

GENESIS OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION: THE EVIDENCE OF GRHYA SUTRAS

The genesis of civilization has been an enigma for the historian and the social scientist. How does it happen that the homogeneous stream of a tribal culture differentiates into the elite and folk traditions? The duality of cultural tradition in civilised societies is widely recognized and is designated by such paired terms as the classical and the lay, the aristocratic and the common, and the great and the little tradition of culture. Apart from architectonic formulations of the philosophers of history and the various metaphysical and mythological models that we have inherited, this question has to be approached from an empiric angle on the basis of cultural data about ancient civilizations available to us.

There can be no adequate comprehension of the existing sociocultural reality without a proper knowledge of the dynamics of its growth and the historical forces that shaped it. Such knowledge is all the more necessary for a country like India, which has maintained remarkable continuity in its cultural tradition through its thousands of years of existence.

The Indian civilization is an indigenous one in the sense that its elite stratum of culture has been formed by carrying forward (through refinement, sophistication and articulation) the indigenous elements of the lay culture. A better comprehension of

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the growth of the elite stratum of culture in ancient Indian civilization is sure to sharpen our understanding of the genesis of civilization as such. From this angle the study of the Grhya Sutras can be of immense value. These aphorisms composed before the sixth century B.C. seem to contain elements pertaining to the stage of the transformation of lay rituals and beliefs into the elite ones. Ordinarily the Grhya Sutras together with the Dharma Sutras are unquestionably accepted as parts of the sacred elite (Sastric) tradition of Indian culture. Their authority in matters dealt with by them would scarcely be challenged by any orthodox learned Hindu who is steeped in tradition. But a close look at the Grhya Sutras would reveal that in their content as well as their tenor, they are closer to folklore rather than to classical works.

This paper is an attempt to bring out the features of the content and style of the Grhya Sutras which show how akin they are to the oral tradition of the folk. A look at these features should vividly reveal the folk roots of highly articulated elite traditions.

The Grhya Sutras as their name indicates contain aphorisms on household rituals. They belong broadly to the period when the Vedic Aryan tribes had decisively vanquished the Dasas, the indigenous people, and were fanning out to colonize the vast lands that came under their sway. The militant spirit of the conquerors which characterizes the Rgveda seems to have diminished by that time and it was assuming ritualistic form. The result of changing social conditions is amply reflected in these aphorisms. When these works were in the process of composition the tribulent tribal hordes were being transformed into simple villagers.

The Grhya Sutras seem to provide the missing link in the evolution of the Indian civilization from the Vedic Aryan state to the stage of classical Hinduism found in works like the Smrtis. The early Vedic civilization was marked by the vigorous militancy of the Aryans who enjoyed taking intoxicants and eating meat of cows, bulls and horses. The life of these invading immigrants was understandably rugged and devoid of much embellishment. As a contrast the classical Hinduism, the tradition of which still survives in some form, is characterized by a surfeit of ritualism and intricate codes governing purity and pollution.

The Grhya Sutras help to reveal the processes which brought about this transformation. In these Sutras we find on one hand the glimpses of the simple life of the settler, and on the other certain ritualistic ideas which foreshadow the later sacramental complex of classical Hinduism.

A striking example of how the Grhya Sutra era constitutes the period of transition from the early Vedic norms to the classical Hindu values is provided by the changing attitude towards cow slaughter and beef eating. Today beef eating is considered a most reprehensible sin by the Hindus, and this has been so for many centuries. But in the early Vedic period beef eating was enjoyed by the Aryans and when a respected guest arrived, a cow was slaughtered in his honour. As a mark of respect the guest was given Madhuparka and requested to slaughter the cow himself. But in the Grhya Sutras, the householder does offer the cow with a butcher's knife to the guest, but implores him to let the animal live if he wishes to. It is provided, nevertheless, that the feast for the guest should not be without meat. This is only one example. Similar transitional positions are found on matters related to gods, rituals and social institutions in these Sutras.

