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HOME LIFE OF HINDU WOMEN.

THE Hindus have a fable that runs in this wise: "A man and a tiger were looking at a picture in which the artist had portrayed a man controlling a splendid tiger. The man turned to his companion and remarked, rather vaingloriously, 'Behold the power of man! He controls the savage beasts of the jungle; even the royal tiger owns his sway!' The tiger, somewhat nettled, and perhaps remembering scenes he had witnessed, where the positions of the man and tiger as shown in the picture were reversed, replied: 'Oh yes; but you should remember it was a man painted the picture!'"

So in regard to the laws that govern Hindu women; it is evident they were framed wholly by men. A man painted the picture!

From the ancient history of the Hindus, we learn that formerly girls were not married until of suitable age; that they were allowed much more freedom than at present; and that *sati* (suttee) was not common, but only occasionally took place. The first authentic mention of *sati* is that of the last Rani of Delhi, who gave herself to the flames when her husband was slain in resisting the invading Mahomedans early in the twelfth century.

A little later, the Rajput princess Durgavati and the Mahrati princess Ahuliya Baie became rulers in their respective provinces, gave audience to their subjects as a king might have done, and even led their armies in person. So it is evident that Hindu women have as much strength of character as the women of any nationality, and that formerly they occupied a more fitting position in society. Why, then, are they now unwelcomed and often murdered at birth, or, if spared, married at an unseemly age and kept in seclusion and ignorance; if widowed, not allowed to remarry, but forced to bear an unloved and unlovely existence, and, in short, deprived of the natural rights of a human being?

The causes of this change seem to be, first, the increased assumptions and rapacity of the priesthood; and, second, the influence of the Mahomedans. The priests saw they could not keep the men under their sway as education became more general, so they determined to keep the women in sub-

jection; and in order to insure this the women must be kept in ignorance. They increased the expenses incident to family ceremonies, especially to weddings; and as these fell with greater weight upon the family of the bride, infanticide came to be largely practiced. They ordained that girls should be married early, in order to insure their entire submission to the will of their parents and husband. But a husband whose wife was made to marry him whether she wished to or not, could not be sure of her affection; hence she must remain secluded, so that she could not have opportunity to form an attachment elsewhere, and must find all her happiness in serving her husband, giving up her will wholly to his, living solely for him, and even dying for him.

Sati was held up before her as the climax of wifely devotion, by which she would not only obtain great blessings herself, but would also bring them to the soul of her husband. The word is simply the adjective *sat*, true, with the feminine termination *i*, used as a noun; so a *sati* means a perfectly true, constant woman. The term *zanana* is from the Persian word *zan*, woman, from which we have *zanan*, women, and *zanana*, the abode of women. The name, therefore, and the institution in its present form are of foreign origin.

The influence of the Mahomedans after they became the rulers of India undoubtedly had much to do with the seclusion of Hindu women. They brought the institution of the *zanana* into India, and the three higher castes of Hindus followed their example. They did this more readily perhaps when they found that Mahomedan officials were not slow to seize any woman they fancied, to add to their harems.

India is a large country, and from various causes there are marked differences in the customs of the people of the several divisions. Among the Mahratas of the South and West, the strict seclusion of women has never prevailed. They are farther from the former center of Mahomedan power. The influence of the Parsees, who dwell in that section, is in favor of the freedom of women; while the Mahratas themselves, not being of the purest Brahminical stock, are more lax in their ideas than are the Brahmins

generally. But in the Northwest Provinces, Brahminism pure and simple had its home, and here were the two capitals of Mahomedan and Mogul power, Delhi and Agra; hence Brahminism and Mahomedanism here had fullest sway and strongest influence, which tended to keep women in seclusion, ignorance, and utter subjection.

It is noteworthy that there is no word in the Hindustani language that signifies home. There are the house, the household, the dwelling; but no home! The son is always expected to bring his bride to his father's house. If there are several sons in a family, the household becomes a large one by the time they are all married. Every house, when practicable, is built around an open space, or court-yard, the entrance to which is secured by a strong gate. A room is set apart for the special use of each family composing the household, although, as a rule, all the men eat together, and afterward the women do the same, but they store their own property in their private rooms.

The house, if that of a poor man, is built of mud or sun-dried bricks; if that of a rich man, it is built of kiln-dried bricks, in a substantial manner. There is usually one room, at least, set apart for the men, where they may receive visits from their friends without the privacy of the domestic circle being invaded. There is a well, or small tank, in the court-yard, and perhaps a few flowers for idol-worship. If there are cows, horses, or goats belonging to the family, they are stabled in this inclosure. All the work of the family is performed in it, except perhaps the washing and sewing, which are done outside by persons of those castes. The women of the family never go outside except when properly accompanied, guarded, and veiled.

The rooms seem quite bare to Europeans.



TAUGHT TO READ BY HER CHILD.

men, where in these days is often gathered a motley collection of cast-off English furniture, pictures, etc. In the main parts of the house there are only low bedsteads without mattresses, covered merely with tape or cord and a cotton mat, on which the women lounge when not busy;



HINDU GIRLS.

and large chests in which the clothing and jewelry of the family are kept.

