahārāja is supposed to rule the country. The Mahārāja then appoints a Smārta (judge), two Mīmāṃsakas, an Akakkoyimma, and a Purakkoyimma. The office of Smārta is hereditary. If a family becomes extinct, the Yōga or village union nominates another in its place. The Mīmāṃsakas are Nambūtiris learned in the law, and their office is seldom hereditary. They are appointed to help the Smārta in his enquiries. The Akakkoyimma, or person whose business is to preserve order, holds his appointment by heredity. The Purakkoyimma is the proxy of the sovereign himself. In ancient days, and even so late as the time of the great Martāṇḍa Varma, the ruling sovereign himself was present during the trial, and preserved order. Now a deputy is sent by the Mahārāja. He is generally the magistrate of the tāluk, who, if he finds it inconvenient to attend the meeting, delegates the function to the chief village officer. The Smārta, when he receives the royal commission (neet) for holding the enquiry, receives from the woman's relations a small tribute of money (dakshina). The Mīmāṃsakas, it may be observed, are selected by the Smārta. In Travancore alone is the Smārta's authority supreme, for no Vaidika lives in this territory, and none are generally invited. In other parts of Malabar, where Vaidikas live permanently, one of the six recognised Vaidikas has to accompany the Smārta to the place of the vichārana (enquiry), and the Smārta merely conducts the enquiry as the proxy of, and authorised and guided by the Vaidikas. Generally the council assembles at some neighbouring village temple. The suspected woman is placed within the anchampura,

and her maid-servant stands at the door. All questions are addressed to her, as the gōsha of the suspect has to be honoured in its entirety until the pronouncement of the final verdict. The procedure begins, not by the framing and reading out of a charge-sheet, but by arranging for the suspicion being brought to notice by the accused person herself. For this purpose, the Smārta makes a feint of entering the isolation shed, as if in ignorance of everything that has transpired. The maid-servant stops him, and informs him that her mistress is within. The Smārta, on hearing this, affects astonishment, and asks her the reason why her mistress should not be in the main building (antahpuram). With this question, the enquiry may be said to have actually begun. The next morning by eleven o'clock, the Smārta and his co-adjutors again go and stand beside the isolation hut, and, calling for the maid-servant, commence the regular enquiry. After about five o'clock in the afternoon, the Smārta, in the presence of the Akakkoyimma, relates the whole day's proceedings to the Mīmāṃsakas, and takes their opinion as to the questions for the next day. The enquiry often lasts for months, and sometimes even for years. It is the most expensive undertaking possible, as the whole judicatory staff has to be maintained by the family, unless the sadhanam or subject gives a circumstantial confession of her guilt. It is not enough to plead guilty; she must point out all the persons who have been partakers in her guilt. Thus every day the Smārta asks "Are there any more?" After the completion of the enquiry, the council re-assembles at the village temple. The guardian of the suspect presents himself before the assembled Brāhmins, and makes the customary obeisance. The Smārta then recounts the details of the enquiry, and

ultimately pronounces his verdict. If the woman is declared innocent, she is re-accepted amidst universal rejoicings, and the head of the family feels amply repaid for the expenditure he has incurred in the reputation for chastity secured for a member of his family under such a severe ordeal. If things do not end so well, all the Brāhmanas come out of the temple and re-assemble, when a Brāhman, who is usually not a Nambūtiri, as the Nambūtiris do not desire to condemn one of their own caste, stands up, and in a stentorian voice repeats the substance of the charge, and the judgment as given by the Smārta. The guardian of the woman then goes away, after she has been handed over by the Smārta to the custody of the Purakkoyimma. The guardian bathes, and performs all the funeral ceremonies for his ward, who from this moment is considered dead for all social and family purposes. The persons meanwhile, whose names have been given out by the woman as having been implicated in the offence, have to vindicate their character on pain of excommunication.

In connection with a case of adultery, which was tried recently in Malabar, it is noted that the Purakkoyimma kept order in the court with sword in hand. Īswara pūja (worship of Īswara) was performed in the local temple on all the days of the trial, and the suspected woman was given pāṇchagavya (five products of the cow) so that she might tell the truth.

I am informed that, in the course of an enquiry into a charge of adultery, "it sometimes happens that the woman names innocent men as her seducers. Two courses are then open to them, in order that they may exculpate themselves, viz., ordeal by boiling oil, and ordeal by weighing. The former of these ordeals is undergone, under the sanction of the Rāja, by the

accused person dipping his bare hand in ghī, which has been boiling from sunrise to midday, and taking out of it a bell-metal image. The hand is immediately bandaged, and if, on examination of it on the third day, it be found unharmed, the man is declared innocent. In the other ordeal, the man is made to sit for a certain time in one of a pair of scales, and is declared innocent or guilty, according as the scale ascends or descends. But these practices do not now prevail." In former days, the ordeal of boiling ghī was undergone at the temple of Suchīndram in Travancore. This temple derives its name from Indra, who, according to the legend, had illicit intercourse with Ahalya, the wife of Gautama Rishi, and had to undergo a similar ordeal at this place.

In connection with a case which came before the High Court of Madras, it is recorded * that "an enquiry was held into the conduct of a woman suspected. She confessed that the plaintiff had had illicit intercourse with her, and thereupon they were both declared out-casts, the plaintiff not having been charged, nor having had an opportunity to cross-examine the woman, or enter on his defence, and otherwise to vindicate his character. Held by the High Court that the declaration that the plaintiff was an outcast was illegal, and, it having been found that the defendants had not acted *bonâ fide* in making that declaration, the plaintiff was entitled to recover damages."

In order to mitigate to some extent the suffering caused by turning adrift a woman proved guilty of adultery, who has hitherto lived in seclusion, provision has been made by the Rāja of Cherakkal. A Tiyan named

* Ind. Law Reports, Madras Series, XII, 1889.

