Though the social composition of weavers involved in weaving occupation in the village is varied, their beliefs associated with the occupation have a lot of similarity. The head of the family or the older member of the household customarily starts the work everyday by touching the main beam of the loom with the right hand as a mark of respect to the loom, which provides him/her the livelihood. Some light incense sticks (*Agarbathi*) as a mark of obeisance before starting their work that day. They start the weaving work generally early in the morning to convince the celestials about their commitment to weaving work as they feel that the celestials will be visiting the house early in the morning. Thus a traditional weaver tries to please the celestials and receive their appreciation in order to prosper in the profession.

Thus, Day for a weaver starts early in the morning around five. Women prepare food for the family and wake up the male members and children. The elder/older member of the family starts the loom after taking bath. He touches the beam with his right hand as a mark of respect, before he sits on the loom. The older women in the family attend the sizing work after she rises from bed. Children attend the reeling and winding work and they are pressurised to do it fast as the wefting work needs to be stopped
if sufficient reeled yarn is not ready. Though this process is more or less uniform among all the weaving families, women share more burden among Padmasale, Devangam, Togata and Sakulasale families. Women from these castes have to attend to all the duties of a housewife besides weaving.

Women are culturally prohibited to work on the loom during menstruation period. However, in some families if women do not participate in weaving work it becomes difficult to make both ends meet. In such families, a menstruating woman takes a purificatory bath and circumambulates around the loom three times, pleading with the celestials for exempting her from observing the taboo.

A pregnant woman would work on the loom until the eighth month of her pregnancy. She again would return to the loom after forth day of her deliver). However, this duration varies according to the need of her involvement in the production. The expectant mother attends to all household work, besides weaving, in the family till the seventh or eighth month of pregnancy. Observing birth pollution and keeping the mother and child under the ritual pollution is found common among all traditional weaver castes. Since they are considered the possible sources of pollution, they are kept in a secluded place in the house (away from the loom). This period of pollution caused by childbirth ends on the seventh day.

In contrast, among Kurini, men equally share the burden of weaving along with women. Besides, unlike the other weavers,
they have a work ethic ingrained in their caste ideology. Kurinis have wide network of relatives in Karnataka. They are influenced by the Lingayat/Veerashaiva sect. They do not observe any rules of pollution in work (The Lingayats/Veerashivas believe that since they wear the image of god on them \textit{(Linga)}, they will not be affected by any kind of pollution. Also, they consider work as worship and no work is regarded as demeaning or polluting. Thus in work situation, gender, caste or creed distinctions do not exist.

In this context, the example of Somappa, a Kurini caste leader illustrates this work ethic. He initially worked with a Muslim and became popular due to his hard work in a short time. He also encouraged Scheduled Castes to start a leather workers’ cooperative. While Somappa set an example, similar attitudes are noticeable among the Gudekal Kurini. This can be seen clearly in case of Bheemappa and Yellappa, two Kurini weavers. Bheemappa and Yellapa work hard even at the age of 70 and above. Both have a large family, about 10 members, and possess three looms each. Since the number of family members are more in proportion to looms, they themselves take-up weaving without hiring labour from outside. They believe that from the childhood they are habituated to do hard work and feel that only hard work will feed them.
It is essential to discuss about the process involved in weaving, before one attempts to understand the cultural aspects among weavers. The process of weaving involves four successive stages. They are Sizing, Reeling, Warping and Wefting. A brief discussion of these stages involved in weaving provides some insight into the social division of labour in weaving process.

SIZING:

Sizing work precede all the processes of weaving. Sizing is necessary- after getting the yarn from YWCS. This process is called, Sarrulu Cheyadamu. This is done in the open space of the house premises either in the front or backyard. The eldest woman of the family usually carries on this work, as this work involves less hard work.