The household duties are almost wholly limited to cooking. Ladies of high caste and wealth do not disdain this work. To prepare nicely seasoned and well-cooked dishes for the household, especially for the lords of the manor, is their highest ambition. They believe this to be the straight road to paradise, *i.e.*, by pleasing their husbands; and Hindu women have learned that good dinners are a certain means to that end. There are usually servants to do all the preparatory and clearing-up work, but the critical operation of preparing the food for eating is often, indeed usually, performed by the delicate hands of the ladies of the household. The meals are but two in number; breakfast about midday, and dinner in the evening.

Very little time is required to keep the bare rooms in order, the children wear but few garments and need but little care, so the women have a great deal of leisure; and we all know who finds occupation for idle hands. Given six or eight women, most of them with children, all obliged to live under one roof, and idleness, and the result *must* be disastrous. Gossip and wrangling abound, children's quarrels and consequent quarrels of the mothers, loud talking, abuse, and sometimes blows.

Many a woman, wrought up to a perfect frenzy of anger, attempts to kill herself by beating her head against a wall or jumping into a well. Often these

quarrels lead to bitter feuds and sometimes to crime. A bad-tempered wife is quietly poisoned and hurried away to the burning *ghât* before any inquiry can be made. No doubt the husbands occasionally come home to find scowling faces and an ill-cooked dinner. Then the fear that they will never see paradise brings the irate females to their senses, and gentle Peace resumes her sway in the disturbed household.

In these days the influence of Christian civilization reaches even the *zananas* to some extent, and the dormant minds of the women are being strangely stirred. Sometimes it happens that a bright little boy, the pet and darling of the family, insists upon teaching his mother to read; and it is a most pathetic and interesting sight to see the little fellow standing by his mother as she sits upon the floor poring over her book as he eagerly explains the lesson.

Many educated native gentlemen teach their wives to read, and often when it is quite a task in addition to their daily

WOMEN IN A ZANANA.



work. Sometimes they engage a female teacher to visit their families regularly and teach the women. Strange to say, the greatest hindrance to the education of women in *zananas* is usually the aged mother-in-law! She cannot read, therefore they need not. "What good will it do them?" "How silly to ape the fashions of the English!" Occasionally, however, even the old mother is won over, and begins learning the alphabet herself with the aid of her spectacles; so it has come to pass that books, newspapers, and pictures are beginning to drive away the dullness, idleness, and wrangling of the *zanana*, and to prepare the women of India for the wider sphere that awaits them.

Hindu women are very fond of dress and jewelry. Since they do not go into society, it seems strange that they should care to adorn themselves; but they seem to take great delight in making themselves attractive to their own family circles.

The dress of a Hindu lady consists of three pieces; skirt, sacque, and the *chadar*, or long-shawl, which is worn over the head and around the shoulders, partially concealing the upper part of the body.

The *chadar* may be of muslin, lace, or silk gauze, and is often beautifully embroidered, and edged with tinsel or gold lace. In the cold season, a warmer *chadar*, of chintz or merino lined with some soft pretty material, is worn. While this garment is very effective in concealing the person, and is graceful and becoming, it is very inconvenient, as it is always slipping off and making the hair rough. To avoid this the wearer pastes her hair down with cocoa-nut oil, which on the whole does not much improve matters.



A NATIVE CHRISTIAN GIRL.

The sacque fits closely but not too tightly, and there are no supports of whalebone or steel to keep it in place. It is made very simply, but always with a little bias border of a contrasting color, and sometimes a little embroidery or gold lace. In the hot season the sleeves are short, but they are

worn long in winter. For all classes, male or female, the sleeve is always made perfectly straight across the width of the goods, with a gusset under the arm; so when the material is striped, the stripes go around the arm.

The skirt is very full and is not gored. It is drawn around



A COOLIE WOMAN.

the waist by a netted cord with tassels at the ends. It reaches to the floor, is without frills, but is often ornamented very beautifully with embroidery half a yard or more in depth.

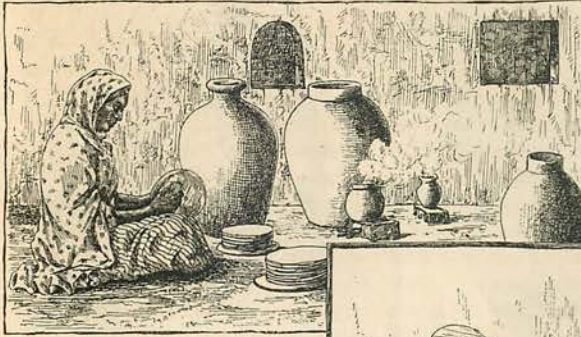
The women wear no shoes in the house. The feet are kept very nice, and the toes are adorned with rings. Some of these are very large, with little bells on the top that tinkle with every movement of the foot. The soles of the feet, like the palms of the hands, are stained red by using the juice of the henna or *mhendi* plant. Gaudy shoes, covered with gold and silver tinsel and having turned-back toes, are slipped on the feet when the lady goes out of the house. Heavy rings are worn on the ankles, from which sometimes little bells depend.

The arms and fingers are adorned with bracelets, bangles, and rings of gold and silver, or base metal and lacquer, according to the circumstances of the family. Whatever gems may be set in these ornaments, topaz, garnet, ruby, or pearl, the women like to have a turquoise or two, "for luck." A peculiar ring is worn on the thumb of the left hand. It has a little round mirror on the top, neatly set, which is supposed to be very useful and convenient, as without much effort the wearers can scrutinize their faces at will. Curious necklaces are worn, made of precious metals or stones, or both combined. Sometimes onyx, garnets, carbuncles, etc., are perforated and strung like beads, with many pendants.