Talliparamba possesses a large extent of land granted by a former Rāja of Cherakkal, on condition of his taking under his protection all excommunicated females, if they choose to go with him. He has special rank and privileges, and has the title of Mannanar. Whenever an inquiry takes place, Mannanar receives information of it, and his messengers are ready to take the woman away. It was the custom in former days for Mannanar's agents to lead the woman to near his house, and leave her at a certain place from which two roads lead to the house—one to the eastern gate, and the other to the northern. If the woman happened to enter the house by the eastern gate, she became Mannanar's wife, and, if she went in by the northern gate, she was considered to be his sister by adoption. This rule, however, is not strictly adhered to at the present day.

The Nambūtiris are stated by Mr. Subramani Aiyar to "belong to different sūtras, gōtras, or septs, and follow different Vēdas. The most important of the sūtras are Āsvalayana, Baudhāyana, Āpastamba, and Kaushitaka. The best-known gōtras are Kāsyapa, Bhargava, Bharadvāga, Vasishtha, and Kausika. There are a few Sāmavēdins belonging to the Kitangnur and Panchal grāmams, but most of them are Rīgvēdic, and some belong to the Yajurvēda. The Rīgvēdic Brāhmins belong to two separate yōgas or unions, namely, Trichūr Yōga and Tirunavai Yōga. It appears that three of the most renowned of the disciples of Sankarāchārya were Nambūtiri Brāhmins, who received their initiation into the sanyāsāsrama at the great sage's hands. They established three maths or monasteries, known as the tekkematham (southern), natuvile matham (middle), and vatakke matham (northern). Succession having fallen in default in regard to the last, the property that stood

in its name lapsed to the Rāja of Cochin. Out of the funds of this matham, a Vêdic pāthasāla (boarding school) was established at Trichūr. A certain number of villagers became in time recognised as being entitled to instruction at this institution, and formed a yōga. Trichūr then became the centre of Brāhmanical learning. Later on, when the relations of the Zamorin of Calicut with the Rāja of Cochin became strained, he organised another yōga at Tirunavai for the Nambūtiris who lived within his territory. Here there are two yōgas for Rigvêdic Brāhmans. In these schools, religious instruction has been imparted with sustained attention for several centuries. The heads of these schools are recruited from the houses of Changngavot and Erkara, respectively. To these two yōgas two Vādhyārs and six Vaidikas are attached. There are also six Smartas or judges attached to these bodies. The Vādhyārs are purely religious instructors, and have no judicial duties in respect of society. The Vaidikas and Smartas are very learned in the Smritis, and it is with them that the whole caste government of the Nambūtiris absolutely rests."

The names of the Nambūtiris measured by Mr. Fawcett were as follows :—

Nīlakantan.	Bhavasarman.
Paramēsvaran.	Nandi.
Rāman.	Kubēran.
Harijayandan.	Mādhavan.
Chandrasēkharan.	Anantan.
Vāsudēvan.	Nambiātān.
Grēni.	Shannan.
Dāmōdaran.	Krishnan.
Sivadāsan.	Sankaran.
Mahēsvaran.	

In connection with the names of Nambūtiris, Mr. Subramani Aiyar writes as follows. "A list of names

not current or unusual now among other Brāhman communities in Southern India may be interesting. These are—

Vishnu.	Kadamban.
Gayantan.	Chitran.
Dēvadattan.	Gadavēdan.
Kiratan.	Bhavadāsan.
Prabhākaran.	Srikumāran.
Dattareyan.	

“The conspicuous absence of the names of the third son of Siva (Sasta), such as Hariharaputra and Budhanatha, may be noted. Nor are the names of Ganapathi much in favour with them. Sṛīdēvi and Sāvitrī are the two most common names, by which Nambūtiri females are known. There are also certain other names of a Prākṛita or non-classic character, used to denote males and females, which sometimes border on the humorous. Among these are—

<i>Males.</i>	<i>Females.</i>
Nampiyattan.	Nangngaya.
Ittiyattan.	Nangngeli.
Uzhūtran.	Pappi.
Tuppan.	Ittichchiri.
Nampotta.	Unnima.
	Chiruta.

“Some names in this list are identifiable with the names of divinities and purānic personages. For example, Uzhutran is a corruption of Rudran. In the same manner, Tuppan is the Prakrit for Subramanya, and Chiruta for Sīta. Unnima is another name for Uma or Parvati. Nambūtiris grudge to grant the title of Nambūtiri to each other. For instance, the Tamaraseri Nambūtiri calls the Mullappalli Nambūtiri merely Mullapalli (house name). But, if the person addressed is an Ādhya of one of the eight houses, or at least a

Tantri Ādhya, the title Nambūtiri is added to his name. Again, if there are in a house two Nambūtiris, one of them being the father and the other the son, the father, whenever he writes, subscribes himself as the Achchan Nambūtiri or father Nambūtiri, while the son subscribes himself as the Makan or son Nambūtiri. In Malabar there were two poets called Venmani Achchan Nambūtiri and Venmani Makan Nambūtiri, venmani signifying the name of the illam. It is only in documents and other serious papers that the proper name or sarman of the Nambutiri would be found mentioned."

When addressing each other, Nambūtiris use the names of their respective illams or manas. When a Nambūtiri is talking with a Nāyar, or indeed with one of any other caste, the manner in which the conversation must be carried on, strictly according to custom, is such that the Nambūtiri's superiority is apparent at every turn. Thus, a Nāyar, addressing a Nambūtiri, must speak of himself as foot-servant. If he mentions his rice, he must not call it rice, but his gritty rice. Rupees must be called his copper coins, not his rupees. He must call his house his dung-pit. He must speak of the Nambūtiri's rice as his raw rice, his coppers as rupees, and his house as his illam or mana. The Nāyar must not call his cloth a cloth, but an old cloth or a spider's web. But the Nambūtiri's cloth is to be called his daily white cloth, or his superior cloth. The Nāyar, speaking of his bathing, says that he drenches himself with water, whereas the Nambūtiri sports in the water when he bathes. Should he speak of eating or drinking, the Nāyar must say of himself that he takes food, or treats himself to the water in which rice has been washed. But, should he speak of the Nambūtiri eating, he must say that he tastes ambrosia. The Nāyar calls his sleeping

lying flat, and the Nambūtiri's closing his eyes, or resting like a Rāja. The Nāyar must speak of his own death as the falling of a forest, but of the Nambūtiri's as entering fire. The Nambūtiri is not shaved by the barber ; his hairs are cut. He is not angry, but merely dissatisfied. He does not clean his teeth as the Nāyar ; he cleans his superior pearls. Nor does he laugh ; he displays his superior pearls.

