

## Marriage and Thereafter

After the wedding was over, we travelled to Gauhati by train. A car was sent to pick us up from the station. As the new bride and groom, we were traditionally welcomed at the threshold by my eldest sister-in-law. I was wearing sandals at that time and Shri Phookan tactfully told me to slip them off before entering the house. I had a feeling that in certain matters, the social strictures in Gauhati were far more rigid than in Dibrugarh. Later on, my first impressions proved to be correct. The women in Dr. Das's family hardly ever stepped out of the house. Even a visit to a neighbour's place was a difficult venture. They were bound by many rules of propriety and social decorum.

Dr. Das did not approve of all these restrictive measures imposed on women. Instead, he encouraged me to continue my activities unhampered by restrictive societal regulations. Just after the wedding, he wanted to take me to pay a courtesy call to the families of Shri Phookan, Shri Kamakhya Ram Barooah and Shri Bishnu Ram Medhi, the people who had helped him throughout the wedding celebrations. His father, surprisingly agreed to the idea without a murmur. Horse carriages were the only mode of transport within the town, and everytime we went out, my husband instructed a servant boy to keep my shoes in the carriage without anyone knowing. Although he had studied abroad, he was a pacifist by nature and did not want to ruffle any feathers in our huge joint family.

We stayed with my father-in-law and Dr. Das's four brothers and their families. My husband was the second among six sons.

Four others, Garga Ram Das, Bhriugu Ram Das, Gunabhi Ram Das and Surendra Rajmedhi shared the family home with us in Gauhati. The brother next to Dr. Das in age had married before him and lived with his family in the ancestral home in Sualkuchi.

It was difficult in many ways to live in an expanding joint family. Hence, we built a house close to the main house and shifted there after two years of marriage. My eldest son Barindra was born around this time. My younger brothers-in-law and their children continued to have their meals with us. Only my eldest brother-in-law had his own separate kitchen in the old house.

My father-in-law lived a spartan life and cooked for himself. Dr. Das had appointed a man-servant to look after his needs. He religiously recited the *Ghoshas* from the *Kirtana* every morning and evening, and played the *bhortal* with it. So spiritual minded was he that he refused to drink water from the tap. River water was obtained twice a week and stored in a reservoir for his use.