

[A Young Girl Becomes a Young Woman](#)

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In May of this year Brahmacharini Kamala Veylan, Saiva Siddhanta Church member and daughter of Aran and Tara Veylan of Edmonton, Canada, attained her coming of age as a woman and experienced first-hand the ancient Hindu culture as the ladies of the Edmonton Tamil community organized for her a traditional attainment ceremony. Here, Kamala shares with Hinduism Today her personal encounter with this important samskara and rite of passage ceremony.

Hinduism Today: What were your thoughts when you experienced your first menstrual period?

Kamala Veylan: I felt scared and I wanted it to stop. I didn't like it.

Q: Did you tell any of your friends?

A: No, you don't really tell your friends about that kind of thing. It's kind of personal.

Q: How did you react when your father told members of the Hindu community?

A: I was mad at him because I didn't think anyone had to know. Then they told other people - so everybody knew. People were phoning up and congratulating me on my first period. It was really embarrassing, because in the West you don't go around telling everybody this kind of thing.

Q: How did you prepare for the attainment ceremony?

A: My first sari was measured up. It was red and had thread woven into shapes like flowers on the border lines.

Our house was decorated and everything was fixed up nicely. There was a chair in the corner covered with a nice cloth. It was a very comfortable chair and I got to sit in it. And then we moved our shrine room out into our family room, and it was all decorated really nicely with flowers.

In the morning, I got into the bath tub with my friend Meena Murugan, and they patted milk on my head, and poured water over me and gave me a bath with my clothes on.

It was about 10 o'clock when Kalayani Subramaniam and Raji Sivananthan [two young Tamil ladies] and Amama [a Tamil elder] started working on me. It took about three hours to get me all ready and dressed up with jewellery and makeup. All the ladies came in and started dressing me. It was very unusual. My hair was all pulled back, and they put flowers all over and jewellery, and lots and lots and lots of make-up.

Q: What happened after you were all dressed.

A: They took a whole bunch of pictures of me, by a mirror, from all these different angles, and turning my head and turning my eyes, and that went on for about twenty minutes. All the ladies said I was real pretty and they thought I could be a movie star and that I must have been a brahmin girl in my past life. Then, I went downstairs and they took pictures of me sitting down.

Here, the ceremonies began. Amama threw some rice cakes at me, and all the Hindu ladies took these trays of fruit and food and waved them in front of me. There were a whole bunch of trays and they all wanted to do it. After this, my

parents gave me a gold chain, and I prostrated in front of them. Then I walked over to the shrine room, sat down and had a puja to Lord Ganesha. The ladies gave me presents, and they all wished me luck in my life. Finally, we went upstairs and had some prasadam. Everyone had brought a lot of food.

Q: How did you feel when it was all over?

A: I felt good, happy, excited. This had never happened to me before. It was actually quite fun getting all dressed up with people making a fuss over how pretty I looked. It was a nice experience. I felt happy and good inside.

Q: Did you show the pictures to anyone?

A: Yes, I took them to school to show my friends, because a lot of my friends are interested in my religion.

Q: Have any of your school friends had ceremonies like that?

A: No, they don't do anything when they have their first period. In our school you just don't go tell anybody.

Q: Which way do you like better, to keep it quiet or to have a public ceremony?

A: I guess in our Hindu religion it's important that you change from a girl to a young lady. The Hindu religion is like one big family. Everyone knows about everybody. I guess if they're Hindu, that's OK. But if they're not Hindu, you might feel kind of embarrassed with everybody knowing.

Q: Do you think it's a good idea for other Hindu girls to have an attainment ceremony?

A: Yes, it was a nice experience, and it was fun. I think all Hindu girls should do it if they want to.

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