Concerning the recreations and pastimes of the Nambūtiris, Mr. Subramani Aiyar writes as follows. " During the intervals of Vēdic or Purānic recitations, the Nambūtiri engages himself in chaturangam or chess. When the players are equally matched, a game may last five, six, or even seven days. Another amusement, which the Nambūtiris take a great interest in, is the Yatrakali, which is said to be a corruption of Sastrakali, a performance relating to weapons. This is a unique institution, kept up by a section of the Nambūtiris, who are believed to represent the Brāhmanical army of Parasu Rāma. When, at a ceremony in the Travancore royal household, a Yatrakali is performed, the parties have to be received at the entrance of the Mahārāja's palace in state, sword in hand. The dress and songs are peculiar. In its import, the performance seems to combine the propitiation of Siva and Parvati in the manner indicated in a tradition at Trikkariyūr with exorcism and skill in swordsmanship. It is generally believed that, in ancient days, the Brāhmanas themselves ruled Kērala. When they found it necessary to have a separate king, one Attakat Nambūtiri was deputed, with a few other Brāhmanas, to go and obtain a ruler from the adjoining Chēra territory. The only pass in those days, connecting Malabar and Coimbatore, was that which is now known as Neruman-galam. When the Nambūtiris were returning through

this pass with the ruler whom they had secured from the Chēra King, a strange light was observed on the adjacent hills. Two young Brāhmans of Chengngamanat village, on proceeding towards the hill to investigate the source thereof, found to their amazement that it was none other than Sṛī Bhagavati, the consort of Siva, who enjoined them to go, *viā* Trikkariyūr, to Kodungngnallūr, the capital of the Perumāls. Seeing that the sight of Bhagavati foretold prosperity, the king called the range of hills Nerumangalam or true bliss, and made an endowment of all the surrounding land to the Brāhman village of Chengngamanat, the members of which had the good fortune to see the goddess face to face. When they entered the temple of Trikkariyūr, a voice was heard to exclaim "Chēra Perumāl," which meant that into that town, where Parasu Rāma was believed to be dwelling, no Perumāl (king) should ever enter—a traditional injunction still respected by the Malabar Kshatriyas. At this place, the sixth Perumāl who, according to a tradition, had a pronounced predilection for the Bouddha religion (Islamism or Buddhism, we cannot say), called a meeting of the Brāhmans, and told them that a religious discussion should be held between them and the Bouddhas, in view to deciding their relative superiority. The presiding deity of the local Saiva shrine was then propitiated by the Brāhmans, to enable them to come out victorious from the trial. A Gangama saint appeared before them, and taught them a hymn called nālupadam (four feet or parts of a slōka) which the Nambūtiris say is extracted from the Samavēda. The saint further advised them to take out a lamp from within the temple, which according to tradition had existed from the time of Sṛī Rāma, to a room built on the western ghāt of the temple tank, and pray to Siva in

terms of the hymn. While this was continued for forty-one days, six Brāhmans, with Mayura Bhatta at their head, arrived from the east coast to the succour of the Nambūtiris. With the help of these Brāhmans, the Nambūtiris kept up a protracted discussion with the Bouddhas. Wishing to bring it to a close, the Perumāl thought of applying a practical test. He enclosed a snake within a pot, and asked the disputants to declare its contents. The Bouddhas came out first with the correct answer, while the Brāhmans followed by saying that it was a lotus flower. The Perumāl was, of course, pleased with the Bouddhas; but, when the pot was opened, it was found to contain a lotus flower instead of a snake. The Bouddhas felt themselves defeated, and ever afterwards the nālupadam hymn has been sung by the Nambūtiris with a view to securing a variety of objects, every one of which they expect to obtain by this means. It is also said that, when the Brāhmans were propitiating Siva at Trikkariyūr, diverse spirits and angels were found amusing Parvati with their quips and cranks. A voice from heaven was then heard to say that such frolics should thereafter form part of the worship of Siva.

“ Engaged in these socio-religious performances are eighteen sanghas or associations. The chief office-bearers are the Vakyavritti who is the chief person, and must be an Ottu Nambūtiri or a Numbūtiri with full Vēdic knowledge; the Parishakkaran who holds charge of the Yatrakali paraphernalia; and the guru or instructor. The chief household divinities of these soldier Nambūtiris are Bhadrakālī, Sasta, and Subrahmanya. On the evening of the Yatrakali day, these Brāhmans assemble round the lamp, and recite the nālupadam and a few hymns in praise of their household divinities, and

especially of Siva, the saviour who manifested himself at Trikkariyūr. On the night of the performance they are entertained at supper, when they sing certain songs called *Karislōka*. They then move in slow procession to the kalam or hall, singing specially songs in the *vallappattu* metre, with the sacred thread hanging vertically round the neck (*apiviti*), and not diagonally as is the orthodox fashion. In the hall have been placed a burning lamp in the centre, a *para* (Malabar measure) filled with paddy, a number of bunches of cocoanuts, plantain fruits, and various kinds of flowers. The Brāhmans sit in a circle round the lamp, and, after preliminary invocations to Ganapathi, sing songs in praise of Siva. After this various kinds of dumb-show are performed, and this is the time for exhibiting skill in swordsmanship. The exorcising, by the waving of a lighted torch before the face of the host, of any evil spirits that may have attached themselves is then gone through. The performance ends with a prayer to Bhagavati, that she will shower every prosperity. Following close upon this, a variety entertainment is sometimes given by the Yatrakali Nambūtiris. This old institution is still in great favour in British Malabar, and, as it has a religious aspect intertwined with it, it is not likely to be swept away by the unsparing broom of the so-called parishkarakalam or reforming age of modern India.