The ears are heavily laden with rings of various sorts and sizes; a *bandeau* crosses the forehead, with a pendant in the center, or, if without a pendant, a round shining ornament is glued to the center of the forehead; then, as if all this gorgeous array were not sufficient, a ring is worn in the nose, either in the cartilage under the nose or in one side. The nose-ring is supposed to be worn by married women only, but others sometimes wear it. It is made quite small for little girls, but six or eight inches in circumference for adults. It is very light, usually, merely a gold wire with three precious stones on the lower side. Instead of the nose-ring, a beautiful little ornament is sometimes worn in the side of

the nose, somewhat resembling a shirt stud, the perforation through the nose answering to a button-hole.

Wheat is the chief food in Northern India, although rice and coarser grains are also largely used. Very early in the morning "the sound of the grinding is heard" in the houses of the natives. Some woman, a servant, a widow, or the mother of the family, is grinding wheat for the day's consumption. Sometimes two women work the mill, which is a rude but serviceable contrivance, within the means of most families. The coarsely ground flour is kneaded with water



HINDU KITCHEN.

into a mass of stiff dough, covered with a piece of muslin, and set away.

Meanwhile the men, having repeated the prayer to the sun at the exact moment of its rising, go to their daily avocations. The children, if they wish, receive a little food that was left over from the dinner of the previous evening, and go to school or to play in the court-yard. The women make the rooms tidy, bathe and dress, and await the return of the men. About noon they come, bathe by the well in the court-yard, and perform worship by placing a little food or a flower before the family idol, burning a little incense, and muttering a few prayers, after which they repair to the place set apart and consecrated to the sacred act of eating. They sit on the floor with their knees near the chest, wearing only a single garment wrapped about them, which they wash themselves so that it shall not be contaminated by the touch of a man of low caste. Their other garments must not be worn when they eat, because they have been defiled in this way.

A metal plate is given to each man, a *lota*, or metal cup, filled with water, is placed by his side, and the women bring the food and serve it out to their lords and masters. In the hot season a woman twirls one of the huge fans, or *punkahs*, in a very deft manner, creating a little breeze in the close, hot room. When the men have finished and gone out to take their usual whiffs at the hookah, the women bring in the rest of the food and eat their breakfast by themselves.

They cook without the aid of a stove or range, and generally without even a chimney. Two or three sets of *chulhas*, which are merely little standards built of brick or mud, are in one corner of a little kitchen. The little kettles rest upon them. Fires of small sticks are kindled in these *chulhas* whenever wanted, the food is cooked quickly, and the fire immediately extinguished. Flat cakes, flattened out in the

hands, are made of the wheaten dough and baked on an iron plate over the fire, first on one side, then on the other. It is reckoned a nice accomplishment to do this "just right," *i. e.*, to have the cakes perfectly baked but not burnt.

With these cakes, or *chapatis*, they serve stewed vegetables or a pulse, called *dal*, highly seasoned and enriched with *ghi*, or boiled butter, or oil. Their only beverage is cold water. They use no china, glass, spoons, knives, forks, or chopsticks. They convey food to the mouth with the right hand alone, using pieces of the flat cakes as spoons to scoop up the stewed pulse. At the evening meal they have a little more variety; rice in some form, perhaps, with a curry of fish or vegetables, and a dessert of fruit or sweetmeats. They are extremely fond of sweetmeats, and have them in great variety. They are made of rice, sugar, flour, butter, cocoa-nut and other fruit. Some kinds are very good; but most of them are too heavy and oily to be digestible.

Some women smoke the hookah, and all of them chew *pan* a large portion of the time. This is composed of betelnut, a little shell-lime, cardamom seeds, etc., wrapped in a pungent leaf. After chewing this awhile, a blood-red juice escapes, which colors the teeth and mouth in a very unpleasant manner.

Of course there is no mixed society among the Hindus; but women of the same caste, though of different families, sometimes meet and visit together, and these are occasions of great interest. They examine each other's jewels and fine clothing, gossip, relate stories, sing together, and perhaps do a little match-making among their children. The shoes are always left at the door. If a visit of ceremony is paid to a superior, a *nazar*, or present, is sent half an hour or so in advance; if by a superior, a *nazar* is presented to the visitor soon after the salutations are made. It may be merely one rupee or a plate of nuts and raisins; but among wealthy families it is usually a gold *mohur*, worth about \$6. This is

not taken, however, but is merely touched with the forefinger with a gesture of acceptance, when it is quietly withdrawn by the servant presenting it; or if taken and retained, a present of jewels or rich cloths is sent in return.

The salutations are not as elaborate as is usual in the Orient. A graceful inclination of the head with a touch of the fingers of the right hand to the forehead constitutes the *salam*, which is also spoken, and means "peace." Kindly inquiries after each other's temper are made, which are understood to refer to the health. Garlands of flowers or necklaces of beads are sometimes thrown over the necks of visitors, and attar of roses is sprinkled upon them.