The interaction between the culture of Aryan settlers and the indigenous inhabitants whom they met and overpowered holds the key to the understanding of the origin of characteristically Indian institutions like caste, joint family based on subjugation of women, and the village community. While similar social institutions are not unknown in other civilizations, the peculiar circumstances of the clash between the Aryan and the indigenous cultures endowed the traditional Indian institutions with certain unique features which have engaged the attention of the social scientist. As the Grhya Sutras belong to the period when the relationship between the Aryans and the non-Aryans was in the process of acquiring institutionalized forms, they can tell us a good deal about the elements and forces which went into the making of these institutional patterns.

It would be wrong to assume that the origin of the two cultural traditions in Indian civilization, namely the classical and the folk, can be neatly traced to the Aryan and the non-Aryan sources respectively. Many of the gods and goddesses of classical Hinduism are clearly derived from the non-Aryan sources. The evidence of the Grhya Sutras is illuminating on this point also.

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The Grhya Sūtras inherited the Vedic gods with a few insignificant female goddesses dependent on their spouses. Some of the gods and demons which are considered harmful and ferocious, became popular Hindu deities in later literature. Among them are Rudra, the howler; the four Vināyakas, who make the person mentally distracted and with an adverse fate; Kumāra; Kuberā and a she-demon whose description is quite close to the famous goddess Kali. All these are considered in the Grhya Sūtras as bearers of different diseases. Rudra, who was later called Asutosa or one who is pleased easily, was considered till the Grhya Sūtra period the bearer of storm and plague in cattle. He was prayed to save the sacrificer from his wrath, and thus from cattle disaster. He was regarded so wrathful and ferocious that in the Sulagava ritual, the calf for him was sacrificed outside the village unwatched, and it was cremated at the same place. The Asvalayana Grhya Sūtra gives the reason. "They should not take to the village anything belonging to Sulagava; for this god (Rudra) will do harm to creatures."¹ The four Vinayakas which were later integrated into one Vinayaka or Ganesa, were also considered destructive—destroying even yajnas. Unlike Aryan gods, they were offered oil, fish and liquor.² Probably these are the gods of non-Aryan origin, and therefore they were considered destructive by the Aryans.

Though the non-Vedic gods and the modes of their worship were taken over by the dominant classical tradition, one can still find some grumbling remarks against them in later works also. In some of these works the Pasupatas, and the Pancratras are considered outside the Aryan cult. The Vrddha-Harita Smṛti recommends that the householder should not enter the places of the Saiva, Bauddha, Skanda and Sakta cults.³ Medhatithi⁴ on Manu says "Pancartrās, Nirgranthas, and Pasupatas are outside the pale of Vedic orthodoxy." The Kurma Purāna says that the various sastras opposed to the Vedas and Smṛtis that are popular among people such as Kapala, Bhairava, Yamāla, Vama and Arhata were for deluding the world and are based on ignorance.⁵

¹ Aśvalāyana Grhya Sūtra IV, 8, 32.

² Mānava Grhya Sūtra II, 14.

³ Vrddha Hārta XI. 143.

⁴ Medhātithi II. 6.

⁵ Kūrma Purāna I. 12. 161, 162.

The non-Aryan language Paisaci was considered not fit to be spoken by the elites. And yet, since many centuries from now the classical Hindu tradition has fully integrated and absorbed gods like Siva, Sakti (mother goddess in various forms), Vinayaka (Ganesa) etc. Indeed the Phallus, the worship of which the Vedic Aryans strongly detested, occupies the place of pride in the sanctum sanctorum at Kashi Visvanath (Banaras), the holiest centre of Hindu pilgrimage.

Any one familiar with a living folk tradition cannot fail to recognise the folk character of the Grhya Sutras. This is true both of the form and the content. Just like the folk songs, the Sutras have blank places (indicated as N.N. in the quotations from Sutras given below) to allow the introduction of the proper names of concerned persons. This is only one example. In true folk style, the Grhya Sutras depict the hopes and anxieties of the ordinary householder. They reveal their daily chores, family relationships and life of women. The householder in the Grhya Sutras is concerned primarily with the day to day problems of setting up and running a small household. The requirements of colonization of vast areas did not permit the huddling together of a large number of kinsfolk in large households. In fact the rituals prescribed in these aphorisms do not presume the presence of any other adult except the husband and the wife. Strikingly enough, it is the husband who is supposed to act as the midwife when his wife delivers; and he has also to act as the priest-cum-magician and the performer of the child-birth rituals apart from running a variety of errands. Many other elements found in these aphorisms seem to represent the stage when the folk tradition of the Aryans had not yet been transformed into the elite stratum of culture of a great civilization.