"The Kathakali, or national drama of Malabar, is held in great esteem and favour by the Nambūtiris. Most of them are conversant with the songs and shows relating to it, and severely criticise the slightest fault or failure. The Kathakali is more than three centuries old in Malabar, and is said to have been first brought into existence by a member of the ancient ruling house of

Kottarakkara. As the earliest theme represented was the Rāmāyana, the Kathakali is also known as Rāmānāttam. A single play lasts for eight and even ten hours in the night. Kshatriyas, Asuras, Rākshasas, Kirātas (hunting tribes), monkeys, birds, etc., each has an appropriate make-up. The play is in dumb-show, and no character is permitted to speak on the stage. The songs are sung by the Bhāgavatar or songster, and the actors literally act, and do nothing more. The Nambūtiris love this antiquated form of theatrical performance, and patronise it to a remarkable extent.

"There are a number of other recreations of an entirely non-religious character. The chief of these are called respectively seven dogs and the leopard, fifteen dogs and the leopard, and twenty-eight dogs and the leopard. Success in these games consists in so arranging the dogs as to form a thick phalanx, two abreast, round the leopard. Stones of two sizes are employed to represent the dogs and leopards, and the field is drawn on the ground.

"The ezahmattukali, or seventh amusement, is said to have been so called from the fact of its being introduced by the seventh Nambūtiri grāmam of Kērala. It is a miniature form of Yatrakali, but without its *quasi*-religious character, and is intended to serve merely as a social pastime. The players need not all be Brāhman; nor is fasting or any religious discipline part of the preliminary programme. Sitting round the lamp as at the Yatrakali, and reciting songs in praise of Siva, the players proceed to the characteristic portion of the recreation, which is a kind of competition in quick-wittedness and memory held between two yogas or parties. One among them calls himself the Kallur Nāyar

and is the presiding judge. There is interrogation and answering by two persons, and a third proclaims the mistakes in the answers. There are two others, who serve as bailiffs to execute the judge's orders. Humorous scenes are then introduced, such as Ittikantappan Nāyar, Prakkal, Mutti or old woman, Pattar or Paradēsa Brāhman, and other characters, who appear on the stage and amuse the assembly."

The Nambūtiris are Vēdic Brāhmans: their scriptures are the Vēdas. It is safe to say that the Nambūtiris are Shaivas, but not to the exclusion of Vishnu. The ordinary South Indian Vaishnava Brāhman has nothing to do with the Shaiva temple over the way, and takes no part or interest in the Shaiva festivals. Siva is to the Nambūtiri the supreme deity, but he has temples also to Vishnu, Krishna, Narasimha, Sri Rāghava, Ganapathi, Subrahmanya, Bhagavati, etc. There are said to be temples to Sāstavu and Sankar-nārāyanan—amalgamated forms of Siva and Vishnu. The lingam is the ordinary object of worship.

Like all Brāhmans, the Nambūtiris believe that the eight directions or points of the compass, north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, west, north-west, are presided over by eight deities, or Ashtadikpālakas, riding on various animals. Indra reigns in heaven and Yama in hell, and Surya is the sun god. All these and their wives are worshipped. Parvati shares adoration with Siva, Lakshmi with Vishnu, and so on. The Nambūtiris believe in the existence of evil spirits which influence man, but they do not worship them.

It is said that the Nambūtiri has of late been influenced by Vēdāntism, that wonderful religious idea of the existence of one spirit or atman, the only reality, outside which the world and all besides is mere illusion,

and whose doctrine is wrapped up in the three words "Ekam ēva advitiyam". (There is but one being without a second).

The Nambūtiris call themselves Ārya Brāhmanar. Their legendary transmigration to Malabar from Northern India is doubtless true. Theirs is by far the purest form of the Vēdic Brāhmanism to be met with in Southern India. A complete account of the religion of the Nambūtiris cannot be given in these pages. The Nambūtiri's life is a round of sacrifices, the last of which is the burning of his body on the funeral pyre. When the Nambūtiri has no male issue, he performs the putra kāmēshti or karmavipākaprayaschittam yāgams or sacrifices to obtain it. Should he be unwell, he performs the mrittyunjaya sānti yāgam, so that he may be restored to good health. He performs the aja yāgam, or goat sacrifice, in order to obtain salvation. Though animal food is strictly forbidden, and the rule is strictly followed, the flesh of the goat, which remains after the offering has been made in this sacrifice, is eaten by the Nambūtiris present as part of the solemn ceremonial. This is the only occasion on which animal food is eaten. Namaskāram, or prostration, is much done during prayers. By some it is done some hundreds of times daily, by others not so often. It amounts to physical exercise, and is calculated to strengthen the arms and the back.

Reference has already been made to certain ceremonies connected with pregnancy, and the early life of a child. There are three further important ceremonies, called Upanāyana, Samāvartana and Upākarma, concerning which Mr. Subramani Aiyar writes as follows. "Upanāyana may be called the Brāhmanising ceremony. An oft-repeated Sanskrit verse runs to the