Jugglers, snake-charmers, men with dancing bears, puppet-shows, etc., are sometimes admitted to the court-yard, while the women, well wrapped in their *chadors*, look on the show from the verandas, and shriek with fear or laughter as the case may be. The jugglers' performances are sometimes very wonderful. They will lift heavy weights with their eyelids, bring a score of large clasp-knives out of their mouths, take a watch out of one person's pocket and put it in another's, then, while the people are wondering how it was done, replace it in the pocket of the owner. They will make a small mango-tree spring out of the ground and a mango appear on one of the branches, although it may not be the season for its fruit to appear.



HINDU MEN, EATING.

The puppet-shows take place in the evening. The apparatus is arranged behind a screen, and a man of ventriloquistic powers is there also. A favorite performance is a representation of the pomp and glory of a native ruler of the past. Puppets dressed to represent all classes of people come in front of the screen and seem to be all talking at once about the expected pageant. Then the great Mogul emperor Akbar, or some other departed potentate, comes out in regal state and slowly passes through the crowd, amidst shouts of "Let the king live forever!" "May the rule of the brave king remain always!" After him come musicians and dancing girls. Different castes are represented, and amusing episodes of daily life. A dignified Mahomedan has his lofty turban of spotless muslin accidentally knocked off, or a washerman's bundle of clothes is stolen. They are fond of "taking off" the English in these shows; for instance, an *ayah*, or lady's maid, comes out and makes up a bed on the floor; soon a puppet, dressed to represent an English lady, comes out, and, after scolding the *ayah* in very bad Hindustani, lies down upon the bed. The *ayah* smooths her dress, and then gently presses her head to soothe her to slumber. Soon she is sound asleep, a fact that is apparent by loud, regular breathing. The *ayah* stealthily slips the pillow from under the lady's head, and putting it under her own goes to sleep on the floor near her mistress. This little scene invariably "brings down the house."

Then again the puppets will imitate English officials, put on lordly airs, call native servants contemptuous names, use ungrammatical Hindustani, such as plural nominatives with verbs in the singular, and *vice versa*. This is done with astonishing cleverness, the speaker changing his voice with each character very readily. If English officials could witness these exhibitions *sub rosa*, and thus see themselves as the natives see them, they might indeed be freed "from many a folly." Europeans think the people of India have very little humor; but these exhibitions prove the contrary.

Besides these diversions there are religious festivals in which the women participate. There are sixteen of these

during the year, besides many others of small importance. The most prominent are the *Holi*, the *Devali*, and the *Puran-Mäsi*.

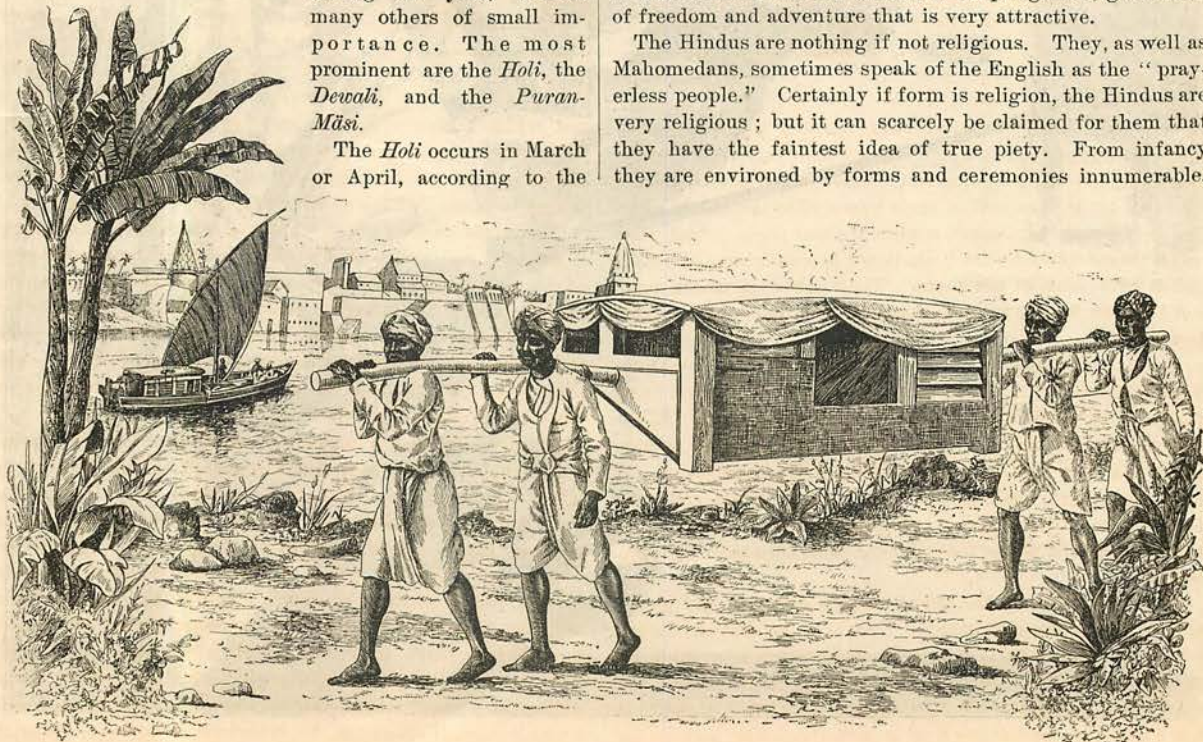
The *Holi* occurs in March or April, according to the

moon. It is somewhat like a "harvest home," as it takes place immediately after the wheat harvest. The men make bonfires at midnight, and walk around them seven times with ears of barley in their hands, which they cast into the fire. Members of families who are employed at a distance from home obtain leave, if possible, to enjoy this season with their friends. There is a special day for feasting, during which red and yellow dyes are thrown sportively by the people over each other, until their white garments are all bespattered. The women enjoy this festival extremely, as it brings home the absent ones, and is a period of hilarity and good-fellowship.