The elemental sentiments of pain and pleasure, love and conflict are brought out beautifully by the Grhya Sutras in the long prayers recited during the various rituals and rites. These prayers are sweet in their content and simple in style. An analysis of these prayers can give us a richer understanding of the world of two thousand years ago. The prayers of the householder are the songs of peace. By that time the indigenous inhabitants do not seem to have remained a serious threat. Some of them had taken shelter in the dense forests and hills, while others accepted the life of *sudra* in the social hierarchy. The struggle with them no

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longer dominated the scene. The Vedas, which preceded the Sutras are replete with feelings of hostility against the indigenes, and the Smrtis which came later show great concern for maintaining the racial purity, patriarchy, and cultural heritage of the Aryans. The Grhya Sutras perhaps mark the period when the Aryans were trying to come to terms with the indigenous people, but were not yet afraid of being swamped and absorbed by them.

In this period people started combining agriculture with cattle breeding and tending. The plough drawn by bullocks was used for tilling the fields. The yava or barley and the brihi, probably a wild variety of rice, were the chief crops. But the cattle still constituted the most important form of wealth. Big herds of cows, horses, goats and sheep were reared. These supplied milk and meat for food and skins for making dresses. The hides and skins were also used as mats. Bullocks and horses were used for pulling carts and chariots. Dog was personified by their pastoral forefathers as the divine bitch, Sarma, of the hero-god Indra. But by the time of the Grhya Sutras it was degraded to such an extent that the diseases of children were given the form of dog demons. This is most probably a non-Aryan influence.

The Sutras throw interesting light on the emerging patterns of basic social relationships between man and woman on the one hand, and between different classes on the other. These relationships were later institutionalized and sanctified as God given. But the Sutras give us an inkling into the era when they were taking shape.

The relationship between man and woman seems to have been deeply influenced by the fact that the Aryan settler had often to take a non-Aryan indigenous woman as his wife. This was unavoidable as there were not enough women of his stock to go round. But he considered her inferior and was suspicious of her. In the Sutras the wife is supposed to bring some evil elements with her, which can harm her husband, his forthcoming progeny, cattle, house and fame. He also doubts her integrity. Sensing these dangers, the husband performs prayers to divert these elements towards his wife's earlier love or spouse. This indicates that wives did not belong to the same stock as their husbands. In Rgveda itself we get such references. The word

'*vadhu*' was used for a bride as well as a slavegirl.⁶ We also get the statement of a general principle: when a Brahmana takes the hand of a girl though she be married, she becomes his wife.⁷ Though this mode of acquiring a wife may have ended by the time of Grhya Sutras, she is still suspected to be destructive for her husband's family and unfaithful towards him. However, he does not fight with his rival physically like his Vedic ancestor but satisfies himself by diverting her destructive attributes towards her lover. He lives with the same wife, not even thinking of deserting her as provided in the Smrtis. This indicates that the demand for absolute chastity from woman which hardened later was not so strong at that time. This may perhaps be related to the scarcity of women among the Aryans.

It is quite probable that the low position of woman in traditional Indian society owes a good deal to the fact that in the period of settlement the Aryans took wives from the indigenous people whom they considered low. Later on this relationship crystallized. The wife no more belonged to an alien stock and the husband was not suspicious of her on that score, but she herself had internalized the values of male superiority and of considering her husband as her lord. To inspire whole-hearted devotion in his bride he shows her the Dhruva or firm star (polar star:) "Dhruva art thou, I see thee Dhruva (firm). Dhruva (firm) be thou to me. O thriving one."⁸

The husband prays to the gods for whole-hearted devotion of his wife. He recites this verse during the marriage ceremony: "When thou wanderest far away with thy heart to various regions of the world like wind, may the gold-winged Vaikarna (the great eagle) grant that thy heart may dwell with me, N.N."⁹ The wife being an outsider in the husband's house may bring some evil elements with her. The husband sensing this danger, diverts it by his straightforward prayer. On the fourth day before establishing conjugal relationship, the husband makes offerings of cooked food in the fire for Agni or the fire-god, Vayu or the wind-god, Surya or the sun-god.