effect that a Brāhman is a Brāhman by virtue of his karmas or actions in this life, or the lives preceding it. The meaning of the term Upanāyana is a ceremony which leads one to god, *i.e.*, to a realisation of the eternal self through the aid of a guru (preceptor). This ceremony takes place in the seventh, eighth, or ninth year of a boy's life. As ordinarily understood, it is a ceremony for males only, as they alone have to observe the four asramas. But, in ancient days, it seems to have been performed also by females. Marriage was not compulsory, and a girl might take to asceticism at once. Sita is said to have worn a yāgnopavitam (sacred thread). A Brāhman is not born, but made by the karmas. In other words, a Brāhman boy is, at the time of his birth, only a Sūdra, and it is by the performance of the necessary karmas—not merely the ceremonial rites, but the disciplinary and preparatory process in view to spiritual development—that he becomes a Dviga or twice-born. The word Upanāyana is composed of *upa*, meaning near, and *nayana*, leading. What the youth is led to is, according to some, Brāhmagagnana or the realisation of the eternal and universal self, and according to others only the teacher or guru. A Nambūtiri Upanāyana begins with the presentation of a *dakshina* (consolidated fee) to the *Ezhuttachchan*, or the *Nāyar* or *Ambalavāsi* teacher, who has been instructing the youth in the vernacular. The boy stands on the western side of the sacrificial fire, facing the east, and the father stands beside him, facing the same way. The second cloth (*uttariya*) is thrown over the boy's head, and his right hand being held up, the sacred thread, to which a strap made from the skin of a *Krishnamriga* (antelope) is attached, is thrown over his shoulders and under his right arm, while he stands reverently with

closed eyes. The thread and skin are wrapped up in the cloth, and are not to be seen by the boy. He is then taken to an open place, where the priest introduces the new Brahmachāri to the sun, and invokes him to cover his pupil with his rays. The boy next goes to the sacrificial altar, and himself offers certain sacrifices to the fire. Saluting his preceptor and obtaining his blessing, he requests that he may be initiated into the Sāvitrīmantram. After a few preliminary ceremonies, the guru utters in the right ear of his disciple the sacred syllable Ōm, and repeats the Gāyatri mantram nine times. He then instructs him in certain maxims of conduct, which he is to cherish and revere throughout the Brahmachārya stage. Addressing the boy, the guru says, 'You have become entitled to the study of the Vēdas; perform all the duties which pertain to the āsrama you are about to enter. Never sleep during the day. Study the Vēdas by resigning yourself to the care of your spiritual instructor.' These exhortations, though made in Sanskrit, are explained in Malayālam, in order that the boy may understand them—a feature unknown to Brāhmans on the other coast. With his words of advice, the preceptor gives the youth a danda or stick made of pīpal (*Ficus religiosa*) wood, as if to keep him in perpetual memory of what would follow if any of the directions be disregarded. The boy then makes his obeisance to his parents and all his relations, and is given a brass vessel called bhikshāpātra (alms pot), in which he collects, by house-to-house visits, food for his daily sustenance during the Brahmachārya stage. He proceeds to the kitchen of his own house with the vessel in one hand and the stick in the other. Making his obeisance in due form to his mother, who stands facing the east, he says 'Bhikshām bhavati dadātu' (May you be pleased to give me

alms). The mother places five or seven handfuls of rice in the vessel. After receiving similar contributions from the assembled elders, the boy takes the vessel to his father, who is the first guru, saying 'Bhaikshmāmidam' (This is my alms collection). The father blesses it, and says 'May it be good.' After the Gayatrijapa, the ceremony of Samidadhana is performed. This is the Brahmachāri's daily worship of the sacred fire, corresponding to the aupasana of the Grihastha, and has to be performed twice daily. After another hōmam at night, the cloth covering the sacred thread and skin is removed, and the consecration of the food is done for the first time. In addition to the skin strap, the Brahmachāri wears a mekhala or twisted string of kūsa grass. It is doubtless of the youthful Nambūtiri that Barbosa wrote as follows at the beginning of the sixteenth century. 'And when these are seven years old, they put round their necks a strap two fingers in width of an animal which they call crenamergan, and they command him not to eat betel for seven years, and all this time he wears that strap round the neck, passing under the arm; and, when he reaches fourteen years of age, they make him a Brāhman, removing from him the leather strap round his neck, and putting on another three-thread, which he wears all his life as a mark of being a Brāhman.' The rules which were observed with such strictness centuries ago are still observed, and every Nambūtiri boy goes through his period of Brahmachārya, which lasts at least for full five years. During the whole of this period, no sandal paste, no scents, and no flowers are to be used by him. He is not to take his meals at other houses on festive occasions. He must not sleep during the day. Nor may he wear a loin-cloth in the ordinary fashion. Shoes and umbrella are also prohibited. The completion of the Brahmachāri

āśrama, or stage of pupilage, is called Samāvartana. After a few religious ceremonies in the morning, the Brahmachāri shaves for the first time since the Upanāyana ceremonies, casts off the skin strap and mekhala, and bathes. He puts on sandal paste marks, bedecks himself with jasmine flowers, and puts on shoes. He then holds an umbrella, and wears a pearl necklace. After this, he puts on a head-dress, and a few other ceremonials conclude the Samāvartana. For three days subsequent to this, the budding Grihastha is considered ceremonially impure, and the pollution is perhaps based on the death of the old āśrama, and birth of the new. In the Upākarma ceremony, hymns are sung by the preceptor, and the pupil has merely to listen to them."

In conclusion, something may be said concerning the general beliefs of the Nambūtiris. All objects, animate or inanimate, organic or inorganic, are believed to be permeated by the divine spirit. Animals, trees, plants, and flowers are animate, and therefore venerated. The sun, moon, and stars are revered on account of some inherent quality in each, such as utility or strength, or owing to their connection with some deity. A god can assume any form at any time, such as that of a man, bird, beast, or tree. The various forms in which a god has appeared are ever sacred. Some animals have been used as vehicles by the gods, and are therefore revered. Cows, horses, and snakes are worshipped. The cow is the most sacred of all animals. The Purānas tell of Kāmadhēnu, the cow of plenty, one of the fourteen useful things which turned up out of the ocean of milk when it was churned, and which is supposed to have yielded the gods all they desired. So Kāmadhēnu is one who gives anything which is desired. Every hair of the cow is sacred, its urine is the most holy water, and its dung the

most purificatory substance. The horse is the favourite animal of Kubēra, the treasure-god. The Uchchaisravas, the high-eared prototype of all horses, also came out of the churned ocean. Horse sacrifice, or Asvamēdha, is the greatest of all sacrifices. Performance of a hundred of them would give the sacrificer power to displace Indra, in order to make room for him. Snakes are the fruitful progeny of the sage Kāsyapa and Kadru. The Mahā Sēsha, their prince, is the couch and canopy of Vishnu, and supports the world on his thousand heads. But attention to snakes is probably more in the light of the harm which they may do, and propitiatory in character.

