APPENDIX

Appendix A - The Questionnaire
Appendix B - Bibliography
Appendix C - Marriage Rites of Maharashtrian Brahmins
Appendix D - Hindu Festivals and Their Meaning
Appendix A - QUESTIONNAIRE

From: Madhavi Renavikar
Lecturer in Sociology
T. M. V., Pune - 37.

Dear Friend,

In our country various studies have been made on women. But there are very limited studies on 'Women and Religion'. Hinduism is considered as 'way of life'. Religion plays an important role in women's life. This research is being undertaken to study the role of religion in women's life. For practical purposes I am studying Brahmin women in Pune.

In any scientific research authentic information is important. So please try to give answers as correctly, openly, honestly as possible. Information supplied by you will be kept strictly confidential and will be used for research purpose only.

I am highly grateful to you for co-operating in the study by filling the questionnaire.

With regards.

Yours Sincerely,

Madhavi Renavikar.
(1) **General Information**

1. Full Name : 
2. Address : 
3. Phone No. : 
4. Age : 
5. Education : 
   (with Branch) 
6. Sub-Caste : 
7. Marital Status : a) Unmarried b) Married c) Widowed 
8. Primary occupation : 
9. Secondary occupation : 
10. Income (Per month) : 

(2) **Family Information**

Sr.No

Relation with respondent

Age

Marital Status

Education

Occupation

Unemployed

Student

Monthly income

Whether living with the respondent

Whether children studying in English/ Marathi medium
(3) General Material Things

(Standard of living)

*Items to indicate -*

(A) 1. L. P. G. 7. Air Conditioner
2. Two wheelers - How many 8. Tape Recorder/Two in One
4. Fridge 10. V. C. R.
5. Car 11. Cable Connection
6. Cooking range 12. Any other

(B) 1. House - owned / Rental - If rented how much rent ?
2. Bungalow / Flat / Wada
3. Area in sq. ft.
4. No. of Rooms
5. Locality
6. Staying since from how many years ?

(C) In which class you will place your family in the social scale ?

1. Upper Class
2. Upper Middle Class
3. Middle Middle Class
4. Lower Middle Class
5. Lower Class

(D) 1. Is there any separate place (Room, Neche, Corner (Deoghar) for Gods in your house? (Yes / No)

   1.1 Give brief description

2. What images of Gods you have kept?
   (Silver, Brass)

3. Are there any photos of Gods? (Yes / No)

   3.1 (If yes, which Gods?)

4. Do you have photos of Religious Persons / Gurus / Saints? (Yes / No)

   4.1 If yes which ones?

367
5. Do you have religious books in the house? (Yes / No)
   5.1 If yes please give number.

6. Do you subscribe to any religious magazine? (Yes / No)
   6.1 If yes, which ones?

7. Which newspapers do you buy?

8. Which magazines do you buy?

9. Do you have books other than religious ones in your home? If yes, name a few -
   Literally Books   Drama   Science Fictions   Any Other

10. Are you a member of any public library? (Yes / No)

(4) Respondent's Parental Family -

1. Education: - Name of town / City where educated 
   Name of school
   Name of college

2. Did you win any major scholarships / Prizes etc. during your student days? (Yes / No)
   2.1 If yes please give details

3. Your age at marriage

4. Arranged Marriage / Love Marriage
   4.1 Followed vedic Method / Traditional method / Registered Marriage
   4.2 If arranged, was your consent asked? (Yes / No)
   4.3. Were horoscopes matched? (Yes / No)
   4.4 Whether employed before marriage? (Yes / No)
   4.5 Sub caste before marriage
   4.6 Husband's sub caste

5. Do you feel that there was discrimination against you as a girl? (Yes / No)

6. Religionwise how do you rate your mother?
i) Very religious   ii) Tolerably religious
iii) Not religious    iv) Atheist
7. How do you rate your Father?
i) Very religious   ii) Tolerably religious
iii) Not religious    iv) Atheist
8. How do you rate the religiosity of your Family?
i) Highly religious   ii) Religious
iii) Moderately religious iv) Non religious   v) Atheist
9. Mother
   i) Conservative   ii) Modern   iii) Intellectual
10. Father
   i) Conservative   ii) Modern   iii) Intellectual
11. What do you feel is your parental family’s impact?
    If any, on your up bringing - (Tick more than one if necessary)
    A) Made me very religious
    B) Made me religious
    C) Made me non religious
    D) Made me intellectual
    E) Made me rational
    F) Moulded my character
    G) Made me conservative
    H) Any other.

(5) Present Family Information:

1. How do you describe your mother in law?
   i) Very religious   ii) Religious
   iii) Moderately religious   iv) Non religious   v) Atheist
2. How do you describe your father in law?
   i) Very religious   ii) Religious
iii) Moderately religious   iv) Non religious   v) Atheist

3. How do you describe your husband’s family?
   i) Very religious   ii) Religious
   iii) Moderately religious   iv) Non religious   v) Atheist

4. Any religious teaching for children in the home? (Yes/ No)
(Please give details)

5. Do you differentiate between daughter and son while giving religious education? (Yes/ No)

(6) Experiential Dimension:

1. Do you offer any ritual, puja for following things?
(tick more than one if necessary)
A) For ill health   B) Success in exam.
C) For good job   D) For male child
E) For girl child   F) For daughter’s or son’s marriage
G) For court case   H) For success in election
I) For property   J) For transfer
K) For mental peace   L) For ‘Samadhi’ experience
M) For metaphysical power   N) Any other

2. Please give information regarding your religious experiences

(7) Religious Beliefs:

1. Do you have faith in God? (Yes/ No/ Can not say)

2. What is your concept about God? (Tick more than one if necessary)
A) God is the creator of the world   B) God is a kind of power
C) God is omnipotent, omniscient   D) God is mercifull
E) God is in every thing   F) God gives response to prayer
G) There is no limit to God   H) God is ‘Sagun’
I) God is ‘Nirguna’   J) Any other
3. If you have faith in God what are the reasons for your faith?
   A) Born with the faith  B) Parental teaching
   C) Because of personal experiences  D) Because of intellectual understanding
   E) Because of spiritual Guru  F) Can not state reason
   G) Any other

4. Do you believe in -
   A) Pap/Punya  
   B) Karma theory/ReBirth 
   C) Varna system (Based on birth)  
   D) Varna according to Guna and Karma 
   E) Concept of ‘Atma’ 
   F) Concept of ‘Purushratha’ 
   G) Ashram system  
   H) Concept of ‘Dana’/Charity 
   I) Concept of ‘Heaven’ and ‘Hail’ 
   J) Virginity 
   K) Belief/Shradha 
   L) Tyaga 
   M) Sacred/Profane  
   N) Auspicious/Inauspicious 
   O) Concept of ‘Incarnation’ 
   P) Veda 
   Q) Mythology 
   R) Dharma 
   S) Moksha/Salvation 
   T) Widow inauspicious  
   U) Pativrathya 

5. Over the years has there been any change in your belief system?  
   Yes/No

5.1 Please give details

6. Do you believe in auspicious and inauspicious things?  Yes/No
6.1 Do you agree that following birds, animals bring fortune?
A) Cow Yes/ No
B) Bharadwaj Yes/ No
C) Mungus Yes/ No

7. Do you believe in -
A) Horoscope Yes/ No
B) Palmistry Yes/ No
C) Numerology Yes/ No
D) Star-Stones Yes/ No

8. Do you have faith in following things -
A) Miracle Yes/ No
B) Evil eye Yes/ No
C) Ghost Yes/ No
D) Witchcraft Yes/ No
E) Possession by spirit Yes/ No
F) Blessing Yes/ No
G) Cursing Yes/ No
H) Making of Vows Yes/ No
I) Sacrifice Yes/ No
J) Observing fast in eclipse Yes/ No
K) Worship Yes/ No
L) Prayer Yes/ No
M) Jap Yes/ No
N) Vrathas Yes/ No
O) Samskara Yes/ No
P) Satsang Yes/ No
Q) Pilgrimage Yes/ No

10. Do you agree that women are more religious than men? (Yes/ No)

11. Do you agree that women are more believer than men? (Yes/ No)

12. People say that women should not visit Lord Kartikaya’s temple, do you agree with this? (Yes/ No)

13. Do you have faith in Saints? (Yes/ No)
14. Do you believe that the wall really moved upon Saint Dyaneswar’s command? (Yes/ No)
15. Do you agree that rituals are fruitful? (Yes/ No)
16. Do you believe that buffalow sang the ‘Vedas’? (Yes/ No)
17. Do you believe that Tukaram’s ‘Gatha’ came up from water? (Yes/ No)
18. Do you believe that during the menstrual periods if the shadow falls on ‘Tulsi’ it burns? (Yes/ No)
19. Do you believe that during menstrual periods if touched the pickle, it gets spoiled? (Yes/ No)
20. Do you obey the rules of purity/ pollution in your everyday life? (Yes/ No)
   A) Do you observe purity/ pollution in menstrual period? (Yes/ No)
   B) Do you visit temple in menstrual period? (Yes/ No)
   C) Do you observe pollution after birth? (Yes/ No)
   D) Do you observe pollution after death? (Yes/ No)
   E) Do you observe purity on festival? (Yes/ No)
   F) Whether menfolk in your family take bath after hair cut? (Yes/ No)
   G) Do you keep lower caste woman for cooking? (Yes/ No)
   H) Do you invite lower caste woman as ‘Savashna’? (Yes/ No)
   I) Do you invite women from all castes for ‘Haldi-Kumkum’? (Yes/ No)
   J) Do you wash feet when come to home? (Yes/ No)
21. Do you eat eggs? (Yes/ No)
   21.1 Do your family members eat eggs? (Yes/ No)
   21.2 Do you take non-veg? (Yes/ No)
   21.3 Do your family members take non-veg? (Yes/ No)
   21.4 Do you prepare non-veg at home? (Yes/ No)
   21.5 Do you take non-veg only in hotels? (Yes/ No)
(8) **Knowledge Dimension**:

1. Do you know your gotra? (Yes/No)
   1.1 Do you know your pravara? (Yes/No)
   1.2 Do you know your sect? (Please give name)
   1.3 Do you know your vedashakha? (Please give name)

2. Do you have faith in following principles? (Please tick more than one if necessary)
   Dwaita / Adwaita / Vishitha Adwaita / No Faith / Any other

3. Do you know following things? (Please tick more than one if necessary)
   Veda / Upanishad / Geeta / Ramayan / Mahabharata / Puran / Bhagavat / Dnyaneswari / Smruti / Dasbodha / Ramanuja / Shankaracharya / Madhwacharya / Vallabhacharya / Ten avatars of Lord Vishnu

4. Do you recite ‘Arati’ of God? (Yes/No)
   4.1 If yes which ‘Aratis’? -

5. Do you know mythological importance of festivals? (Yes/No)

6. Do you know names of ‘Six Darshanas’? (Yes/No)

7. Do you know names of ‘Five Yadnyas’? (Yes/No)

8. Do you know ‘Three Rinas’? (Yes/No)

9. Please give any two good features of Hinduism -

10. Please give any two worst features of Hinduism -

11. Do you know fundamental principles of Islam? (Yes/No)

12. Do you know fundamental principles of Christianity? (Yes/No)

(9) **Rites and Rituals - Daily, Weekly, Monthly**

**Daily rites and rituals** -

1. Do you perform following things after wake up in bed? A) Do you take God’s name? (Yes/No)
B) Do you offer any prayer?  

2. Do you perform following things after washing mouth? -

A) 'Namaskar' to God  
B) 'Namaskar' to elders  
C) Hearing of spiritual programmes on radio  
D) Reciting of prayer while doing domestic work  
E) Drawing of 'Rangoli'  

3. Do you perform following things after bath? -

A) Watering, worship of 'Tulsi' plant  
B) Worship of God  
C) Reading of religious book  
D) Jap  
E) Meditation  
F) Arati  
G) Offering food to God  
H) Visit to temple  

4. Do you perform following things in the evening? -

A) Lighting a lamp in home shrine  
B) Prayer, Worship  
C) Reading of religious books  

5. Do you perform following things before going to bed?

A) Namaskar to God  
B) Prayer  

Weekly, Monthly rites and rituals -

1. Do you observe fast?  

1.1 If yes please tick following -

A) Once in a week  
B) Twice in a week  
C) Fortnightly  
D) Monthly  
E) Other Fasts - Ekadashi (Ashadhi/ Kartiki), Shivaratri, Gokulashtamee, Ramanavmi, Navaratri, any other
G) Please give reasons of Fast

2. Do you have any spiritual Guru? (Yes/ No)
   2.1 If yes please give name -

3. Do you think that Guru helps you? (Yes/ No)
   3.1 If yes how? (Please tick more than one if necessary)
   A) Acts as a guide  B) Increases will power
   C) Removes difficulties  D) Gives mental peace
   E) Gives spiritual enlightenment  F) Helps in routine life
   G) Any other

(10) Yearly Cycle Rites

1. Do you celebrate following festivals?
   1.1 Gudhipadva - Yes/ No - Raising of ‘Gudhi’/ preparation of sweets/ Buying of new articles.
   1.2 Ramanavmi - Yes/ No - Fast/ Reading of Dasbodh/ Visit to temple
   1.3 Chaitragouri - Yes/ No - Haldi-Kumkum
   1.4 Hanuman Jayanti - Yes/ No - Fast/ Birth of Hunuman/ Visit to temple
   1.5 Vatapurnima - Yes/ No - Fast/ Worship of Vata tree/ Worship of Vata branch in home
   1.6 Ashadhi Ekadashi - Yes/ No - Fast/ temple visit/ attend ‘Vari’
   1.7 Chaturmas Nemdharma - Yes/ No - which nam ? -
   1.8 Gurupournima - Yes/ No - Temple visit/ visit to Guru, his worship
   1.9 Divyachi Avas - Yes/ No - worship of brass lights/ offering of sweets to God.
   1.10 Shravani Somavar -Yes/ No - Fast/ visit to temple
   1.11 Shravani Manglavar -Yes/ No - Manglagour
   1.12 Shravani Budhvar -Yes/ No - worship of Budha
   1.13 Shravani Guravar -Yes/ No - worship of Bruahaspati
   1.14 Shravani Shukravar -Yes/ No - worship of Jeevati/ food to savashna

376
1.15 Shravani Shnivar -Yes/ No - fast/ temple visit
1.16 Shravani Ravivar -Yes/ No - fast/ worship of Sun
1.17 Nagapanchami -Yes/ No - worship of Snake/ Drawing of mehandi/ preparation of sweets
1.18 Rakhee Pournima -Yes/ No - Tying of ‘Rakhee’ to brother
1.19 Gokulashtami -Yes/ No - Fast/ temple visit
1.20 Pithori Amavasya -Yes/ No - Food to Savashna
1.21 Hartalika Vrata -Yes/ No - Fast/ worship of Hartalika/ playing games
1.22 Ganesha Chaturthi -Yes/ No - Pranapratistha of image of Ganesh/ worship/ offering of sweets
1.23 Rishi Panchami -Yes/ No - Fast
1.24 Jyeshta Gouri -Yes/ No - Irrection of Gouri image/ decoration/ offering sweets/ worship/ immersion
1.25 Pitru Pandharavada -Yes/ No - Shradha/ Dan/ Any other
1.26 Navaratra of Devi -Yes/ No - Fast/ Lalita Panchami/ Phulora/ worship of Kumarikas/ temple visit/ Haldi-Kumkum/ Bhondala
1.27 Dasara -Yes/ No - buying new articles/ preparation of sweets/ giving sone
1.28 Kojagiri -Yes/ No - remaining awake whole night
1.29 Diwali -Yes/ No - buying new articles/ preparation of sweets/ sending greeting cards/ get together/ lighting of lamps/ drawing rangoli
1.30 Kartiki Ekadashi -Yes/ No - Fast/ temple visit
1.31 Tulsi Vivaha -Yes/ No -
1.32 Khandobache Navaratra -Yes/ No - Fast/ worship/ food to Brahmin
1.33 Dattajayanti -Yes/ No - Fast/ birth of Datta in home/ temple visit
1.34 Makar Sankrant -Yes/ No - giving sweets/ Haldi-Kumkum
1.35 Mahashivaratra -Yes/ No - Fast/ temple visit
1.36 Holi -Yes/ No - Making of bonfires/ preparation of sweets
1.37 Rangapanchami -Yes/ No - Playing with colours/ preparation of sweets
2. Reasons for celebration of festivals - (Please tick more than one if necessary)
   A) For tradition
   B) For elders
   C) For joy
   D) Gives meaning to life
   E) For Social contacts
   F) Preservation of values, beliefs
   G) Any other

3. Do you celebrate Vratas? Yes/ No
   3.1 If yes, which ones?
   3.2 Please give reasons for keeping Vratas
   3.3 Do you feel that importance of Vratas is decreasing? (Yes/ No)
   3.4 What do you feel about women doing Vratas?
   3.5 What do you feel about women not doing Vratas? -

(11) Life Cycle Rites:

1. Have you performed following rites for self -
   1.1 Garbhadan - Yes/ No
   1.2 Athangul - Yes/ No
   1.3 Chor Choli - Yes/ No
   1.4 Dohal-Jevan - Yes/ No

2. Went for honeymoon - Yes/ No

3. Have you performed following rites for children? -
   3.1 Worship on fifth day after child’s birth - Yes/ No
   3.2 Wearing of ‘Jeevati’ image in child’s neck - Yes/ No
   3.3 Naming ceremony - Yes/ No
   3.4 Karnawedha - Yes/ No
   3.5 First outing - Yes/ No
   3.6 First food - Yes/ No
   3.7 Javal - Yes/ No
   3.8 Upanayana - Yes/ No

4. Have you done any segregation in son’s and daughter’s naming ceremony?
   Yes/ No
4.1 If yes please give details
5. Have you called priest for daughter's naming ceremony? Yes/No
5.1 Have you consulted about daughter’s ‘Nakshatra’? Yes/No
6. Have you invited to a widow or childless lady for naming ceremony? Yes/No
7. Have you performed all rituals in son’s upanayana? Yes/No
7.1 Anybody performs ‘Sandhya’ in your family? Yes/No
7.2 Do you feel that upanayan has lessen religious importance and become social function? Yes/No
8. Do you feel that upanayana is necessary for girls also? Yes/No
8.1 Please give reasons -
9. Do you perform following rituals after death? -
   A) Pindadan - Yes/No
   B) Observation of Sutak - Yes/No
   C) Monthly Shraddha - Yes/No
   D) Yearly Shadddha - Yes/No
10. Do you visit ‘Smashan’ (Funeral Place)? Yes/No
11. Should women attend the Funeral? Yes/No
12. Should women perform ‘Agnisamskar‘/Funeral rituals? Yes/No

(12) Other Rituals

1. Do you perform any ritual for good health? (Yes/No)
1.1 If yes please tick more than one if necessary -
   A. Visits to temple
   B. Visits to ‘Mantrik’
   C. Worships God
   D. Make Vows
   E. Any Other
2. Do you perform Satyanarayana Puja? (Yes/No)
2.1 If yes please tick more than one if necessary -
   A. On particular, good occasion
   B. Every year
3. Have you done ‘Vastushant’?  (Yes/No)

4. Do you visit pilgrimage places?  (Yes/No)
   4.1 If yes please give names -
   4.2 Do you visit pilgrimage places by self management or by tourist company -
       please state.