⁶ Rg Veda VIII. 19. 36, 37.

⁷ Atharva Veda V. 17. 8-9.

⁸ Sāṅkhāyana Grhya Sūtra, I 17, 3.

⁹ Pāraskara Grhya Sūtra, I 4, 15.

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Agni, Thou art expiation of gods.
What substance dwells in her that brings death to her husband;
Drive that away from her.
Yāyu, Thou art expiation of the gods.
What substance dwells in her that brings sonlessness;
Drive that away from her.
Sūrya, Thou art the expiation of the gods.
What substance dwells in her that brings destruction to the cattle,
Drive that away from her.¹⁰

Similarly he offers oblations to Candra, the moon, and Gandharva respectively to expiate the substances which dwell in her that bring destruction to the house and fame. Each time after he has sacrificed, he pours the remainder of the oblations into the water-pot, and out of that pot he sprinkles her head with the words: "The evil substance which dwells in thee that brings death to thy husband, death to thy children, death to cattle, destruction to the house, destruction to fame, that I change into one that brings death to thy paramour. Thus live with me to old age, N.N."

The householder of the Grhya Sutras, is full of ambition and optimism. He is a practical man; having potentiality of overcoming various individual problems through magical acts. While taking Madhuparka (curds with honey and clarified butter) he sits down with the verse: "I am the highest one among my people; as the Sun is among the thunder-bolts. Here I tread on whosoever infests me." And with the feet, he treads on the bundle of grass. Obviously, the old militant spirit of crushing one's enemies has by now taken the form of symbolic action.

While entering courts of justice, the judges first pray the court: "Court! Thou that belongest to the Angiras! Trouble art thou by name! Vehemence art thou by name! Thus be adoration to thee!" He then enters the court with the words: "(May) the court and the assembly, the two daughters of Prajapati (protect me). May one who does not know me, be below me. May (all) people be considerate in what they say."

¹⁰ Sāṅkhāyana Grhya Sūtra, I, 18, 3. Pāraskara Grhya Sūtra I, 11, 2-4.

He should murmur while entering: "Superior (to my adversaries) I have come hither, brilliant, not to be contradicted. The lord of this assembly is a man insuperable in his power."

When he thinks that any person is angry with him, he addresses him (silently) with the verses, "The destroying power of wrath and anger that dwells here on thy forehead, that the chaste, wise gods may take away! Heaven am I and I am earth; we both take away thy anger; the she-mule cannot bring forth offspring; N.N."

When he thinks that this person will do evil to him; he addresses him with the words, "I take away the speech from thy mouth, I take away the speech in thy heart. Wheresoever thy speech dwells, thence I take it away. What I say, is true. Fall down, oh inferior to me."¹¹

The folk nature of rituals found in the Grhya Sutras is well brought out in the aphorisms dealing with ceremonies connected with child-birth. The householder, who is a cattle breeder and a farmer, eagerly wants more sons. For securing many longlived sons, a number of rituals are prescribed which appear to be magical acts. Performance of so many rituals indicates that securing a living son must have been quite difficult at that time. During the marriage ritual, the husband puts a boy of good birth on both sides of his bride's lap. Through this act, it has been asserted that she will certainly become the mother of male children.¹² It is ordained that after the marriage the couple should sleep for three nights on the ground and serve the nuptial fire in evening and morning. On the fourth day the first pre-natal ritual, Garbadhana or securing conception is performed. The wife with verse offers the oblation in the fire. She prays the gods in pairs: "Let the two men Mitra and Varuna, let the two men Asvins both, let the man Indra and also Agni make a man grow in me. Svaha!"¹³

In this prayer the manliness of gods is asserted so that a male child be born. The husband prays: "May a male embryo enter the womb, as an arrow (enters) the quiver; may a man be born here, a son after ten months." He further says that the

¹¹ Pāras. G. S. III, 13, 2-6.

¹² Sān. G. S. I, 16, 8.

¹³ Sān. G. S. I, 17, 9.