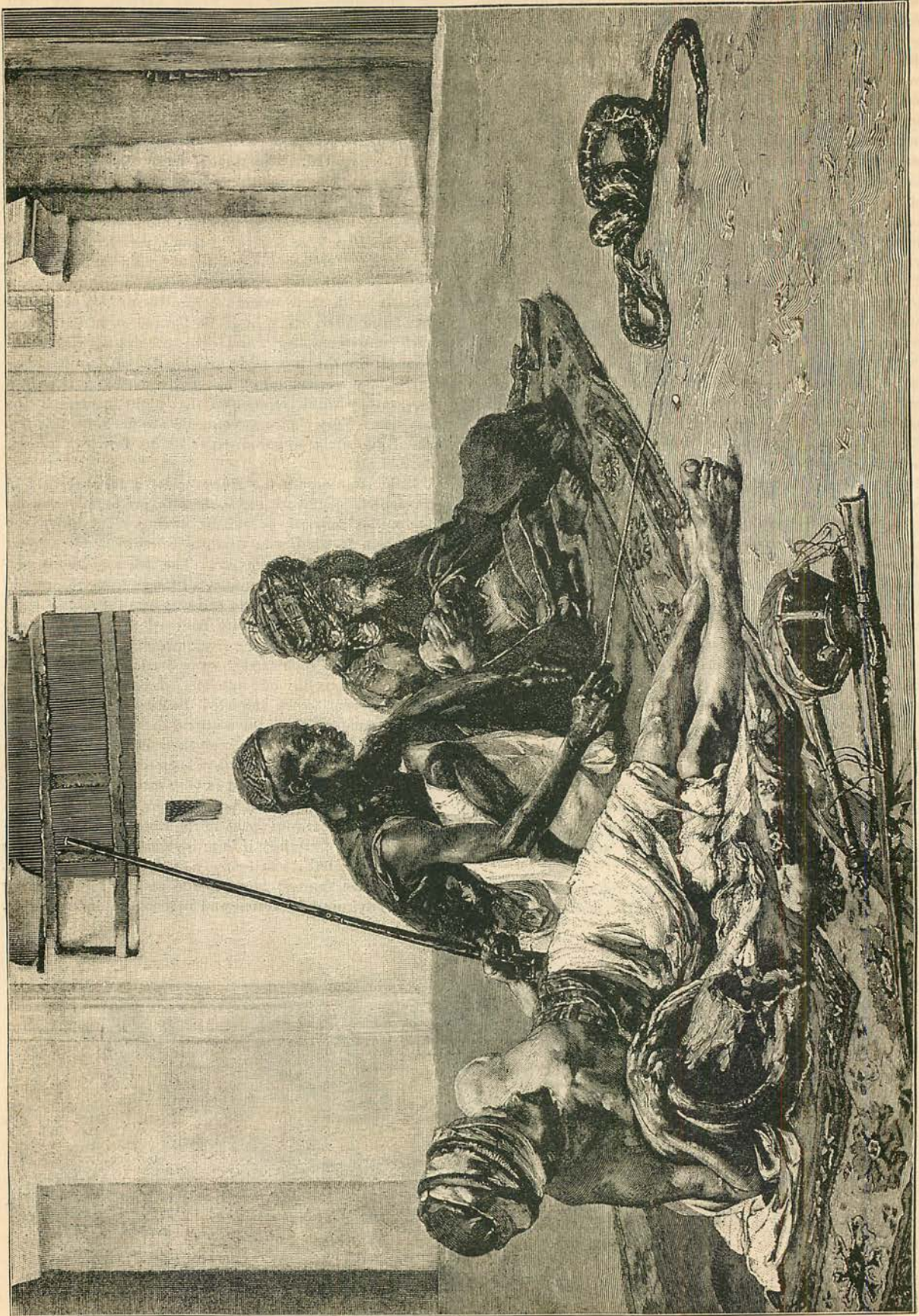
In October and November the two other festivals occur. During the *Devali*, or festival of lamps, merchants examine their accounts, collect their dues,—if they can,—take an inventory of their stock, and worship Lakshmi, the goddess of success, with their ledgers before them. On the great night of the feast, every house is lighted as brilliantly as possible, and the villages and cities present a striking appearance. On the last night of the *Devali*, professional thieves make a great effort to steal something, if only a trifle, as they think success on that night insures it the whole year. Very choice sweetmeats are made for this festival, of delicately prepared sugar in the forms of beasts, birds, and men.

