

Yet these two sects show distinctly their religious-cultural differences!

When coming unexpectedly upon Hindu women or little girls, they flee in obvious terror for their farm yard dropping whatever precious load they may hold, on the way. Yet the men and small boys have no such fear and stand aside to watch the white stranger, answering his questions most agreeably when they are approached. After his women see the friendly gesture, their attitude undergoes a most remarkable change, and their hospitality and dignity is as natural and spontaneous as might be found in any civilized society. Within the courtyard of the home, the males respect and look to the women of the family for the entertaining of their strange guests. The women do this generously showing the visitor their limited possessions with great pride. In these small bashas one usually finds a few rush or grass sleeping mats on the floor, and at best a crude rope bottomed bedstead sans mattress of any sort. Only the head of the family sleeps on the bed, the rest of the family sleeping on the floor. Near one wall is a shallow fire pit for cooking, and outside of a few brass bowls, and earthen water jugs for cooking and storage, there is little else. The people use large fresh leaves from nearby trees for plates for their food, eating it with their fingers. There are no smoke vents in the roof, the smoke being permitted to find its way out between wall and thatched roof. This perhaps helps in heating the basha at night during the winter season. There is one manifestation of a higher civilization common to all these homes, however. There are at least two or three highly colored cheap prints of their favorite family gods, usually one of Vishnu, Shiva, or Brahma, and the others of the various lesser gods of the harvest, prosperity, fertility, and the like. When inquiring of the nature of these gods one is impressed with the extreme awe and respect of the entire family for their terrible power! After the harvest, the grain is stored in the basha, and the picture of one of the gods is hung near it to protect it from evil spirits.

The women, and usually one of the older women specifically, are the directing force in the family life. The suggestions and directions made by them are accepted by the male members of the family without question. It is noticeable that the rural women appear to have more individuality and personality than the average woman met in the more civilized districts. This may be due to a somewhat obvious difference in the customs of the upbringing of small girls. The girls and boys are found playing together at some distance from their homes in wholesome companionship, not only with their own religious group, but with Muslim children of the same age! Perhaps this is merely a local condition of Upper Assam, but it has had its effect on the development of the women. Their extreme fear of white strangers outside their homes is in ludicrous contrast. Perhaps the near enslavement of the members of their families who have gone to the nearby British tea plantations to work for the fantastic sum of two dollars a month has had something to do with it. The appalling filth and poverty of the quarters of those unfortunate coolies, coupled with a peculiar disease that tea workers succumb to, makes the coolie farmer appear free and wealthy in comparison!

The general Hindu religious marriage customs are carried out in Assam, but are naturally limited by the general poverty, and slight differences in childhood social customs. The ceremony takes place at the home of the bride's father, the groom arriving and officially meeting his bride for the first time at the ceremony. In the case of the child-bride and older groom, she stays with her parents until puberty, but in the case of the child-bride and child-groom, the children are permitted to play together thus growing up together and occasioning greater opportunity for early