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gods may give girls to other women, but a son must be bestowed on him. He addresses his wife:

Be a well-breeding cow and produce a son from the auspicious sperm.
Prajāpati has created him, Savitar has shaped him.
Imparting birth of females to other (woman),
May he put here a man.¹⁴

Infantile mortality must have been a great threat. To avoid this the bridegroom prays god Agni during marriage rituals to release the offspring of his wife from the fetter of death, so that he may enjoy a long happy life together with his son and wife:

May Agni come hither, the first of the gods.
May he release the offspring of this wife from the fetter of death.
May this king Varuna grant that this wife does not weep over distress (falling to her lot) through (the death of) her sons. Svāhā!
May Agni Gārhapatya protect this woman.
May he lead her offspring to old age.
With fertile womb may she be the mother of living children.
May she experience delight in her sons. Svāhā!

In the third month of pregnancy, Pumsavana or securing the birth of a male child is performed. The wife observes fast. The husband gives her two beans and a barley grain with a handful of curds of a cow, who has a calf of the same colour. The husband asks: What do you drink? She replies thrice, "Pumsavana, (generation of a male) Pumsavana, Pumsavana."¹⁵

The Grhya Sutras of Hiranyakesin say that the husband should give the barley grain in wife's right hand with words "A begetter are you," and two beans on either side: "Two testicles are you." He pours a drop of curds on these grains with the formula: "Svavrtat!" The wife eats that and sips water. He touches her belly with the formula, "With my ten

¹⁴ Śān. G. S. I, 19, 6.

¹⁵ Pāra. I, 5, 11. Asva. G. S. I, 13, 2-4.

fingers I touch thee that thou mayst give birth to a child after ten months!"¹⁶ The Jaimini Grhya Sutra says that after the wife has eaten two beans and a barley grain with a drop of curds, a Nyagrodha shoot together with fruits is fastened by means of two threads, one white and the other red to her neck for wearing constantly. This is believed to be a sure way of begetting a son.¹⁷ The Sutras also prescribe putting the Soma stalk or a blade of Kusa grass or the last shoot of Nyagrodha tree after pounding in the right nostril of the wife.¹⁸ The Paraskara Grytha Sutra says that if the husband desires a valiant son, he should put the shell of a tortoise with water on the wife's lap with some Mantras (incantations).¹⁹

In the fourth, sixth or eighth month of pregnancy Sīmantonnayana or the parting of hair of the wife is performed during the first pregnancy. The husband cooks Sthalipaka or a mess of sacrificial food containing sesamum and Mudga beans and sacrifices to Prajapati. The husband parts her hair upwards with a bunch containing an even number of unripe Udumbara fruits and three Darbha grass, a porcupine's quill that has three white spots, a stick of Viratara wood and a full spindle with the words, "Bhur bhuvah svaha." He ties the bunch to a string of three twisted threads with (the words), "Rich in sap is this tree; like the tree, rich in sap, be thou fruitful." Then lute-players sing songs.²⁰

The husband prepares the *sutikalaya* or labour room for the wife. He besmears it with various herbs in order to drive away goblins. Then the wife enters the room. When she is about to deliver, the husband is required to place his hand dripping with water on her head and touch her with the dripping wet hand from the head to the heart downwards with the mantras: "As the wind blows, as the ocean trembles, so may thy foetus move, may it come out together with the afterbirth."²¹

When the boy is born, he performs for him the *medhajanana*

¹⁶ Hir. G. S. II I, 2, 3-5.

¹⁷ Jai. G. S. I, 5.

¹⁸ San. G. S. I, 20, 3-5, Hir G. S. II, 2, 6, Para. G. S. I, 14, 2-4.

¹⁹ Pāra. G. S. I, 14, 5.

²⁰ Para. G. S. I, 15, 3-7.

²¹ Kāthaka Grhaya Sūtra XXXIII, 1-3.

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or production of intelligence and *ayusya* or the rite for procuring long life, before the navel string is cut off. He makes the new born infant lick honey and ghee with a gold article (gold spoon or ring) thrice, with the recitation of some Vedic formulas. Then near the child's navel or his right ear he murmurs:

Agni is longlived, through the trees he is longlived.
By that long life I make thee longlived.
Soma is longlived through the herbs he is longlived.
By that long life I make thee longlived.
The Brahman²² is longlived; through the Brahmanas he is longlived.
By that long life I make thee longlived.
The gods are longlived; through ambrosis (*amṛta*) they are longlived.
By that long life I make thee longlived.
The Rṣis are longlived; through their observances they are longlived.
By that long life I make thee longlived.
The fathers are longlived; through the Svadhā²³ oblations they are longlived.
By that long life I make thee longlived.