A little later occurs the *Puran-Mäsi*, a festival held in great respect. Immense *melas*, or fairs, are held at various points on the banks of the Ganges, during which Shiva, the third person in the Hindu triad, is worshiped, and a great ceremonial bathing takes place. The ashes of those who have died during the year at a distance from the sacred river, are brought at this time and cast into the stream. On a certain night little lamps are fastened to sticks that are put down into the mud of the river, which is shallow at that season. They are soon carried away by the force of the current, and go dancing off into the dark distance. This ceremony seems to be intended to benefit the souls of departed friends. The women attend these *melas* with their families, and, although they keep themselves well wrapped in their *chadars* and are careful to keep together, get a taste of freedom and adventure that is very attractive.

The Hindus are nothing if not religious. They, as well as Mahomedans, sometimes speak of the English as the "prayerless people." Certainly if form is religion, the Hindus are very religious; but it can scarcely be claimed for them that they have the faintest idea of true piety. From infancy they are environed by forms and ceremonies innumerable.



A PALANQUIN.



HINDU JUGGLERS AND SNAKE-CHARMERS.

Upon the birth of a child there are many religious observances, feasting, and rejoicings, especially when it is a boy. When it is a girl the rejoicing is modified.

A Hindu woman has no skillful assistance in her hour of need. An ignorant, superstitious nurse attends her, whose services are more likely to do harm than good, and it is a marvel that she survives the ordeal. Many lives are doubtless needlessly sacrificed, but owing to good health and free-



A WIFE COVERING HER FACE AT THE APPROACH OF HER HUSBAND.

dom from the restraints of civilized fashions, most of them do well and soon recover their usual strength. Many trifling customs are observed, and worship offered to various divinities during the first days of the child's life. On the sixth day a certain god is supposed to write the infant's fate upon its forehead. Whatever happens to the child after this is "kismet," or the decree of fate. Hence the oft-repeated proverb "*Jo hoga, so hoga,*" "What will be, will be."

When a boy is about eight years old a very important ceremony takes place, viz., the investiture with the Brahminical thread, called the *janeo*. It is put over the boy's right shoulder and falls down to the waist on the left side. The boy was only a child before, but now he is a man, and must keep the Brahminical law in its entirety. He is born again and is a sacred being. What an honor to be the mother of such a son! Even educated Hindus, who realize the folly of these pretensions, involve themselves in debt in order to meet the expense of the feasts and presents to relatives and Brahmins, that are customary at this time. "It is the custom," they say, and they dare not ignore it.

A girl should be betrothed by the time she is seven years of age, and *must* be when she is ten. Sometimes it takes place much earlier. When the time comes that it must be attended to, the parents consult their friends and the family priest until a boy is selected who is in every respect a suitable match. Some one is appointed to quietly ascertain if the proposal would be pleasing to the boy's family. If that prove to be the case, the two priests of the respective families consult in regard to the children's horoscopes. If the stars of the boy are more powerful than those of the girl, their union is suitable; but if not, it must be given up. If

this important question be settled in the affirmative, the friends and priest of the bride call upon the bridegroom elect, perform a few religious ceremonies, and put a mark on his forehead, called *teekah*. The boy's father then gives sweetmeats to all present, which they eat together to signify that henceforth they are one family. A feast takes place in the evening, and the visitors depart laden with presents, to report what they have done, and give their impressions in regard to the bridegroom and his family.

Soon after this visit the two priests meet again and fix the days on which the remaining ceremonies shall take place. A *lagan*, or list of these days, is made out, and a copy given to each family. Invitations are then issued to the relations and friends of the families. Many gatherings and feasting take place, after which a grand procession is formed at the bridegroom's house, consisting of all the men and boys connected with the family. Musicians are engaged to attend them. Some go in curious little covered carts drawn by large white oxen with the hump between the shoulders

peculiar to the sacred cattle of India, and large beautiful horns tipped with silver, and bells around their necks. Others are on gayly caparisoned horses or gorgeously draped elephants, or in palanquins or *palkees*. All the color, tinsel, noise and show that the lad's family can muster for the occasion are present in this procession.

The little fellow himself, the hero of the hour, is richly dressed



THE MARRIAGE KNOT.



A HINDU MOTHER SACRIFICING HER CHILD.

and placed either on horseback or in a palanquin draped with red, and a large red umbrella is carried over him. The party proceeds to the home of the bride, with music sounding and banners flying. Upon its arrival, the bridegroom and his near relations are received in a temporary pavilion erected in the court-yard, which is itself filled with the other guests. The pavilion or tent must have five

poles, the most important one being in the center. The father of the bride receives the party. He gives a special welcome to his son-in-law elect, placing him on a comfortable cushion, and washing his feet. Incense is burned, and numerous trivial ceremonies take place.

One, however, is of peculiar interest, as it illustrates the phrase "marriage knot," which we so often hear. The little bride, her mother, and a few of the older female relations, beautifully dressed, enter the pavilion, and the priest places the bride near the bridegroom. The two priests now take two yellow *chadars* and wrap them around the shoulders of the little pair. Then they take a corner of each *chadar* and tie them together in a strong knot. The children, hand in hand, with their *chadars* tied, walk around the central pole seven times, after which the priests burn incense and pronounce the marriage vows *for the children*.

The bride's priest begins in this wise: "If you live happily, keep me happy too; should you ever be in trouble I will share it; you must support me, and not desert me when I am ill. You must always keep me with you, and pardon all my faults; you must allow me to join in your worship, pilgrimages, and fasts. You must be faithful to me as long as I live. You must consult me in all that you do, and always tell me the truth. Vishnu, fire, and the Brahmins are witnesses between you and me."