Among plants, the tulasi or sacred basil (*Ocimum sanctum*) is the most sacred of all. It is supposed to be pervaded by the essence of both Vishnu and Lakshmi: according to some legends, it is a metamorphosis of Sita and Rukmini. The daily prayer offered to the tulasi is thus rendered by Monier Williams. "I adore that tulasi in whose roots are all the sacred places of pilgrimage, in whose centre are all the deities, and in whose upper branches are all the Vēdas." The udumbara (*Ficus glomerata*) is also sacred. Under this tree Dattatreya, the incarnation of the Trinity, performed his ascetic austerities. The Nambūtiri says that, according to the sāstras, there must be one of these trees in his compound, and, if it is not there, he imagines it is. The bilva (*Aegle Marmelos*) is specially sacred to Siva all over Southern India. To the Nambūtiri it is very sacred. Its leaves are supposed to represent the three attributes of Siva—Satva, Rāja, and Tama—and also his three eyes and his trisūlam (trident). They are used by the Nambūtiri in propitiatory ceremonies to that god. An offering of a single leaf of this tree is believed to annihilate the sins done three births or existence. Kūsa grass (*Eragrostis*

cynosuroides) is very sacred, and used in many ceremonies. At the churning of the ocean, the snakes are said to have been greedy enough to lick the nectar off the kūsa grass, and got their tongues split in consequence. The asvaththa (*Ficus religiosa*) is also very sacred to the Nambūtiris. It is supposed to be pervaded by the spirit of Brahma the Creator.

From the sun (Sūrya, the sun-god) emanate light and heat, and to its powers all vegetation is due, so the Nambūtiri worships it daily. He also offers pūja to the sun and moon as belonging to the nine navagrāhas (planets). The planets are the Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Rāhu and Kētu. They influence the destinies of men, and therefore come in for some worship. The three last are sinister in their effects, and must be propitiated.

Nāmdēv.—A synonym of Rangāri.

Nanchi Kuruva.—A name for Kuruvas, who inhabit Nanchinād in Travancore.

Nanchinād Vellāla.—The Nanchinād Vellālas, to the number of 18,000, are found scattered all over Travancore, though their chief centre is Nanchinād, composed of the tāluks of Tovala and Agastisvaram. Their manners and customs at the present day are so different to those of the Tamil Vellālas that they may be regarded as a separate caste indigenous to Travancore and Cochin. Like other Sūdras of Travancore, they add the title Pillai to their name, which is often preceded by the title Kannaku.

From a copper-plate grant in the possession of the Syrian Christians, dated A.D. 824, we learn that one family of carpenters, and four families of Vellālas, were entrusted with the growing of plants on the sea-coast, the latter being the Karalars or trustees. From this it

appears that the Vellālas must have settled on the west coast in the ninth century at the latest. The Nanchinād Vellālas were not originally different from their Pāndyan analogues, but settled in the tāluks above mentioned, over which the Pāndyans held sway during several periods in mediæval times. On one occasion, when there was a dispute about the territorial jurisdiction of Nanchinād between the Mahārāja of Travancore and the Pāndyan ruler, the leading Vellālas of these tāluks went over in a body to the Travancore camp, and swore allegiance to the Travancore throne. They gradually renounced even the law of inheritance, which their brethren of the Tamil country followed, and adopted many novel customs, which they found prevalent in Kērala. From Nanchinād the caste spread in all directions, and, as most of them were respectable men with good education and mathematical training, their services were utilised for account-keeping in the civil and military departments of the State. They must, of course, be clearly distinguished from the Tamil makka-thāyam Vellālas of Kuttamperūr in Tiruvella, who have also become naturalised in Travancore.

For the following note, I am indebted to Mr. N. Subramani Aiyar.

Like the Tamil Vellālas, the Nanchinād Vellālas are divided into two classes, Saiva and Asaiva, of which the former abstain from flesh and fish, while the latter have no such scruple. Asaivas will take food in the houses of Saivas, but the Saivas cook their own food when they go to an Asaiva house. Again, though the Saivas marry girls from Asaiva families, they are taught the Saiva hymn by the Gurukal immediately afterwards, and prohibited from dining with their former relatives. This custom is, however, only known to prevail in the south.

While the Vellālas in the south reside in streets, their brethren in the north live, like Nāyars, in isolated houses. In their dress and ornaments, too, the Nanchinād Vellālas living in North Travancore differ from those of the south, inasmuch as they adopt the practice of the Nāyars, while the latter are conservative, and true to their old traditions.

The Nanchinād Vellālas are well known, throughout Travancore, for their thrift, industry, and mathematical acumen. Several families have dropped the designation of Vellāla, and adopted Nanchinād Nāyar as their caste-name.

Their language is largely mixed up with Malayālam words and phrases. Madan Isakki (Yakshi) and Inan are their recognised tutelary deities, and were till recently worshipped in every household. Villati-chānpāttu is a common propitiatory song, sung by members of the goldsmith and oilmonger castes, in connection with the ceremonies of the Nanchinād Vellālas. It deals with the origin of these minor deities, and relates the circumstances in which their images were set up in various shrines. Amman-kodai, or offering to the mother, is the most important religious festival. They also observe the Tye-pongal, Depāvali, Trikkartikai, Ōnam and Vishu festivals. The anniversary of ancestors is celebrated, and the Pattukkai ceremony of the Tamil Vellālas, in propitiation of deceased female ancestors, is performed every year. Stories of Chitragupta, the accountant-general of Yama, the Indian Pluto, are recited on the new-moon day in the month of Chittiray (April-May) with great devotion.