The thread is allowed to soak, initially, in cold starch water (extracted after boiling rice or by mixing maida powder, starch, in boiled water), called Ganji locally. Sometimes it is soaked in plain water also. Later, it will be kept in a clay pot or in a tub for some time. This is usually situated in a corner of the courtyard of the weaver's house. This will be later pounded in a mortar with a pestle. Children, especially girls, are engaged for this pounding work. Girls do this work by imitating pounding rice with rhythmic body movements. After pounding, the yarn is again soaked in Ganji in a pot or tub. The sized yarn, after removing from the pot
or the tub, will be allowed to dry. They tie it to two electric poles in
the street, for drying it. At this stage, they take greater care and
handle the yarn carefully and will be cautious to see that the yarn
does not get enmeshed.

The dried yarn is shifted into the house after sunset. Those
who are weaving the white cloth as specified by the YWCS, start
weaving after this. In case they have to weave a coloured cloth,
YWCS will supply the coloured yarn after sizing.

Some members from the traditional weaving castes,
especially from Padmasale, are engaged for sizing work on wages.
Mostly, widows and divorced women are engaged in this work.
There are separate sizing sections of YWCS in Yemmiganur where
the widows, divorced and other women were employed. In
Gudekal, there are three such facilities available and are run by
private parties on payment. If some weavers use this facility, they
would pay a stipulated fee as rental charge/wage. Bhagyamma, a
55 years old Padmasale lost her husband recently. Her husband
was working in a local spinning mill. She started working on a full
time basis in this job, after the death of her husband. She preferred
to take up sizing work as she did not know weaving and neither
could she go to work on the agricultural fields in the hot sun.

Thus the weaver's life is intertwined with different processes
of weaving. The participation of the entire family, occasionally
employing wage or exchange labour, in this process of weaving helps in maintaining a dense knit bond among its members.

REELING:

Reeling demands a weaver to prepare the bobbin and spindles using the spinning wheel located beside the loom or in the open space under the neem tree. As this requires little skill or no skill, children are mostly employed for this work. They first reel the yarn into the bobbin, called *kandi* locally, which is attached to one end of the thread into the left hand. After keeping the bobbin on the wheel, the wheel is turned and the thread rolls around the small bobbin (See picture 6.1 for raw implements of a loom).

WARPING:

Warping is the next process. It also requires concentration as it involves arranging the threads into correct length, according to the length of the doth to be woven. However, there are two dory machines available in the village, owned by two weaver families, and most of the people make use of this facility. The weavers avoid taking up warping process and make use of the dory machines.

WEFTING:

Wefting begins after the completion of warping work. The YWCS supplies the yarn sufficient enough for 15 days at a time. This yarn would be sufficient to weave two saris or four lungis, etc. If the weaver wants additional yarn, they have to submit fifty percent of the finished cloth out of the given yarn. Thus the loom
is always in operation in the weaver's house and when the other family member is on wefting; the remaining members of the family would be involved in pre-loom activities.

As referred earlier, wefting generally starts in the morning at six and continues till late evening. Usually the elder or older male member in the household starts the work first by bowing before the loom and touching the *Done* as a mark respect to it, as it is their breadwinner. Weaving is conducted on a pit loom, a traditional loom. It is named pit loom because the entire loom is placed on a pit. It is called locally as *Cuntha Maggam* (in Telugu, *Guntha* means pit and *Maggam* means the loom). The weaver sits on one end of the pit with his two legs placed on two treadles. The horizontal log comes to the level of weaver's belly when he sits on the pit. One "M" shaped "harness" with a "V" shaped "harness pull" hangs in front of the weaver (picture 6.2). The procedure involves pushing down the treadles simultaneously. A person weaves the cloth piece by technically allowing the hands and legs to move simultaneously. While pushing down the left treadle, the harness should be pulled to the left down with the right hand. Similarly, simultaneous movement of harness should follow pushing down the right treadle with the right leg to the right down. This process allows the pirn, which carries thread with it, to move left and right accordingly. The pirn adds horizontal strands to the cloth. The weaver checks the cloth's strands by pressing the heald towards the cloth beam, which makes the threads to come closer to
PICTURE 6.1: IMPLEMENTS OF A LOOM

1. Bobbin
2. Charkha
3. Shuttle
4. Pirn
one another. After some part of cloth is woven the weaver uses *pala katte* (a sort of handle) to roll the cloth to the *Done*, the main beam (Picture 6.2).