The boy's priest replies: "I will all my life do just as the bride requires of me; but she must also make me some promises. She must go with me through suffering and trouble, and must always be obedient to me. She must never go to her father's house unless invited by him, and when she sees a richer or handsomer man than I am, she must not despise me."

To this the priest of the bride answers: "I will all my life do just what you require of me; Vishnu, fire, the Brahmins, and all present are witnesses between us."

The bridegroom then takes a little water in his hand and sprinkles it on the bride's head. A handful of coins is thrown over their heads, and the bride's mother also throws a handful or two of rice over them. The wedded pair bow their heads in worship while incense is burned, and the marriage is now completed by a mark being affixed to their foreheads; after which the knot is untied by the priests, who then receive their fees.

After much feasting and rejoicing, and the payment of a portion of the bride's dowry to her father-in-law, the procession returns home. The little bride, with her *ayah*, is taken with them, that she may see the women of the family with whom she is to spend her life. She soon returns home, where she remains until she is twelve years of age, when another and shorter ceremony takes place and she goes to her father-in-law's house to reside. Should the little girl die before the concluding ceremonies take place, another bride is secured for the bereaved lad; but should *he* die in the interim, the girl is prohibited from marrying again. She is also in dire disgrace, because it is supposed that she has offended the gods by her sins in a former existence, on account of which her husband has died. The jewels and pretty clothes of which she is so fond are taken from her, and she is obliged to wear coarse white garments with only one or two pieces of jewelry. One day in every month she must wholly abstain from food, and *always* the least palatable morsels and the most unpleasant duties fall to her share. No wonder her whole nature revolts against this cruelly unjust custom, and that she sometimes escapes from it by plunging into a life of infamy! When a woman who has children becomes a widow, her position is more tolerable, especially when she is mother of a son; but even then her lot is far from being enviable.

After the bride is received into her husband's family she

is expected to be very shy and modest, painfully and absurdly so it seems to us, as she must not let her voice rise above a whisper, and must keep her face covered even when women only are present, if any of them are strangers to her. If by chance her husband should pass through the room where she is sitting with other women of the family, she must instantly pull her *chadar* over her face. This farce is kept up until she becomes mother of a son. Should this never come to pass, I suppose she must continue this silly custom all the term of her natural life. The husband and wife must not call each other by name; "he" and "she" must suffice if they dare to speak of each other, and "you" or "thou" when speaking to each other. When a child is born to them this difficulty vanishes. We will suppose it a boy named Hari. Whether speaking of or to each other they would say "mother of Hari," or "father of Hari," as the case might be.

Polygamy is not usual except among the nobility. Where the son brings his wife to his father's house, it is evident that it would not be convenient for him to bring three or four, especially in a family of several sons. A second wife is usually taken when the first has no children. Sometimes this is cordially acceded to by the disappointed wife; but at other times she is very much averse to it, and domestic warfare enters the house with the new-comer. She, poor thing, may be just as unwilling to come there as the other is to have her; but both are, to all intents and purposes, slaves, and cannot break their chains. Many cases of suicide and murder occur from this cause.

Another reason why a second wife is taken, is that the poor wife, deprived of a healthy, careless girlhood, becomes a mother at so early an age that in bearing the burden of an increasing family while so immature herself, she loses her health and consequently her beauty. The husband wishes a more attractive companion, and if he can support another wife procures one. Still more objectionable is the custom of taking a woman of lower caste as a companion. This is often done to avoid the expense incident to another formal marriage. The "stranger," as she is called, is installed in a room of the house and kept in comfort as long as the relation continues, which may be as long as she lives. True, she must not eat with the other women, nor enter the kitchen or dining-room, because being of lower caste she would pollute those sacred precincts; but these delicate matters are so well understood that they are easily managed. But what an unseemly position they are all in, and what a slender chance there is for happiness in such a family!

Early in the present century infanticide was suppressed by the Anglo-Indian government, and *sati* was also abolished by a law passed in 1829. Since that time anyone accused of committing the one or abetting the other has been prosecuted as a murderer. *Sati* was more easily put down than infanticide. The interior of the *zanana* is so private that crimes are sometimes committed there that never come to light. Indeed, child-murder is undoubtedly perpetrated often at the present day.

Two other of the bonds fastened upon Hindu women by a corrupt priesthood are loosening and will soon fall off; viz., infant-marriage and perpetual widowhood. As Hindu women advance in education and general intelligence, they naturally begin to understand their own rights and privileges, and are not so easily persuaded or coerced as heretofore. This is of course the inevitable result of education, which priests and sages foresaw, and which they desired to avert by keeping them in the strictest ignorance.

It now happens sometimes that a bright young girl learning to read and think is suddenly confronted by the demand of a man she has perhaps never seen (if the betrothal was by proxy), to fulfill the contract then made by removing to his

house as his wife. She has no desire to accede to this demand. She shrinks from it, and instinctively feels it is not right that she should be forced into a position which fixes her condition for life. She might have felt this even if her mind had not received any cultivation, but she would not have dared to resist; now, however, she dares to plead her own rights, and sometimes insists upon their being granted.