5. Do you feel it useful?  (Yes/No)
   5.1 If yes, how? please explain.

(13) Ethics

1. Do you feel that monogamy is ideal type of marriage?  (Yes/No)
   1.1 Please give reasons.

2. Do you think that polygamy injusticed with women?  (Yes/No)

3. Do you think that chastity before marriage is important?  (Yes/No)
   3.1 Do you agree that chastity is more important for women?  (Yes/No.)
   3.2 Do you feel that chastity is more important for men?  (Yes/No)
   3.3 Do you think that chastity is important for both of them?  (Yes/No)
   3.4 Do you feel that chastity is not important?  (Yes/No)
   3.5 Do you feel that chastity is loosing importance?  (Yes/No)

4. Do you agree that loyalty of husband and wife is important?  (Yes/No)
   4.1 Do you think that loyalty is important for women?  (Yes/No)
   4.2 Do you feel that loyalty is important for men?  (Yes/No)
   4.3 Do you agree that loyalty is important for both of them?  (Yes/No)

5. Do you think that mistake in chastity and loyalty should be pardonable? - please
   tick -
   A. Pardonable for man
   B. Pardonable for woman
   C. Pardonable for both
   D. Pardonable for none

380
6. Do you think that in immoral behaviour relaxation for man is given by nature? (Yes/No)

7. Who will be responsible in immoral relations? Please tick -
   A. Woman responsible  B. Man responsible
   C. Both of them are responsible

8. Do you think that divorcée woman should be given married woman's status? (Yes/No)

9. Do you invite widow on auspicious occasion? (Yes/No)
   9.1 If yes do you invite widows in relation or outside also? - Please state -

10. Do you feel that widow should put 'kumkum' on her forehead? (Yes/No)

11. Do you think that widow should use flowers? (Yes/No)

12. Do you feel that a widow should marry widower only? (Yes/No)
   12.1 Will you allow your family member to marry a widow? (Yes/No)
   12.2 Please give reasons -

13. What should be the girl's and boy's age at marriage?
    Girl's age - Boy's age -

14. Do you think that unmarried woman should have baby by artificial insemination? (Yes/No)
   14.1 Please give reasons -

15. Do you agree that unmarried woman should adopt a child? (Yes/No)
   15.1 Please state reasons -

(14) Religious Organization

1. Do you have membership of any religious organization? (Yes/No)
   1.1 If yes do you have any designation? (Yes/No)
   1.2 Please give number of women in your religious organization having any designation.

2. Do you feel that in religious organizations no importance is given to women? (Yes/No)
3. Do you feel that women heads should be there in these organizations? (Yes/No)

4. Generally in religious organizations women look after preparation of food and its distribution, do you think that there should be change in women’s role? (Yes/No)

5. Do you have membership of ‘bhajanee mandal’? (Yes/No)
   5.1 Are there only women members or both men and women? Please state -
   5.2 State the functions of your ‘bhajanee mandal’ -
   5.3 Give reasons for going to bhajanee mandal -

6. In your home who initiates rituals? Please state -
   6.1 In which way you participate in household rituals? - Please tick proper answer -
   A. Arrangement of the whole ritual  B. Look after food
   C. Preparation of Puja  D. Any other

7. Do you feel that women have ability to head the ‘Math’? (Yes/No)

8. Will you accept woman headed ‘Math’? (Yes/No)

(15) Public Religious Activities

1. Do you listen katha-kirtan and pravachanas? (Yes/No)
   1.1 Reasons for listening - Please tick more than one if necessary -
   A. For religious purpose  B. For social purpose
   C. For religious and social purpose  D. For time pass
   E. For entertainment  F. For knowledge
   G. For other purposes

2. Do you feel that women should deliver pravachanas? (Yes/No)
   2.1 Please give reasons -

3. Do you think that women should do ‘Paurohitya’? (Yes/No)
   3.1 Please give reasons -
   3.2 Do you feel that now a days men are not available for Paurohitya so women are doing it? (Yes/No)
   3.3 Will you call a woman priest for rituals? (Yes/No)
   3.4 Please give reasons -

4. Do you participate in ‘Haldi-Kumkum’? (Yes/No)
5. Do you personally, your adult daughters and daughter-in-laws participate in following functions -
   A. Ganesh visarjana procession - Yes/No
   B. Disco Dandiya - Yes/No
   C. Rangapanchami / Playing with colours - Yes/No

(16) Gender, Marriage and Family

1. Do you feel that woman is enemy of woman? (Yes/No)

2. Do you think that woman should have a separate position other than wife, mother, daughter and sister? (Yes/No)

3. Do you think that motherhood is an obstacle in career (Yes/No)

4. Do you feel that girls should have freedom as that of boys? (Yes/No)

5. Please state your opinions about the custom of showing a girl for marriage -

6. Please state your opinions about dowry -

7. Do you feel that Hinduism is not an obstacle in women’s progress? (Yes/No)

8. Do you agree that a woman should take divorce if her husband beats her? (Yes/No)

9. Do you agree with women’s smoking and drinking alcohol? (Yes/No)

10. Do you agree with abortion? (Yes/No)

11. Do you feel that abortion should take place in case of a female foetus? (Yes/No)

12. Do you think that compared to man marriage is essential for a woman? (Yes/No)

   12.1 Please give reasons -

13. Do you agree that afterall woman is a ‘female’? (Yes/No)

14. Do you feel that top Gods in Hinduism are male Gods? (Yes/No)

15. Do you think that Hinduism is dominated by men? (Yes/No)

16. Do you agree with indecent portrayal of women in advertisment? (Yes/No)

   16.1 Will you feel that compare to men following features, traits in women are more, less or equal?
Tick proper choice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>More than men</th>
<th>Less than men</th>
<th>Equal to men</th>
<th>Can not state</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Intelligence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Discipline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Love/affection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Great affection towards children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Obedienceanence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Tendency of dedication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Practicality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Superstitiousness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Shyness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Figure, beauty consciousness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K. Unstable / Fickle mindedness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. Good in character</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Responsibility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Skill of speaking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O. Mathematical skill</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. Softness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q. Patience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. Satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Thinking about others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T. Ability to endure, bear</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18. Do you think that women should avoid certain things? (Yes/No)
   A. Should not remain out of home in late night. (Yes/No)
   B. Should not work in bar. (Yes/No)

19. Do you feel that women are not illegible to become ‘Acharya’ in Hinduism? (Yes/No)

20. Do you feel that Rama injusticed with Seeta? (Yes/No)

21. Do you think that Rama is ideal husband? (Yes/No)
22. Do you agree that woman should have property rights in both parental and conjugal property? (Yes/No)
   22.1 Give reasons -

23. Please state decision making authority in case of your marriage -

24. Do your husband help you in domestic work? (Yes/No)
   24.1 If yes please explain -
   24.2 Do you like his help? (Yes/No)

25. Do you agree with to use both the names parental and conjugal? (Yes/No)

26. Do you like to address you as Miss/Mrs./Shrimati/Any other?
   (Please tick proper choice)

27. Do you feel that concept of 'Soubhagay' has given importance to husband and lessen woman's status? (Yes/No)

28. Do you feel 'Seeta-Savitri' as ideal? (Yes/No)

29. Do you agree with the concept of 'Pati Parmeshwar'? (Yes/No)

30. Do you agree with the concept of 'dating'? (Yes/No)

31. Do you think that middle aged women should wear salwar-kurta, jeans and skirt? (Yes/No)

(17) Social Relations

1. Will you accept a non-Hindu daughter in law? (Yes/No)
   1.1 Will you accept a non-Brahmin daughter-in-law? (Yes/No)
   1.2 Will you accept a daughter in law from any other sub-caste? (Yes/No)
   1.3 If yes which sub-caste? Please tick proper choice - Konkanstha / Karhade / Deshtha
   1.4 Will you accept a daughter-in-law from same clan? (Yes/No)

2. Will you accept a non Hindu Son-in-law? (Yes/No)
   2.1 Will you accept a non-Brahmin Son-in-law? (Yes/No)
   2.2 Will you accept a Son-in-law from any other sub-caste? (Yes/No)
2.3 If yes, which sub caste? Please tick proper choice - Konkanstha / Karhade / Deshtha

2.4 Will you accept a Son-in-law from same clan? (Yes/No)

3. Do you have Muslim friends? (Yes/No)

4. Do you have Christian friends? (Yes/No)

(18) Educational System

1. Do you feel that separate school/college for boys and girls should be there? (Yes/No)

2. Do you think that girls should be given freedom for mixing in boys? (Yes/No)

3. Do you feel that girls should be motivated more than boys in case of education? (Yes/No)

4. Do you agree that sex education should be given to boys and girls? (Yes/No)

5. Which educational course you will select for your daughter? - Please explain

6. Do you feel that compare to men, women writers, scientists and artists are less? (Yes/No)

7. Do you think that religious education should be given in school and college? (Yes/No)

7.1 If yes please explain it’s nature -

8. Do you feel that women’s education is neglected? (Yes/No)

9. Do you feel that woman’s traditional role, stereotype is presented in text books? (Yes/No)

10. Do you think that woman, woman’s work is neglected in text books? (Yes/No)

(19) Economy

1. Do you feel that woman should take a profession according to her choice? (Yes/No)

2. Do you think that woman’s full time job is an obstacle in her family life? (Yes/No)
3. Do you agree that a woman should do a part time job for her family? (Yes/No)
4. Do you feel that a woman should not do a job for her family? (Yes/No)
5. Do you feel that because of being a woman you are neglected in job? (Yes/No)
6. Do you feel that because of being a woman some problems arise in job? (Yes/No)
   6.1 If yes please explain -
7. Do you think that women are sticking to jobs like nursing, teaching, typist etc.? (Yes/No)
8. Will you continue to do the job if you will become economically better? (Yes/No)
9. If you are a housewife are you thinking of doing a job? (Yes/No)
   9.1 Please give reasons -