The Nanchinād Vellālas are chiefly an agricultural class, having their own village organisation, with office-bearers such as kariyasthan or secretary, mutalpiti or

treasurer, and the *pilla* or accountant. Contributions towards village funds are made on certain ceremonial occasions. Their high priest belongs to the *Umayorubhagam* mutt of Kumbakonam, and the North Travancore Vellālas recognise the *Pānantitta Gurukal* as their spiritual adviser. East coast Brāhmans often officiate as their priests, and perform the sacrificial and other rites at weddings.

The usual rule is for girls to marry after puberty, but early marriage is not rare. The maternal uncle's or paternal aunt's daughter is regarded as the legitimate bride. The presents to the bridegroom include a *mundu* and *neriyatu*, the ordinary Malabar dress, and very often an iron writing-style and knife. This is said to be symbolical of the fact that the Vellālas formed the accountant caste of Travancore, and that several families of them were invited from Madura and Tinnevely to settle down in Nanchinād for this purpose. A procession of the bridal couple in a palanquin through the streets is a necessary item of the marriage festivities. The Nanchinād Vellālas contract temporary alliances with *Nāyar* women from the *Padamangalam* section downwards. Divorce is permitted, provided a formal release-deed, or *vidu-muri*, is executed by the husband. After this, the woman may enter into *sambandham* (connection) with a Nanchinād or *Pāndi Vellāla*.

The laws of inheritance are a curious blend of the *makkathāyam* and *marumakkathāyam* systems. Sons are entitled to a portion of the property, not exceeding a fourth, of the self-acquired property of the father, and also a fourth of what would have descended to him in a *makkathāyam* family. This is called *ukantutama*, because it is property given out of love as opposed to right. It is a further rule that, in case of divorce, the

wife and children should be given this ukantutama, lest they should be left in utter destitution, only a tenth part of the ancestral property being allotted for this purpose, if her husband leaves no separate estate. If more than a fourth of the estate is to be given in this manner, the permission of the heirs in the female line has generally to be obtained. If a man dies without issue, and leaves his wife too old or unwilling to enter into a fresh matrimonial alliance, she is entitled to maintenance out of his estate. A divorced woman, if without issue, is similarly entitled to maintenance during the life of her former husband. The property to which she may thus lay claim is known as nankutama, meaning the property of the nanka or woman. The nankutama cannot be claimed by the widow, if, at the time of her husband's death, she does not live with, and make herself useful to him. When a widow enters into a sambandham alliance, the second husband has to execute a deed called etuppu, agreeing to pay her, either at the time of his death or divorce, a specified sum of money. The ukantutama from the family of her first husband does not go to the issue of a woman who is in possession of an etuppu deed.

The namakarana, or name-giving ceremony, is performed in early life. Many of the names are unknown among Nāyars, *e.g.*, Siva, Vishnu, Kuttalalingam, Subramanya, Ponnampalam among males, and Sivakami, Kantimati among females. The tonsure is performed before a boy is three years old. The right of performing the funeral ceremonies is vested in the son, or, failing one, the nephew. Pollution lasts for sixteen days. The karta (chief mourner) has to get himself completely shaved, and wears the sacred thread throughout the period of pollution, or at least on the sixteenth day. On

that day oblations of cooked food, water and gingelly (*Sesamum*) seeds are offered to the departed. If a daughter's son dies, her mother, and not the father, observes pollution.

Nānchinād Vellāla has been assumed by males of the Dēva-dāsi caste in Travancore.

Nandikattu (bull's mouth).—An exogamous sept of Mēdara.

Nandimandalam.—A sub-division of Rāzu.

Nanga (naked).—A sub-division of Poroja.

Nangudi Vellāla.—The so-called Nangudi Vellālas, or Savalai Pillais, are found inhabiting several villages in the Tinnevely district, and differ from other Vellālas in several important points. They say that they are Kōttai (fort) Vellālas, who have given up the custom of living within a fort. Nangudi women are not allowed to enter the fort at Srivaiguntam, wherein the Kōttai Vellālas live. Within the last few years, marriages are said to have taken place between members of the two communities. The Nangudis have exogamous septs or kilais, named for the most part after persons or deities, which, like the septs of the Maravans, run in the female line. The hereditary caste headman is called Pattaththu Pillai. In olden times, members who disobeyed him were made to run through the streets with a rotten tender cocoanut tied to the kudumi (hair knot), while a man ran behind, applying a tamarind switch to the back.

The consent of a girl's maternal uncle and his wife is necessary, before she can marry. The aunt's consent is signified by touching the tāli (marriage badge) on the wedding day. The uncle keeps a light, called ayira panthi, burning until the time for tying the tāli. A quarter measure of rice is tied up in a cloth, and the

knot converted into a wick, which is fed with ghī (clarified butter).

The news of a death in the community is conveyed by the barber. Before the removal of the corpse, all close relations, and at least one pair of Nangudis from every village, must come to the house. Absence on this occasion is considered as a very grave insult. On the second day after death, an *Amarantus*, called arakkirai, must be cooked.

A special feature in connection with inheritance is that a man should give his daughters some property, and every daughter must be given a house. The husbands have to live in their wives' houses. The property which a woman receives from her father becomes eventually the property of her daughters, and her sons have no claim to it. Sons inherit the property of the father in the usual manner.

Like the Kondaikatti Vellālas, the Nangudis claim that they had the right of placing the crown on the head of the Pāndyan kings. In the village of Korkai, there is a tank (pond) called Kannimar Jonai, because celestial maidens used to bathe there. When one Agni Mahā Rishi was doing penance, three of the celestial maidens are said to have come to bathe. The Rishi fell in love with them, and eventually three sons were born. These children were brought up by the Vellālas of Korkai at the request of the Rishi, who represented that they were likely to become kings. According to the legend, they became Chēra, Chōla, and Pāndya kings.

Nannūru (four hundred).—An exogamous sept of Mādiga.

Nantunikkuruppu.—Recorded, in the Travancore Census Report, 1901, as a synonym of Vātti, a subdivision of Nāyar.

Nanukonda.—A sub-division of Lingāyat Kāpus, named after the village of Nanukonda in the Kurnool district.