In 1887 a case occurred that aroused deep interest and sympathy, and will probably do much toward bringing about a reform. A young lady named Rukhmabaid, of a class that do not marry as early as most Hindus, when twenty-one years of age was asked by a boorish, diseased man, to whom her friends had betrothed her when she was ten years old, to fulfill the vows then made for her, by living with him as his wife. She was an intelligent, educated young lady, and her whole nature revolted from the hideous proposal. She sent a positive refusal, saying she would never consent to become his wife; that she wholly abjured the promise made for her without her sanction. The man brought her before a court of justice. The decision was in her favor; but when the case was appealed, the former decision was reversed and the young lady was ordered by an English official to live with her husband or go to jail for six months! She quickly chose the latter alternative, and by a six months' captivity gained her freedom.

Much attention has been given to the legal questions involved in this case, and a judge of eminence has decided that the government is not justified in coercing a woman to enter into a relation in which she would be wretched; and he declares that there is nothing in the Hindu or Mahomedan codes of law which either warrants or justifies the imprisonment of the wife as a means of compelling her to live with her husband. He indignantly adds that the mission of (English) legislation in India is not to render the position of women still more intolerable.

Hindustani women are passionately attached to their children, especially to the *sons*, who are the crown and glory of their lives. Nor are they without affection for their little daughters who must be transplanted so early to other households. They try to take good care of them all. If prayers and offerings to the gods and to Brahmins could keep the little ones in health, then would Hindu children never know a pain; but in their ignorance of the simplest rules of health, the mothers often cause sickness to come to the beings they love more than life. Diseases of the eyes are very prevalent in India, and the children suffer even more than adults. A curious custom prevails of drawing a black line at the base of the lower eyelashes with a preparation called *surma*. They think this protects the eyes from inflammation, and also that it adds to their beauty.

In sickness they formerly depended upon their priests, who have a little knowledge of roots and herbs. Now there are well-educated native doctors in all the cities, who are employed by government to take charge of hospitals, under the superintendence of an English physician. But the poor people in the villages suffer greatly from the lack of medical treatment. When a child is sick, the anxious mother gets the best advice and medicine she can, and redoubles her prayers to the gods. If the child dies she is overwhelmed with sorrow and despair, fearing that some sin of her own has caused the death of the child, or that *its* sin has hurried it into another existence where, as a savage beast or venomous reptile, it must expiate its guilt. The vague doctrine of the transmigration of souls does not afford much comfort to the Hindu. No hope of recognition or reunion is held out; and yet, with the utmost inconsistency, the people often speak of paradise and of meeting dear ones there.

High-caste Hindus are far from being the only people in

Hindustan. About one-fifth of the population are Mahomedans, whose women of the higher classes live in *zananas*, and of the lower, go out freely. Then there are great numbers of Sudras, low-caste people, who follow the same customs and same faith, so far as they are allowed, as the aristocratic "twice-born" Hindus whose home life we have been describing. The women are not kept in seclusion, but are seen constantly in the streets of the cities and villages, in the fields working with their husbands and children, and in European families, where they are employed as servants.

But but for all classes of women in India a brighter day is already dawning. Educated India begins to feel a longing for a national union,—a country and a home. In order to obtain a fulfillment of this noble desire, the absurdities of caste, polygamy, and female seclusion, with the attendant train of evils, will have to be abandoned forever.

MRS. E. J. HUMPHREY.

Helene Darcy.

I.

HALF lying down on the sand, with his back against a row-boat, he was resting. His lithe, well-made figure, his muscular arms, showed beneath his closely fitting blue flannels, and his trousers rolled above the knees left naked his strong legs and shapely feet. Hercules in repose. His hair was closely cut; his soft beard shaded a face browned by the wind, gilded by the sun, lit up by two clear eyes which were evidently accustomed to looking both men and things straight in the face.

At this hour the beach was deserted; also the bathing establishment hard by, where the sunrise was just touching the little cabins. People do not rise early at Dinard, even in the first days of July. The flotilla of fishermen had just returned, and without troubling himself to help his companions to unload their boat, tired, perhaps, after a hard night's toil, this young man had strolled along the beach, lit his pipe, and, lazily stretched out, was dreaming.

A light sound made him raise his head. A little way off, on one of the wooden stairways which at Dinard unite the baths to the cottages on the cliffs, a young lady was descending with her maid. The former, alert and animated, seemed to glide along the badly joined planks, scarcely touching them with her little feet, while the latter followed more sedately, weighed down as she was with a heavy package containing bathing-dress, wrapper, and towels.

"Bather! Oh! bather!"

He turned and looked around to see who was addressed in this gentle yet haughty tone. He was alone.

"He does not seem to hear. Bather!"

"Mademoiselle?"

"Push the boat to the water while I get ready. I wish to bathe out at sea." And, without waiting for any reply, she disappeared, followed by her maid, who had opened the door of the private cabin.

"Well, now! I am transformed into a bathing-master! The fact is," he thought, as he glanced at his costume, "she might well mistake me for one of those men. I must set her right. Bah! after all, what does it matter? To push a boat to the water's edge? I can do that. I have often done it for my own pleasure; I may surely do it for the pleasure of this child. To row her out to sea and keep her from drowning herself? I row like one of the Oxford twelve, and swim like a Newfoundland. I am going to be useful for once, and when I bring her back she will perhaps offer me a silver coin. It will be the first I ever earned."

With a vigorous arm he raised the boat, with a strong