(20) Polity

1. Are you a member of any political party? (Yes/No)
2. Do you participate in voting? Please tick proper choice - Never / Sometimes / Always
3. Do you like to contest election as a candidate? (Yes/No)
   3.1 If yes at which level? Please tick proper choice - Local level / State level / Central level / Not at all
4. Please state your opinion about reservation for women -
5. Do you think that only women will look after women’s rights? (Yes/No)
6. Do you feel that as a principle our government should be secular? (Yes/No)
7. Do you think that government should encourage religion, religious institutions and religious ceremonies? (Yes/No)
8. Which political party do you like ?
   8.1 Please state your opinion about V.H.P., R.S.S., B.J.P.
9. What is your opinion about demolition of Babari Msjid?
10. State your opinion about Shahabanoo case -
11. Do you feel that uniform civil code is essential? (Yes/No)

12. Do you agree that congress is pro Muslim? (Yes/No)

13. Do you agree that B. J. P., Shivsena are anti Muslim? (Yes/No)


14.1 Do you feel that because of these laws women's status have improved? (Yes/No)

14.2 If yes how much? - Please tick proper choice -
   - Very much / To some extent / Not at all / Any other

(21) Sports and Entertainment

1. Have you participated in sports while studying in school and college? (Yes/No)

   1.1 If yes as a hobby or for competition?

   1.2 Level of participation - Please tick proper choice
      - Local / State / National / International

2. Do your daughter participate in Sports? (Yes/No)

   2.1 If yes in which sports?

   2.2 Level of participation - Local / State / National / International

   2.3 Do you encourage her? (Yes/No)

3. Do you feel that girls should participate in sports like boxing, weightlifting? (Yes/No)

4. Which T. V. programmes do you watch? -

5. Have you watched Ramayana and Mahabharata regularly? (Yes/No)

6. What type of movies and plays do you like? (Please tick more than one if necessary)
   - Familial / Romantic / Mythological / Suspense / Stunt / Comedy

7. Do you like songs and dances in current movies? Please explain -

8. Do you feel that film magazines affect badly? (Yes/No)
(22) Sociological Perspective

1. Do you feel that religion is opium of masses? (Yes/No)
2. Do you think that religion makes masses fatalistic? (Yes/No)
3. Do you agree that following of religion is childish or foolishness? (Yes/No)
4. Do you feel that religious festivals, ceremonies unite people? (Yes/No)
5. Do you agree that because of rituals moral values, ideals sustain in society? (Yes/No)
6. Do you think that rituals help in conquering adversities, lessening frustration? (Yes/No)
   6.1 If yes how? Please explain.
7. Do you believe that due to rituals happiness increases? (Yes/No)
8. Do you feel that due to religion life becomes meaningful? (Yes/No)
9. Do you think that religious beliefs, rituals have scientific base? (Yes/No)
10. Do you have any knowledge about feminism? (Yes/No)
11. Please state your opinion about feminists -
12. Do you think that feminists oppose religion? (Yes/No)
13. Do you know anything about women’s liberation movement? (Yes/No)
   13.1 Do you support it? Please explain -

(23) Concluding Section

1. Will you marry if you will get a chance to live life again from the beginning? (Yes/No)
2. Will you allow to have children? (Yes/No)
3. If you will get chance of rebirth do you feel that it should not be of a ‘woman’? (Yes/No)
4. Are you happy as a woman? (Yes/No)
Appendix C

Marriage Rites:

Pandey gives as many as forty stages, from Vagdan or betrothal to Chaturthi karma or Garbhadaana viz. Consummation of marriage, and each stage has it's rites and it's own significance.

Pandharinath Prabhu, in his book ‘Hindu social organization’ cites the following seven rites as the major ones commonly performed at all Hindu marriages:

(1) Kanyadana:

The father of the bride pours out a libation of water symbolising the giving away of the daughter (Kanyadana) and exhorts the bride-groom not to fail his wife i.e. overrule her wishes, in his pursuit of dharma, artha and kama. At least at the ceremony, the bridegroom promises ‘dharma, arthecha, kamecha Nati charami.’ Kama Sukta is recited during this rite.

(2) Vivah homa:

Sacred fire is kindled, and homa performed with fire as a witness (Agni Sakshi) and sanctifier of the samskara.

(3) Pani grahana:

The groom holds the right hand of the bride with his right hand and recites a mantra signifying that the bride has been bestowed on him 'so that I may fulfill my dharma as a householder with thee.'
(4) **Laja homa:**

The bride’s brother (or his substitute) offers sacrifices to the Gods Aryaman, Varuna, Pushan with Agni imploring them to release his sister from their bonds (pasa), signifying change of gotra i.e. bride leaves her father’s gotra and enters the gotra of her husband.

(5) **Agni-parinayana:**

The bridegroom leads the bride three times round the sacred fire while uttering a mantra which ends with expressing a wish, ‘may we live a hundred autumns.’

(6) **Asmarohana:**

With the helping hand of the bridegroom, the bride treads over the stone (asma). The bridegroom exhorts the bride to be firm like a stone, treading the stone symbolizes overcoming the difficulties of life.

(7) **Saptapadi:**

Now comes the most important rite-saptapadi-without which a Hindu marriage is neither ritually nor legally complete. The bridegroom leads the bride, making her take seven steps with a mantra for each step, ‘Take one step for life sap, two for life power, three for wealth, four for happiness in life, five for offsprings, six for long-wedded-life’. With the seventh step he says, ‘Be now my life-mate’. The ‘giving away of the bride’ is now supposed to be complete.

After this the couple leave for the groom’s house where the ‘Grihapravesh’ ceremony takes place in which the bride is welcomed with benedictory mantras.

Then follows the rite of looking at the polar star Arundhati, also known as ‘Dhruva’ (firm) because of its permanently fixed position in the heaven. The wife is exhorted to be
firm. For the next three days, the couple gives up wearing silk clothes and ornaments and eschews food with salt and spices. They sleep on the floor and observe continence till three nights are over - this is to impress on the young couple the importance of Variagya and Brahmacharya. On the fourth day, Chaturthi Karma, also known as Garbhadrana, rite takes place. (Prabhu, Pandharinath, 1988, P. 163-73).

Brahmins closely follow the marriage rites and rituals as prescribed in the scriptures. However, their nomenclature is different in some respects and there are also some minor variations. Brief discussion of marriage practices amongst Maharashtrian Brahmins is as follows:

(1) *Sugar-packet / Sakharpuda* :

Sakharpuda, literally is the first formal step in marriage. After the approval of bride and groom by each other and their respective families and negotiations regarding other matters like give and take, Man-Pan i.e. gifts to be exchanged, this ceremony takes place. Normally it takes place in bride’s residence. The bride is presented a sari and a ring, the groom may be presented a full suit and ring, at times even an expensive wrist-watch. The presentations of rings is possibly because of western influence. Now a days even this ritual is celebrated on a large scale by hiring a hall. Traditionally this was a simple function. If the date of wedding is not settled now it is done later by mutual consultation. This is an engagement ceremony or *vagnishchay* i.e. giving word or promise to accept the girl. Since sugar packet is given to the bride it is known popularly as ‘Sakharpuda’.

(2) *Mundavalya* :

On the marriage day both the bride and the groom are tied ‘Mundavalya’ before marriage rituals Mundavalva is a string of Pearls or Beads or Flowers that is tied on the forehead of the bride and bridgroom in such a way that the ends of the string dangle on the cheeks from the sides of the forehead (Bharatiya Sanskriti Kosh, Vol. 8, 1974, P. 730).
(3) **Halad Lavane:**

After tying Mundavalya the function of Halad Lavane takes place in which turmeric paste is applied to the bride and her parents and the left over paste is sent on to the groom’s party which is known as ‘Ushti Halad’ i.e. left over turmeric paste.

(4) **Gandaganer:**

This is also known as ‘Gharche Kelwan’ or ‘Gruhmukh’. This is the last time the bride takes food in the parent’s house as a daughter. Homa is done on this day and delicious food and delicacies are prepared and relatives are invited for this special meal.

At the groom’s place ‘Sod Munj’ takes place. This function is to liberate the groom from his vow of Brahmacharya taken at the time of Upanayana and make him eligible for marriage and Grihasthasram. Here also Homa is performed. At both bride’s and groom’s place the bangle seller is called and women including the bride are given green bangles.

(5) **Vyahi Bhojan:**

The groom’s party invites the bride’s parents for a meal before the marriage. The reason is partaking of food in the married daughter’s house is forbidden till she has borne a male child.

(6) **Seemant Poojan:**

The groom is formally worshipped by the bride’s parents when he reaches the boundary of the bride’s village. Now this is done when they come near the Mangal Karyalay hired for the marriage. At this ceremony important relatives of both the sides are introduced to each other. This includes both men and women. The basic idea is that marriage is not just a relationship between two individuals or families but the larger kingroups.
(7) **Telphal:**

There is a tradition of taking scented oil and auspicious ingredients and sari, blouse piece, MundaValya, etc. to bride’s party.

(8) **Rukhvat:**

A feast with traditional items is prepared for the groom’s party on the eve of the marriage.

(9) **Varaprasthan:**

After Rukhvat, the groom is taken to bride’s residence for marriage. However it may be noted these are done in a symbolic way in cities like Pune where all the activities take place in the marriage hall itself.