Then the father should place five Brahmanas in the five directions and should say to them, "Breathe ye upon this (child)." The Brahmana to the south should say, "Back-breathing"; the one to the west, "Down-breathing"; the one to the north, "Out-breathing"; the fifth one looking upwards, should say, "On-breathing." In case the father can not find Brahmanas he may himself do this going round the child. He recites over the place at which the child is born:

I know, O earth, thy heart that dwells in heaven, in the moon.
That I know; may it know me.
May we see a hundred autumns.
May we live a hundred autumns.
May we hear a hundred autumns.²⁴

²² The word Brahman refers both to the Vedic aphorisms and the mysterious power inherent in them.

²³ Offerings made to forefathers during the Sraddha ceremony.

²⁴ Pāras. G. S. I, 16, 3-18.

He then touches him and lays an axe on a stone, a piece of gold on that axe and turns them upside down and holds the boy over them with the verse,

Be a stone, be an axe, be imperishable gold. Thou indeed art the self called son.
Thus live a hundred autumns.

In all these prayers the father performs rituals which are symbolic. The forceful movements of ocean and wind are represented by the movements of the wet hand so that the infant may come out with the after-birth. By the same ritual he ensures a long life for the infant by remembering the longlived gods. Breathing round the infant is again a part of the same magical ritual, adding more breaths into his life. He prays to the earth for his long life. He suggests to his son to be imperishable like stone, axe and gold.

The father washes the infant with lukewarm water. He washes his wife's right breast and gives it to the child with a verse addressed to the right breast: "O breast! you swell up for his life, glory, renown, splendour and strength." Similarly he washes and addresses the left breast.²⁵

For a secure confinement, the father puts down a pot of water near his wife's head with the verse, "O waters, you watch with the gods. As you watch with the gods, so do watch over this mother who is confined, and her child."

He also establishes the *sutikagni* or the fire of confinement at the southern side of the door to ward off various evil spirits. He pronounces the names of various demons and goblins and throws mustard seeds mixed with rice chaff into that fire in the morning and evening twilight, until the mother gets up from child-bed:

May Sanda and Marka, Upavira, Saundikeya, Ulukhala, Malimluca, Dronasa, and Cyavana vanish hence Svaha!
May Alikhat, Vilikhat, Animisa, Kimvadanta, Upasruti, Haryaksa, Kumbhin, Satru, Patrapani Nrmani, Hantrimukha, Sarsaparuna vanish hence, Svaha!

²⁵ Hiranyakesi Grhya-Sūtra II, I, 4, 3-4.

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Kesini, Svalomini, Bajahoja Upakasini go away, vanish hence Svāhā!

Wearing variegated garments, the servants of Kubera, sent by the king of demons, all of one common origin, walk through the village wishing (to harm) those who are unprotected, Svāhā!

Kill them! Bind them! thus says this messenger of Brahaman. Agni has encompassed them. Indra knows them; Brhaspati knows them; I, the Brahmana, know them who seize (men), who have prominent teeth, rugged hair, hanging breasts, Svāhā!

The night-walkers, wearing ornaments on their breasts, with lances in their hands, drinking out of skulls, Svāhā!²⁶

Their father Uccaiśrāvyaakaranaka (walks) at their head; their mother walks in the rear, seeking Vidhura in the village, Svāhā!

(Their) sister, the night-walker, looks at the family through the crevice (*sandhi*) of the door, she who wakes the sleeping (child), whose mind is turned on the wife that has become the mother, Svāhā!