Naravidyavāru.—These are Vipravinōdis, who are Jangams by caste. They style themselves Naravidyavāru when they perform acrobatic and other feats before ordinary people, and Vipravinōdi when they perform before Brāhmans. The name Naravidyavāru is said to be a contraction of Narulu-mēchche-vidya-cheyu-vāru, *i.e.*, those who receive the approbation of men. One of their most favourite feats is throwing three or four wooden or stone balls up into the air, and rolling them quickly in succession over various parts of the body—arms, chest, etc.

Nariangal (nari, jackal).—An exogamous sept of Vallamban.

Nārikēla (cocoanut).—An exogamous sept of Baliya.

Narollu (fibre).—An exogamous sept of Pedakanti Kāpu.

Narpathu Katchi (forty-house section).—A sub-division of Valluvan.

Nasrāni Māppilla.—A name, in Malabar, applied to Christians.

Nāsuvan.—Nāsivan or Nāsuvan, said to mean unholy, one who should not be touched, or one sprung from the nose, is the name for Ambattans (Tamil barbers). The equivalents Nāsiyan and Nāvidan occur as a name for Telugu barbers, and Malayāli barbers who shave Nāyars and higher castes. Nāvidan is further recorded as the occupational name of a sub-division of Tamil Paraiyans, and Vēttuvans.

Natamukki.—Recorded, in the Travancore Census Report, 1901, as a sub-division of Nāyar.

Naththalu (snails).—An exogamous sept of Māla.

Natramiludaiyan.—A name, meaning the repository of chaste Tamil, returned by some Nattamāns at times of census.

Nāttān.—At the Census, 1901, nearly 12,000 individuals returned themselves as Nāttān, which is stated by the Census Superintendent to be “a vague term meaning people of the country, reported by some to be a main caste, and by others to be a sub-caste of Vellāla. Nearly all of those who returned the name came from Salem and were cultivators, but some of them entered themselves as possessing the title of Sērvai, which usually denotes an Agamudaiyan” (*see* Sērvai, Sērvaikāran). Nāttān also occurs as a title of the Tamil Sembadavan and Pattanavan fishing castes, and of the Vallambans. Portions of the Tamil country are divided into areas known as nādus, in each of which certain castes, known as Nāttān or Nāttar, are the predominant element. For example, the Vallambans and Kallans are called the Nāttars of the Pālaya Nādu in the Sivaganga zamindari of the Madura district. In dealing with the tribal affairs of the various castes inhabiting a particular nādu, the lead is taken by the Nāttars.

Nattāti (the name of a village).—A sub-division of Shānān.

Nāttu (sons of the soil).—Recorded as a sub-division of Kallan, and of the Malayans of Cochin.

Nattukattāda Nāyanmar.—A class of mendicants attached to the Kaikōlans (*q.v.*).

Nāttukōttai Chetti.—“Of all the Chettis,” Mr. Francis writes,* “perhaps the most distinctive and interesting are the Nāttukōttai Chettis, who are wealthy money-lenders with head-quarters in the Tiruppattūr

* Madras Census Report, 1901.

and Dēvakōttai divisions of the Sivaganga and Rāmnād zamindaris in the Madura district. They are the most go-a-head of all the trading castes in the south, travelling freely to Burma, the Straits Settlements and Ceylon (also Saigon, Mauritius, and South Africa), and having in some cases correspondents in London and on the Continent. As long as their father is alive, the members of a Nāttukōttai Chetti family usually all live together.

The caste is noted in the Madura district for the huge houses, to which this custom has given rise. Married sons have a certain number of rooms set aside for them, and are granted a carefully calculated yearly budget allotment of rice and other necessities. On the father's death, contrary to all ordinary Hindu usage, the eldest son retains the house, and the youngest his mother's jewels and bed, while the rest of the property is equally divided among all the sons. When a male child is born, a certain sum is usually set aside, and in due time the accumulated interest upon it is spent on the boy's education. As soon as he has picked up business ways sufficiently, he begins life as the agent of some other members of the caste, being perhaps entrusted with a lakh of rupees, often on no better security than an unstamped acknowledgment scratched on a palmyra leaf, and sent off to Burma or Singapore to trade with it, and invest it. A percentage on the profits of this undertaking, and savings from his own salary, form a nucleus which he in turn invests on his own account. His wife will often help pay the house-keeping bills by making baskets and spinning thread, for the women are as thrifty as the men. As a caste they are open-handed and devout. In many houses, one pie in every rupee of profit is regularly set aside for charitable and religious expenditure, and a whip round for a caste-fellow in

difficulties is readily responded to. By religion they are fervent Saivites, and many of the men proclaim the fact by wearing a rudrāksham (*Elæocarpus Ganitrus*) fruit, usually set in gold, round their necks. Of late years they have spent very large sums upon several of the famous Saivite shrines in the Madras Presidency, notably those at Chidambaram,* Madura, and Tiruvannāmalai. Unfortunately, however, much of the work has been executed in the most lamentable modern taste, and it is saddening to contrast the pitiful outcome of their heavy outlay with the results which might have been attained under judicious guidance. The decoration in the new Kaliyāna Mahāl in the Madura temple is mainly inferior varnished wood-carving, looking-glasses, and coloured glass balls. The same style has been followed at Tiruvannāmalai, although lying scattered about in the outer courts of the temple are enough of the old pierced granite pillars to make perhaps the finest mantapam in South India. Owing to their wealth and their money-lending, the Nāttukōttai Chettis have been called the Jews of South India, but their kindliness and charity deserve more recognition than this description accords."

I am informed that the property of a woman (jewels, vessels, investments, etc.), on her decease, goes to her daughters. As among other Hindu castes, the eldest son may retain the personal effects of his father, and, with the consent of his brothers, may retain his house. But the value thereof is deducted from his share in the property.

It is stated in the Madura Manual that the "Nāttukōttai Settis in particular are notorious for their greed, and most amusing stories are told about them. However

* The proverb Chetti Chidambaram is well known.