(10) **Varache Rusane:**

Formerly it was expected that the groom had the right to demand some additional presents. For that he would refuse to participate in further marriage rituals. Then the bride’s father placates him by giving him gifts. This ritual is now, by and large, given up.

(11) **Gaurihar Poojan:**

While the groom is taking food in Rukhvat, the bride worships Parvati and Shiva in her room at the Karyalay.

(12) **Lagna Sabha:**

This is a marriage meeting where the actual wedding takes place in the presence of the invitees. After the wedding, betel leaf and betel nuts and pedha is given to everyone. To married women Haldi-Kumkum and Otee i.e. articles used by married woman, is given.
(13) **Saptapadi:**

As a part of the actual wedding there are several rites culminating in *saptapadi* which sets the seal of marriage.

(14) **Airanidan / Zal:**

Some branches of ‘velu’ i.e. Bamboo are given to bride and groom. This is symbolic wish that the family line will flourish.

(15) **Soonmukh:**

The groom’s mother presents the bride auspicious clothes. This is called ‘*soonmukh*’ i.e. face of daughter-in-law as the groom’s mother sees the face of bride (daughter-in-law) for the first time after wedding. The traditional practice is that the groom’s mother should not be present at the place of marriage and should enter only after the groom and bride garland each other.

(16) **Var Dakshina:**

Presents may be given by the bride’s father to the groom, formerly dowry was given which is now officially prohibited by law.

(17) **Amba Shimpane:**

This is a ceremony at which a mango tree and an image of Annaporna Devi, Goddess of Food is given to the groom by bride’s father. Mango tree is considered auspicious and mango leaves are used to decorate houses on festival days. It also symbolizes fertility.
(18) **Varat:**

Bride and groom are taken to the groom’s place in a procession. Since the residences are far away only the bride, groom and their parents go in a decorated car to a temple and then to groom’s residence.

(19) **Griha Pravesh:**

The newly married bride enters the groom’s residence. She enters it in a ritualistic way by upturning a measure full of rice by the right foot kept on the threshold. After this auspicious entering the worship of Goddess Laxmi takes place. After the Laxmi Pujan a new name may be given to the bride symbolizing a new birth for her. However changing the name is becoming very rare these days. Laxmi Pujan is now a days performed in the marriage hall itself and only after this the bride goes to the groom’s house. If the groom’s party is from another town, Griha Pravesh is done later on after reaching the groom’s town.

(20) **Gondhal:**

If one of the Devi’s or Khandoba is the family deity of the groom, Gondhal is performed, Gondhali i.e. traditional story tellers are invited and Devi is worshipped. In the past this would go on throughout the night, now a days it is over in one or two hours. Generally Deshastha and Karhade Brahmins perform Gondhal and Konkansthas perform Bodan i.e. worship of Devi with food articles.

There are many rites which have been given up or modified according to convenience of time and space.
Appendix D

Chaitra Pratipada / Gudi Padva:

This is one of the most important days in the Hindu calender and it is among the three complete 'Muhuratas', i.e. auspicious days. It is believed that 'Kaliyug' commenced from this day. It is also known as the beginning of Shalivahan Saka era. On this day king Shalivahan was supposed to have breathed life into clay soldiers and marched with them to victory.

In those parts of India (such as the Deccan) where the year begins with (Chaitra) the first tithi is observed with some pomp and religious ceremony.

Purana states that Brahma created the world on the first day of the bright half of Chaitra at sunrise and started the reckoning of time. On that tithi a maha shanti (propitiatory rite), destroying all untoward occurrences and sins, should be offered and first Brahma should be worshipped. It was declared by Brahma to be the best among tithis and thus placed in the first place, it is called Pratipada. On Chaitra Pratipada there is worship of the Lord of the year, viz. the lord of the week-day, on which Pratipada falls. Arches and banners should be raised by each householder, one should anoint one's body with oil and have a bath, put on new clothes, eat leaves of the 'nimba' tree with black pepper, grampulse, salt, etc., and should hear from the reciter of the calender the name of the year (saka or samvat), its lord and the deities that would be the ministers for the year, the governing deities of all corns and fluids. Spring in India starts with the month of Chaitra and the spring time verdure and pleasant atmosphere have lent a charm and religious merit to this festival. People raise a pole with silk cloth at top covered with a silver or brass pot, offer worship to the pole with sandalwood paste, flowers and eat nimba leaves.
Ramnavami:

The next important tithi in Chaitra is the 9th in the bright half on which is observed the Ramnavami and the celebration of the birth of Rama, 7th avatar of Vishnu. It is stated that it is obligatory for all while others say that it is obligatory only for devotees of Rama and optional for those that desire special rewards (such as removal of sin, mukti or release from samsara) If a man fasts on a single Ramanavmi all his objectives are fulfilled and he is released from all sins.

Rama and Krishna are the two great 'avatars' i.e. incarnations. Who are considered as Adarsha Purushas i.e. ideal persons and therefore worshipped. Rama is considered as 'Maryada Purushottam' who lived an ideal life as a human being. Rama is considered an ideal son, ideal king, ideal brother, ideal husband, ideal friend. He also had love and respect for the non-human spieces like bears, monkeys, squirrels etc. and also he had compassion for the 'fallen' (Ahilya) and for the poor tribals (Shabari). Many start Ramanama japa vrata on this day. In Maharashtra, Swami Ramdas, a great devotee of Rama revived religion and is considered the spiritual mentor of king Shivaji. Ramaraksha is one of the popular stotras in Maharashtra and is recited daily in many homes.

In modern times not many people observe a fast on Ramnavmi and hardly one performs homa or donate images, but the birth of Rama is celebrated in Rama temples by many at noon with great ceremony. A Haridas treats a gathering of men and women assembled in the temple to a 'kirtan' with music and Bhajan on the birth of Rama. At the end there is distribution of sweets or 'sunthavada' (dried ginger with sugar or jaggery). In some places such as Nasik, Tirupati, Ayodhya and Rameswaram this festival is performed with great pomp and thousands of people assemble at these holy places. There is no holy name other than that of Rama so constantly on Hindu lips even in these days.
The main worship of the deity takes places in the noon but the devotees observe a fast whole day and spend the night in ‘Bhajans’ of Shri Ramachandra and in reading and hearing of the great epic Ramayana. A feast is served on the next day.

Religious programmes in the temples commence from the first day of Chaitra. The programme ends on the 9th day with the cradling of the image of Rama and recitations venerating the deity. The cradling ceremony of the divine baby Rama, evokes devotion and maternal affection among women who flock to witness the ceremony.

**Gauri Tritiya**:

In the month of Chaitra on Shuddha 3rd women worship Gaur (the Devi) and till Akashya Tritiya they perform Haldi-Kumkum on any day. Gauri is cradled on this day. Chaitra is a summer season so flowers, articles prepared with raw mango, soaked whole Bengal gram are offered first to Devi and then to other married women (oti bharane).

**Hanuman Jayanti**:

Hanuman or Maruti as he is more popularly called in Maharashtra is worshipped alone or together with Shri Rama to whom he was profoundly devoted.

Hanuman was a Brahmachari, i.e., celibate known for his courage, intelligence, strength and humility. He is a devotee par excellence so much so that there are more temples of Hanuman than Rama.

The jayanti or birth anniversary of Maruti falls on the full-moon day of Chaitra every year (Chaitra Shuddha 15) and is celebrated in every Hanuman temple by organizing kirtans in his praise at the sunrise of Chaitra Shuddha 15 at which time Hanuman is believed to have been born. The programme ends with the cradling of the image of Hanuman and distribution of ‘Sunthawada’.
Akshaya - Tritiya:

This is one of the most important days according to Hindu calendar and is counted as one of the ‘three and half Muhurtas,’ i.e. auspicious days in the year on which any new work or ceremony can be undertaken without reference to the almanac. It falls on Vaishakha Shuddha 3 and marks the beginning of the warm season presaging the summer.

Akshaya Tritiya is a day of commemorating one’s dead ancestors by making to them offering of Til (seasame) and water and offering of cooked food to the crows in their name.

This festival happens mid-way between the spring with its gaiety and the summer with its scorching heat. It is therefore, taken as a starting point for offering and drinking cool water after offering it first to Gods, manes, Brahmins and travellers.

Any work started or anything done on this auspicious day is believed to be everlasting.

Vata Savitri Vrata:

On the full moon day of Jyestha, women whose husbands are living perform even now in many parts of India the Vata Savitri vrata. The story of Savitri whose memory has been cherished for ages by all Indian women as an ideal of a ‘Pati vrat’, of wifely devotion to the husband unto death (and even thereafter) is very popular and is described at great length in the Mahabharata and in the Puranas. The worship of Vata (Banyan) tree comes in probably because Satyavan when the moment of death approached took shelter under the shade of the Vata tree and supported himself by a branch of it and spoke in a choked voice to Savitri that he had pain in the head. On Vatapournima women sprinkle water at the root of the Vata tree and surround it with cotton threads and worship it and then after worship to Savitri from her feet upwards and pray to err to bestow on them beauty, good name, prosperity and
freedom from widowhood. Then they worship Yama and Narada and give presents to the priests and break their fast next day. Married women (whose husbands are alive) observe this vrata. They worship Vata tree and distribute fruits and flowers as ‘prasad’.

It shows particularly how constancy and conjugal fidelity can not only surmount insuperable obstacles and difficulties in life, even death, but secure happiness and prosperity.

The banyan tree is symbolic of worldly existence and those under its shade are bound to suffer some day or other. It is only those who even when encumbered with calamities, such as death or destruction, face in squarely and grapple with it severely but gently, that succeed in life.