O god with the black path, Agni, burn the lungs, hearts, and the liver of these female demons, burn their eyes.²⁷

In the fifth or sixth month after the birth of the son, the ritual of Annaprasana or feeding the child with solid food is performed. The Grhya Sutras prescribe a variety of fowls and fish as the baby's first food for infusing different qualities in the son. If the father wishes for the child fluency of speech, he should feed him with the flesh of the Bharadvaji bird; if the abundance of nourishment is desired the flesh of partridge should be given. If he wants swiftness in the child, he should be fed on fish. In case he wants long life for the child, the flesh of the bird Krkasa is to be given. If he wishes holy lustre in the child, the father should feed the child on flesh of the bird Ati. In case the father wants all these qualities, he should feed the child with all these things.²⁸

The identical features of son and father strengthen the bonds

²⁶ This description strongly suggests Kālī, who is now a goddess.

²⁷ Pāra. G. S. I, 16, 23; Hīra G. S. II, I, 3, 7.

²⁸ Pāra. G. S. I, 19, 7-12.

of love with the son. When he returns from a journey and sees his son, he murmurs, "From limb thou art produced; out of the heart thou art born. Thou indeed art the Self called son; so live a hundred autumns!" He then kisses his head with the words, "With the *himkara* of Prajapati, which gives thousandfold life, I kiss thee, NN! Live a hundred autumns!" He kisses him thrice with the words, "With the *himkara* of the cows!" In his right ear he murmurs, "Bestow on us, O bountiful, onward-pressing Indra, plentiful rich treasures. Give us a hundred autumns to live; give us many heroes, oh strong-jawed Indra." In the left ear he murmurs, "Indra, bestow on us the best treasures, insight of mind, happiness, increase of wealth, health of our bodies, sweetness of speech, and our days may be good days!"

It is remarkable that in the Grhya Sutras it is the husband who has to act both as the midwife and the priest during the delivery of his wife. This strongly suggests that an ordinary household in that period had no other adult member besides the couple. Thus the joint family, consisting of more than two generations and several married couples, which is often regarded as the characteristic institution of the traditional Indian social structure is conspicuous by its absence. This is understandable. When the Aryans were colonizing the vast areas they had conquered, they had to be mobile; and the large joint family did not suit these conditions. That institution acquired its pivotal position with the establishment of settled plough agriculture.

The Indian caste system, which has been in existence for more than two thousand years, also owes a great deal to the clash of races. But for a long time now the lower castes, a majority of whom seem to be derived from the non-Aryan stock, have been accepting the superiority of the upper caste as God given, and the service of the latter as their sacred duty. This situation had not been institutionalized during the Sutra period. The Aryan householder had to try hard to find servants from amongst the indigenes and it was not easy to retain them. They were seized and forced to work for their masters. They often ran away from the unpleasant job. Sutras prescribe a magical rite of *Utula-parimehah* for a servant who habitually runs away. The master had to discharge his urine into the horn of a living animal, and had to walk three times round him, turning his left side towards

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him, and sprinkle (the urine) round him, with the verse, "From the mountain (on which thou art born), from thy mother, from thy sister, from thy parents and thy brothers, from thy friends I sever thee. Run-away-servant, I have made water round thee. Having been watered round, where wilt thou go!" In case the servant ran away, his master established a fire and performed sacrifice with the formula: "May the stumbler stumble round thee, may he tie thee with Indra's fetter, loosen thee for me, and may he lead another one up to (me)." It is asserted that after this ritual, the servant quietly remains in his master's house.²⁹

Thus the *Grihya Sūtras* seem to provide rare glimpses into the twilight zone of the growth of Indian civilization. They reveal how the folk tradition of a conquering people was raised to the status of the elite stratum of culture in the composite civilization. It is obvious though that the conquerers had to take over and absorb a good deal from the culture of the people whom they vanquished, and whom they began by despising wholesale.

The battering of two streams of culture against each other resulted in intricate patterns. The open conflict subsided but it gave birth to a stratified sociocultural structure in which the subjugation of the vanquished people was legitimized and sanctified.

The intricate structure of the immense edifice of the Indian caste system bears testimony to this process. Though the hostility between the invading Aryan and the indigenes ended, it led to an overall supremacy of the former. The low position of woman in the traditional order and the suspicion with which she was looked upon also seems due partly to her extraction from the indigenous peoples. The foundations of this civilization were, however, laid solidly in the sense that both the women and the Sudras accepted their position as natural and god given; and shuddered even to think of revolting against it.

²⁹ Pāra. G. S. III, 7, 1-4.