

All of these activities are directed at birth and caring for a healthy baby. Also, the older women – the mother-in-law, the grandmother – play a significant role in them.

“What has been the most important thing in your life? – To be a good mother and to bring up my children, to take care of my family”. As a wife, mother and mother-in-law the gypsy/Romany woman is burdened with the children’s bringing up. She bears the responsibility for the girl’s chastity. If this rule has somehow been broken, she faces the consequences together with her daughter. Everything, which the mother (as well as the community), imposes and requires from the daughters, is to keep their virginity, to stay “clean” until their wedding days.

Preserving the traditional gypsy/Romany holidays and customs, the woman sees to the observance of a number of norms and prohibitions, fulfills a multitude of ritual activities, and keeps a watch on anything she believes to be helpful about realization of her main mission – family protection and ethnos preserving.

In the gypsy/Romany tradition and memory there are calendar holidays, which are absolutely womanly (Midwives’ Day, St. Bazar’s Day, Maya). On them, out of the man’s control, the woman is free to enjoy herself. During other holidays, such as St. George’s Day, Bango Vasil, St. Atanas’ Day, Bogoroditza, Sheker Bayram, Kurban Bayram, etc., in which the rest of the family members participate, she is the leading figure in the rites performance.

The key role of the gypsy/ Romany woman in the family and calendar holiday ritualism is presented, by the nuances in the separate groups of the community are demonstrated. Highly influenced by the contacts with the rest of the ethnoses, mostly Bulgarians, she is depending both on the confessional affiliation and the life-style. As an expression of the folk belief in her supernatural and magical abilities, we meet the gypsy woman’s character in the masquerade ritualism of Bulgarian song folklore.

In her everyday life gypsy/ Romany woman is burdened with essential economical functions, which take place in the obligation to ensure the