**Ashadhi Ekadasi:**

The most important tithi in Ashadha is Ekadasi. Observance of Ekadasi consists in simply not eating for the whole day anything that is cooked. The underlying conception of a fast on Ekadasi is spiritual, it is a discipline of the mind, the idea being that fasting undertaken cheerfully purges man’s spirit of the lower animal passions and brings him to a mental level at which he becomes fit to receive God’s grace.

This is accompanied by visits to the temples of Shri Vitthal in the locality or at Pandharpur. At Pandharpur there are big fairs on Ashadhi and Kartiki Ekadashis when large number of people assemble there. They go there by all available means of transport or even on foot, accompanying the procession of Palanquins and parties singing devotional songs of Shri Vitthal and continuous prayers in honour of God are organized in temples. In all temples dedicated to Lord Vishnu or any of his incarnations the day is celebrated with pomp.

This vrata forms an important part of the Bhagavat Dharma prevalent in Maharashtra as in many other parts of India. It is a religion of universal love towards fellow beings and
unrestricted devotion towards a personal God, as advocated and practised in Maharashtra by an unending chain of saints, prominent among whom are Shri Dnyanadeo, Namdeo, Tukaram, Ekanath and Ramdas. Bhagavat Dharma does not require one to discard the worldly life and take to a life of penance but lays down a code of conduct which prescribes love for all including the Almighty as the sure way of reaching eternity, while following one's normal pursuit honestly. Its peculiarity is that caste, sex, social position and traditional distinction or regradation have no place in its observance. This has branched out into 'Varkari Sampradaya' in Maharashtra. The followers of this sampradaya take out processions mainly on the occasions of the Shayani and Prabodhini Ekadashis (Shri Vishnu who is specially venerated on Ekadashi day is supposed to start his four month long sleep on the Ashadhi Ekadashi and so it is known as Shayani (Sleeping) Ekadashi and the Ekadashi in the bright half of Karttika, when he is supposed to wake up at the conclusion of the Chaturmasa (Four months) being known as Prabodhini (waking up) Ekadashi.) The period between these two Ekadashis is observed by many as Chaturmasya (four months period) in which many devoted people arrange recitations and discourses from religious works and certain food articles such as meat, fish, onions, garlic, brinjals, etc. are avoided. Processions from several centres associated with Maharashtrian saints, consisting of 'Palkhi', 'Dindi', 'Pataka' and Bhajan parties, start so as to converge at Pandharpur, the celebrated seat of Shri Vithoba or Panduranga on the 10th day of the bright - half of Ashadh and Kartika months and participate in 'Bhajans', 'Kirtans' and other type of devotions during the Ekadashi celebrations without any distinctive character all through the Ekadashi day on which a fast is observed as already indicated. The conclusion of the fast is observed with a 'Santarpana' or feast, early next day.
Chaturmasya:

Is an occasion for a large number vratas. On Ashadha - Sukla ekadasi or dvadasi or Paurnima or on the day when the sun enters the Zodiacal sign Cancer, Chaturmasyavrata is to be observed Whenever it may begun it is to be finished on kartika - sukla 12. The performer observes a fast that day and worships Vishnu. The performer has to give up some edible item during the four months viz. vegetables in Shravana, curds in Bhadrapada, milk in Asvina and pulses in Kartika. The performer is asked to give up many other things also such as sleeping on a cot, meat, honey etc. when the vrata is finished he invites brahmins, announces to them what restrictions he had undertaken, feeds them, gives them daksina and recites the prayer. Apart from giving of particular food in charity and fasting they may also start 'Mouna Vrata'. This vrata is even now observed, particularly by women.

Guru Pournima:

In the month of Ashadha, on Shuddha 15, worship and gift is offered to Guru. There is a custom of worshipping ‘Vyasa’, the eminent Guru. Monks believe that ‘Shanakaracharya’ is a reincarnation of ‘Vasya’ so they offer worship to Shankaracharya.

Guru may be a spiritual Guru or mundane i.e., one’s teacher. Pupils offer worship to their teacher and children worship their parents on this occasion.

In Maharashtra Marathi people offer worship to Dattatreya.

Divyachi Avas:

On Ashadha dark 30, women clean Samai, i.e. lights of brass, worship them and sweet articles prepared with bajara and wheat flour are offered for children’s long and prosperous life.
Shravan Month:

Month of Shravan is especially a women’s month. On Monday married women do ‘Shiva’ vrata. The whole day they observe fast, visit Shiva temple and worship him. Newly married women offer special puja and articles to Shiva. On Tuesday newly married women perform Mangalgauri Vrata for husband’s long life. Special worship is offered to Devi, sweet dishes are prepared and in the evening there is Haldi - kumkum and at night women and girls play games which are exclusively for women. On every Tuesday and Friday married women offer worship to ‘Jevantika’ i.e. Devi considered a child goddess. On one Friday women invite ‘Savashan’ (;married woman whose husband is alive) for lunch. ‘Purana’ is offered to Devi and also Arati made out of Puran (boiled bengal gram and jaggery are ground in to a paste) is waved. This is observed for children’s health and long life. The five lamps in the Aarati symbolise ‘पंचनाग’ (five vital breathes). Seven Jeevantikas and their children are worshipped. According to Ayurveda, there are seven stages of life newly born, infancy, childhood, adolescence, youth, adult hood and old age.

Mangalgaur:

Formerly, newly married women used to observe this vrata for 16 years, then it was discontinued after five years, now it is done for only one year. Sixteen types of flowers and leaves are offered and sixteen puran lamps are waved. After five years at the time of udyapan i.e. completion, Vann, i.e., all the adornments of a married woman are presented to the mother.

On Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday also worship is offered to specific deity of that day.
On the last day of the dark fortnight of Shravana women observe vrata for husbands's and son's long life.

**Nagapanchami:**

In the month of Shravana there are several important vratas one of which is Nagapanchami on the 5th day of the bright half of Shravana. Nagapanchami is observed in different ways in all parts of India. Persons should make golden, silver or clay images of nagas (Cobra), should worship them with *Karavira* and Jati flowers etc. and should bathe nagas with milk. The result would be that nagas would bestow on the worshippers safety from snake bite.

In the Deccan, on the 5th day of the bright half of Shravana, figures of snakes are drawn with red sandalwood paste on wooden boards or clay images of snakes coloured yellow or black are purchased and worshipped and given milk and snake charmers go about with snakes of all sorts, to which people offer milk and some money is paid to the snake charmers.

Rational explanation of worship of snakes is that it is done out of the fear of snakes that must have taken a heavy toll of life, particularly at the beginning of the rainy season. Secondly, the snakes are friends of the farmers whose fields are ravaged by mice. The serpent plays a very important role in Indian mythology and Yoga. Adishesh (Primeval Serpent) is the couch of Lord Vishnu. Patanjali, the Yoga Darshankara is supposed to be a reincarnation of Adishesh. Further the energy at the root of the human spine is known as Kundalini- serpent power. Vasuki, the serpent played an important role in Amruit Manthan - the churning of the ocean for the nectar and a serpent adorns the neck of Lord Shiva.
Furrowing, digging etc. are forbidden on this day. Making of pancakes, cutting of vegetables, killing of any kind are also a taboo.

On this day girls enjoy themselves by swinging in keen competition on rope-contrivances hung from branches of high trees or enjoy folk-dances and Phugadis.

**Rakshabandhan:**

On the full moon of Shravana there is in the afternoon a ceremony called Rakshabandhan (tying the protective amulet). One should rise at dawn on full Moon of Shravana and after offering tarpana to gods, sages and pitri’s, get prepared a protective packet (or amulet) containing whole rice grains and mustard and decorated with gold (thread) and strung together with variously coloured threads and have such an amulet tied, when this is done a man lives on happily for a year. Women in Gujrat and some other places tie silken amulets round the wrists of their brothers and give and receive presents.

Pandurang Shastri Athavale emphasises that Raksha Bandhan day is a day of looking at a woman in a moral, spiritual light. It glorifies the brother-sister relationship whereby the brother promises protection to the sister. The sister prays for her brother’s well-being and prepares sweet coconut rice for the brother who in turn gives her some gift.

On Shravani pournima Brahmins ritually discard the previous year’s sacred thread and don a new one. It is a day of rededication to the vows one takes at the time of Upanayana.

On this day it is usual on the sea-coast of western India (Particularly in Konkan and Malabar) not only for Hindus, but also for Muslems and Parsis of the merchant class to go to the sea and offer flowers and a coconut to the sea. The sea becomes less rough and the violence of the monsoon winds abates after the full Moon of Shravana and the coconut is offered to the sea god (Varuna) in order that he may make sea voyage for vessels of
merchandise safe. Of late tying of ‘Rakhis’ on the brother’s wrist has assumed social importance like that of ‘Bhaubij’ or ‘Makar Sankrant’ in big cities and towns and the day is observed more as a day of a social rather than a religious festival and it is becoming customary with the women of today to tie ‘Rakhis’ on the wrists of people in high position or power.

**Janmastami / Gokulastami :**

In sravana on the 8th day of the dark half to celebrate the Janmastami festival which is probably most important festival celebrated throughout the whole India.

Krishna is considered as ‘Poornavtar’, i.e., full incarnation. Hindu culture owes a great deal to Lord Krishna. Bhagwad Geeta the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna is the most popular and influential among Hindu scriptures. Krishna is a God worshipped by people of all classes and temperaments : Balkrishna, Radha-Krishna, Brother Krishna, Friend Krishna, Geetacharya Krishna. His exploits from childhood onward are a great joy and inspiration to many Indians.

The main items in Janamastami are fast, worship of Krishna, *jagaran*, i.e., keeping awake at night, listening to and repeating hymns of praise and stories about Krishna’s exploits, parana. Besides this, it is the practice, particularly of boys and common people in Maharashtra, to hang up pots full of curds and buttermilk at some height from the ground on the day after the birth of Krishna, to play underneath the pot, sing songs and then by forming a human pyramid, Pierce the pot and get drenched by curds and buttermilk running out from the holes made. This is probably due to the legends associated with Krishna’s boyhood among cowherds. This is called ‘Gopalkala’ also *Dahi-handi* in Maharashtra.
Hartalika Vrata:

There are three basic vratas for obtaining soubhagya the married status. Hartalika is specially performed by unmarried girls to secure a desirable husband. Married women also performs it for the welfare and long life of their husbands.

On the third tithi of the bright half of Bhadrapada occurs the Hartalika vrata for women alone. Women bow to Uma and Siva, offer them worship. In modern times women purchase coloured clay images of Parvati, of Sivalinga and a friend of Parvati and worship them. The story narrated by Siva himself to Parvati about the vrata by performing which she secured him as her husband and also the position of being half of Siva’s body.

Originally intended for observance by unmarried girls, it is now undertaken by married ladies also. Even widows observe it with a fast, especially in Maharashtra. A lady who does not observe a fast on this day will not get progeny for seven successive births and will end up as a widow every time, being consigned to the nether-world in the end, so say the shastras. Cooked food and water are taboo to women on this day and they keep awake during the night and read or hear the story of Haritalika. On the next morning the concluding worship is performed and the Brahmin is presented with gifts usable by married woman (सौभाग्याचार वर्धन). After offering the requisite oblations the ‘Lingas’ are consigned to the river.

Those who observe the vrata are assured happiness in this and the other world.

The objective of the vrata is declared to be for the cleaning of one’s sins during this life and hereafter and for the actual and increasing accumulation of ‘Bhagya’.

Ganeshachaturthi:

On the 4th day of the bright half of Bhadrapada is observed the festival of Ganeshachaturthi in many parts of India. There is considerable symbolism regarding Ganesh. His trunk indicates that he can take up the minutest to the largest object. His large stomach indicates Brahmand (cosmos). His one tooth indicates his single mindedness, the mouse
indicates destroyer, nibbler of time and Ganapati has control over it. The faithful believe the Ganapati figure stands for ‘OM’, the ‘Pranava’, the most sacred syllable in the Hindu scriptures. In modern times a clay image of Ganesha, beautifully painted is brought, and ‘Pranapratistha’ is effected and worship is offered to Vinayaka - 21 ‘durva’ tendrils are offered, 21 modakas are got ready and placed before the image, one is offered as ‘naivedya’, ten are donated to brahmans, ten are eaten by the performer himself or his family. The number 21 is important in Ganeshachaturthi.

In medieval times and also in modern times the popular belief was and is that if one happens to see the moon on Ganeshachaturthi evening one is falsely charged with the commission of a theft or the like.

In modern times the worship of Ganesha lasts for one day and a half, for three days, 5 days, 7 days or till Anantachaturdashi (14th day of bright half of Bhadra) according to the usages of the people, their inclinations and their tastes. The image is then immersed in a well, tank or in the sea in a great procession.

Ganesha is the most popular god these days and it is the practice to invoke him at the beginning of every important undertaking or rite. He is the God of wisdom, the presiding deity of life and nature, bestower of success and the destroyer of obstacles i.e. Vighna Harta.

The individual household worship and celebration of Ganapati festival is common throughout Maharashtra. Ganapati festival amongst all, provides unique entertainment and rejoicing and also offers an opportunity to the people to come together in common cause which is denied to these people. The institution of Public Ganapati celebrations was rightly introduced by Lokamanya Tilak and it is getting stronger with the passing of time. These Public celebrations beside providing entertainment which is so essential for healthy life and providing an opportunity for display of talents, also give the persons sponsoring them an
opportunity of working shoulder to shoulder in a common cause. At these celebrations elaborate programmes or instructive lectures and discourses (religious, social, political), dialogues, elocution competitions, Hari Kirtans, Bhajans, dramas, art exhibitions and even fancy dress competitions are organised.

These public celebrations were introduced originally to create political consciousness under the guise of a religious festival at a time when to indulge in political activity was a risky game. They are serving a useful purpose of providing a common platform where people living in the vicinity can meet besides giving a fillip to fine arts and crafts such as drawing, painting, image making, singing, etc.

**Risipanchami:**

On the fifth day of the bright half of Bhadrapada occurs the Risipanchami - vrata. It was meant for men of all varnas but is now mostly practised by women.

One should, when engaged in this vrata, subsist on vegetables alone and observe celibacy. The result is freedom from all sins troubles and the increase of one’s good fortune. If a woman performs this vrata she enjoys happiness, becomes endowed with good bodily form, beauty and sons and grandsons. This vrata should be performed particularly by women for getting rid of the sin of contact during their menstrual periods.

The seven sages together with Arundhati are to be worshipped. It is further provided that one should subsist on vegetables or bulbous roots or fruits and should not eat anything produced by ploughing the land. Even in these days those who perform this vrata do not eat corn produced by employing oxen. In modern times if men perform the vrata the priest invokes for them seven sages with vedic mantras.
It appears that originally the Risipanchami vrata was meant for the removal of sins for all, but later on it came to be specially provided for women.

This vrata offered women an opportunity to tender their dutiful homage to the great sages of the past. The other aspect, the need for strict hygienic mode of life. For women the primary objective of this vow and has been impressively illustrated both by the stories and the prescription of brushing the teeth and washing the body 108 times and keeping away from work and association during the menstrual period.

**Gauripuja / Jestha Gauri:**

In Maharashtra among common people it is customary to perform Gauripuja on the 7th and 8th day of Bhadrapada - Sukla and immerse Gauri (represented by a sheaf of plants). Jyeshta Gauri is known thus because she comes on the Jyeshta star and on the same day, elder sister of Laxmi, known as Alaxmi, i.e. poverty and is also, worshipped and given fairwell (visarjan). If she is not worshipped she may stay in the house. In some families women used to place threads before the goddess to symbolically mean the removal of poverty. They were preserved as they were believed to be capable of removing poverty.

Gauri festival is performed with more pomp and gaiety by putting all the ornaments on the Gauri image and by arranging folk dances of men and women.

**Pitri Pandharvada (Ancestral Fortnight):**

After Ganesh festival, till dark Bhadrapada 30 on any day in the memory of dead ancestors, Shradha is performed and lunch and gift are offered to Brahmins. *Pitru rina* is one of the rins which a householder is supposed to discharge.
Navaratra / Durgotsava:

From the 1st of Asvina bright half to the 8th is celebrated the Durgapuja festival, otherwise called Navartra, observed all over India in some form or other.

This is a festival of nine nights and basically a ‘upasana’ (worship) of Shakti epitomised by Goddess Durga. It is practiced by some as Kuladharma and the following constitute the observance of Navaratri.

(1) Fasting (2) Ghasthapana (3) Mala Bandhan (4) Akhanda Prajwalan of Nandadeep - an oil lamp is lighted and care is taken to see that it remains lighted incessantly for nine nights. (5) Kumarika Poojan (6) Lalita Panchami (7) Phulora (8) Ghagari Phunkane (9) Worship of Saraswati (10) Khande Navami - worship of weapons and equipments on the ninth day (11) Bhondala / Hadaga.

Particularly in temples dedicated to Goddess worship is done on a large scale and people visit these temples in large numbers.

Durgapuja is very cosmopolitan in character. It could be performed not only by persons belonging to the four varnas, but even by those who were outside the pale of the caste system. Durga-puja has congregational character and is not purely religious but has also a social element in it, such as inviting friends and treating them etc.

Vijayadashami:

The 10th tithi of Asvina- Sukla is called Vijayadashami. It is one of the three most auspicious days in the year (the other two being chaitra - sukala first tithi and Kartika - sukla first ). Therefore, in India, children begin to learn the alphabet on this day i.e. perform Sarasvatipujan. People start new undertakings on this day even when the moon and the like
are not astrologically favourable and if the king marches against his foes on this tithi when there is sravana naksatra it is very auspicious and brings to him victory and peace.

On this day the principal acts are the worship of Aparajita, the worship of shami tree, simollanghana (crossing the boundary of one’s village), returning home and having a lamp waved before oneself by the women in the house, wearing new clothes and ornaments.

In modern times on Vijayadasami there is ‘shamipuja’ in many parts of India. But shami is a rare tree. In Maharashtra and Konkan, twigs of a tree called Apta are brought from the forest and arranged in the form of a bush near a temple and in the afternoon the people of a town or village engage in a sort of mock scramble for taking away twigs of Apta and distribute the leaves among their neighbours, friends and relatives saying ‘take this gold’ common people in Maharashtra cut off twigs of shami and take them to their house. In the former princely states of India such as Baroda and Mysore ‘darbars’ were held on Vijayadashmi or Dasara and grand processions with richly caparisoned elephants and prancing horses were taken out on the streets of the capital city.

In some parts of Northern India Ramalila celebrations go on for ten days and culminate on the 10th of Ashvina in the burning of tall hollow paper and wickerwork structures concealing crackers representing Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Meghanad.

There are several other local customs and usages such as worship of weapons of war and implements of one’s trade or avocation associated with Dasara.

There are many conjectures about the origin of the Dasara festival. Some, relying on the usages of some parts of India to offer to gods ears of new corn, of hanging on the doors of the house the ears of green or unripe paddy and of putting in the turban young sprouts of wheat and the like, hold that it is more or less an agricultural festival. Others hold that as
about Dasara, monsoon rains stop, swollen rivers abate and crops are near being garnered, it is the most suitable time for marching on an expedition and that therefore the origin is due to military exigencies.

**Hadaga:**

This is a festival celebrated by girls especially, in the Hindu month Ashvina, when the sun enters the constellation of Hasta and it lasts for sixteen days.

The festival is very popular with girls. They draw pictures of elephant on a low stool in the house or on the ground with the help of ‘Rangoli’ powder, decorate them and dance around them to the accompaniment of songs. The number of songs to be sung corresponds to the number of the day since the festival started. On the first day they sing one song, on second two, on the third three and so on to the last. Every day the proceedings end with the distribution of ‘Khirapat’ (Some sweet). The items of Khirapat differ every day. The distribution of ‘Khirapat’ as preceded by a programme which requires the girls assemble to name the article used in the ‘Khirapat’ and interesting questions and answers ensure in the wake of this programme between the girls assembled. On the last day, all the articles used in the daily ‘Khirapat’ for fifteen days are used.

This is a festival to honour the Hasta constellation in which the sun enters at this time of the year and incidentally with whose departure from it after 15 days the rain comes to a close.

**Kojagara / Kojagiri Pournima / Kaumudi - Mahotsava:**

Asvin purnima tithi is marked by worship of Laxmi and Indra riding Airavata, lighting of lamps fed with ghee or sesame oil on a large scale at night on the capital roads, in
temples, parks and private houses and dice play. On this day beneficent Laxmi moves about at midnight in the world saying 'who is awake' and people should drink coconut water and play with numerals i.e., dice marked with numerals. Words 'Ko jagarti’ try to explain the name Kojagara.

This is a Harvest Festival which is celebrated on the day when the first fruits of the harvest are eaten. The persons who are keeping the festival according to custom, have to keep awake the whole night, awaiting the blessings of Shri Lakshmi, the Queen of Fortune, inviting her into the house keeping a light in front of it. Instead of playing dice to drive away the sleep from off the eye-lids or the individuals who are eager to await the blessings of Shri Lakshmi, it would be plainly better to sing her praise by means of Bhajans and kirtans so that she may willingly enter the house and bless those who wait for the blessings so eagerly. Kartika Snan (bath) starts from this day.

**Diwali:**

This festival of lights, illuminations and fireworks is the most joyful of all festivals and is most widely observed throughout India. Observances however differ in detail and numbers from age to age and from province to province. It is not a single festival in honour of a single god or goddess. It is spread over four - five days and contains several independent items.

Taken all in all, Deepavali spreads over four to five days.

**Dhan Teras:**

Diwali starts with Dhan Teras / Trayodashi, on which day Laxmi is worshipped and women take Abyanga Snan, i.e., a ritual bath with scented oil rubbed all over the body. On this day Dhanawantari is also worshipped.
Narakachaturdashi :

On this day wives give Abyanga Snan to husbands and wave ‘arati’ and husbands in turn are expected to offer some presents to their wives.

Laxmi Poojan :

Home is cleaned, water sprinkled and ALaxmi removed. Special silver coins are worshipped. Roasted paddy (Lahya) symbolising burnt karma and sweet sugar candies (Battase) are offered as Naivedya - consecrated food. Traders open new accounts books after offering worship.

Balipratipada :

This is also known as Diwali Padva. It celebrates Vishnu’s victory over king Bali. The new year Vikram Samvatsar starts from this day. This is considered one of three and half most auspicious days in Hindu calender. The wife waves the lamps over the husband, daughter over the father.

Bhau Beej / Bhai Dooj :

Is also known as Yamadwitiya. Where Yamee, the sister of Yama, God of death is worshipped. The sister does Arati to the brother. The belief is that it increases the longivity of the brother. The brother in turn offers her some gift. This is a celebration of the brother-sister relationship. There are illuminations and the discharge of crackers on almost all the five days from the 13th of the dark half of Asvina.

Divali holidays have, of late, assumed a great social importance and mutual greetings are exchanged on this occasion as during Christmas.
Kartiki Ekadashi:

Also called Bodhani or Prabodhini or Utthana Ekadashi when Vishnu rises from sleep. This is specially sacred to Sri-Vaisnavas as on this tithi there is the marriage of Tulsai to Vishnu. Tulsi plant plays a very important role in Hindu religious life.

1. It is known for its medicinal properties and is used in daily worship.
2. Early morning pradakshina (circumlocution) of Tulsi is supposed to fulfill women's desires.
3. A garland of Tulsi beads is a symbol of saintliness.
4. Tulsi leaves are placed in the mouth of the dead as a sign of purification.

Traditionally Tulsi Vivah was done with Homa etc.

Khandobache Navaratra:

Khandoba is a very popular deity in Maharashtra and Karnataka. During Navaratra those whose family deity is Khandoba offer special worship and articles prepared with wheat floor, onion, garlic and brinjal, dry coconut and turmeric as naivedya to him. Khandoba is the family deity of Brahmans but lower caste people also worship him.

Makarsankranti:

This is a very important religious observance and festival. Sankranti means ‘the (apparent) passage of the sun from one rasi (Sign of zodiac) to the next following’ and hence the rasi in which the sun enters is designated as the Sankranti of that name. When the Sun leaves the rasi called Dhanus and enters the Makara rasi that is called Makarsankranti.

In modern times Makarsankranti is more a social festival than religious one. No fast is observed and hardly anyone performs Sraddha, though many people bathe in the sea or in tirthas likes the Ganges at Prayag and elsewhere. Sesame are very much in evidence,

437
particularly in the Deccan and people greet each other by giving articles made from sesame and jaggery to artistic sugared preparations of sesame coloured with saffron and go about saying ‘take these sesame and jaggery and speak sweet words’ (in marathi).

The importance of ‘til’ (sesame) is brought out in the following words:

A person who uses sesame in six ways does not sink (is not unsuccessful or unlucky) i.e. who rubs his body with sesame, who bathes with sesame, who is pure and always offers water mixed with sesame (to his deceased ancestors) and who offers sesame into fire, who makes a gift of sesame and who eats sesame.

Gifts are made on Makarasankranti but mostly by women. They honour priests by donating vessels (of clay, copper or brass) containing several things such as betelnuts and coins and also invite their women friends and distribute among them earthen vessels containing red powder (kumkum), pieces of turmeric, betelnut and also separately several other things such as sugarcane stalks.

The day is observed by a feast of sweet dish. In the evening women go round the Hindu houses in the neighbourhood where the lady of the house applies turmeric powder and vermillion to their foreheads, gives them sweet sesame and speaks sweetly, and presents them with some articles such as small utensils, mirrors, combs, fruits etc. These mutual visits continue up to Ratha saptami.

Of late, Makar Sankranti is assuming unrivalled social importance amongst all the Hindu festivals and good wishes are exchanged not only between those present but also between people staying apart by sending them token parcels of sweetened seasamum and greeting cards as at Christmas.

Dattatreya- janma:

On Margasis Paurnamasi is Dattatreya jayanti. Datt was an avatra of Vishnu and propounded yoga to Alarka. His Jayanti is celebrated in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu.
Mahasivaratri:

The 14th tithi of the dark half of a month is called Sivaratri, but the 14th of the dark half in Magha is the Sivaratri ‘Par excellence’ and is often designated Mahashivaratri.

In modern times a fast is observed and Siva is worshipped and people may listen to stories of Siva’s exploits. Common people in some part drink a beverage called ‘bhang’ prepared by pouring water on crushed hemp leaves with the addition of almonds, rose leaves, opium seeds, etc. It is supposed to be dear to Sankara. In many temples of Siva water is made to drip on the linga incessantly.

Holika:

Holi or Holika is a festival of unmixed gaiety and frolic throughout India, though all parts do not observe it in the same way. The number of days during which this festival is observed also varies from province to province. Another item which is common to many parts of India is the sprinkling of friends with coloured water from bamboo, metal or plastic syringes or with red powder (gulal) and this merriment is indulged in even now by person’s in high places. In the Konkan men dressed as women accompanied by several persons go about with songs (often obscene) and music and dances. The only religious element is the worship of Krishna in Bengal and in some provinces where bonfires are made, a priest is engaged to perform puja before the bonfire, people go round the fire throwing coconuts in the burning wood and grass, taking them out half burnt, and distributing the singed kernel among the people present as ‘prasada’. In some parts people produce sounds by beating their mouths with the backs of their hands.

The bonfire represents the expiry of the season of frost and cold and heralds the warmth and love-making of spring. The ribald songs, dance and music are further accretions
due to the joy felt on the advent of spring. The sprinkling of coloured water and powder is an additional item in the celebration of the delights of spring. In some provinces this sprinkling is done on the very day of the Holika, while in the Deccan it is indulged in on the 5th day (popularly called Ranga Pancami) after Holica bonfire. Originally it was a spring festival. In some parts mud is thrown by people at each other on the day after bonfire. That is probably an extension of the idea of applying ashes of the bonfire to one’s forehead and the body on the day after it. The usage in some parts of creating noise by striking the back of one’s hand against one’s mouth accompanied by an obscene reference to sex is a further perversion due to welcoming the advent of spring which is traditionally the season of love making.

Some orthodox people observe the festival individually in front of their houses but as a whole, it is a public festival in which only men take part. A special sweet preparation going by the name of ‘puranpoli’ marks this festival.

Like most other good things in the world the reputation of this excellent festival has been damaged by the gross misuse of its privileges. The psychological safety valve provided for the pent up ugly emotions of the whole year assumed the form of a licence for unseemly abuse and obscenity, so much so that women folk refuse to take any part in this spring-cleaning and spring welcoming festival whose main function is to ring out the dirty and discard old autumn and ring in the colourful fresh and fragrant spring.

Women Performing Pooja of the Banyan Tree for Vat Pournima
Women tying Rakhis to Prisoners

Celebration of Janamashtmii by Samskar Bharati Org.
Girl Students of Jana Prabodhini Practicing for Ganesh Visrjana Procession on drums.

Women Feeding Spoonfuls of milk to idols of Ganesha
The woman priest performing ritual