There are few framed looms through which bed sheets and towels are produced. The Jaquad loom is the new technology adapted in the village. Jaquad looms help the weavers to produce more saris and new designs can be adopted by using Jaquad. Production as well as returns will be higher under Jaquad loom. This loom is a bit expensive but is quite efficient over the traditional loom. There are only three weavers who have switched over to Jaquad loom.

II

Tradition plays a very significant role in societies, which maintain a pattern of life and have a long-standing tie up with occupations. This is more so with artisan castes/communities. Such societies are bound by a pattern of culture, which include the process of socialisation. This process of socialisation influence the ideas, concepts and beliefs that guide the actions of the members of the particular societies, and, in turn, it becomes helpful in interpreting the form and meaning of their behaviour, attitude, etc. Also, the socialisation process becomes instrumental, to some extent, in generating behaviour of the individual/society. Rao (1990) observed among the Jalaris that they perceive the solidarity relations as emanating from an individual's birth and incorporation
into the family and household. These relations, he states, bind the individual and his family with "codes of conduct" as revealed in the passage of life.

Socialisation process among the weavers varies according to the background of the caste/community. An individual's pattern of behaviour is conditioned by his birth in a particular caste/community. As noted earlier, for instance, among the Kurini the values like sincerity, hard work, etc., are taught to the individual since childhood. Introduction of a woman member into the family after marriage makes her follow certain patterns of behaviour specific to her conjugal family to become a full-fledged member of that particular family. Thus an individual is brought into a complex network of culturally defined relationships amongst kinsmen and others with morally binding obligations. This cultural network forms the basic framework to guide one's behaviour and interpret one's experience.

The ritual of naming is the first among the life cycle rituals of an individual among the weavers. It marks the transition from a state of pollution of a new-born child to his incorporation into the social environment. The naming ceremony helps in establishing the kinship bonds between the child and the other kinsmen. Naming children after their ancestors' names is generally observed in all communities. Their strong contention in giving the ancestor names is that their belief in acquiring the ancestor's qualities of hard-work
and sincerity in weaving. Naming their child after their household deities is quite common among all weaver families.

A girl who attains puberty, referred to as "Pedda Manishi Ainadf, has to observe five days as pollution period and on the fifth day she would be given a purificatory head-bath and a ritual would be performed. Kin members from both mother's and father's side attend the function to mark the occasion. She receives gifts like clothes, gold, etc., from them. The ceremony would start with touching the loom by the girl. She would formally sit on the loom after visiting the temple in the morning. This is done to pay her respect to the loom, which provides livelihood to a weaver family, and also to seek blessings from celestials to give her a good husband. Women, who gather at the function held in the evening on the fifth day, sing songs, which appeal to celestials to give her a hard working weaver husband.

The short stories they tell each other, the lullabies they sing to make the child sleep and the riddles they exchange while weaving, generally, revolve round their occupation. Their short stories are filled with achievements of a weaver hero who was challenged to weave as many clothes as he can, to win the heart of his heartthrob. Similarly another story depicts about how a weaver recognised his heartthrob in a test conducted by the celestials when he enters Swarga (heaven) in search of her. It describes that Lord Brahma (the creator) had sent three angels to earth to test the commitment and hard work of a weaver in weaving. In his process
of work, the weaver did not recognise the presence of those angels before him. However, one of those angels was attracted to his commitment, hard work and sincerity and fell in love with him and decided to stay in Bhooloka (earthly world) and started living with the weaver. But she was forced to leave him, as the rules of Swargaloka (heavenly world) did not permit her to stay on with the weaver. However, the weaver enters Swargaloka in search of her. As a test of his love, the celestial asked him to recognise his lover from among seven women, who were look alike, standing in a row. First, he felt it difficult to do it. But finally he recognises her with the help of the sari she was wearing that was woven for her with special designs during her stay with him. Thus, the celestial allowed her to go with her weaver lover and live with him on earth. These stories are narrated to younger members and children to motivate them to continue weaving work with dedication so that they can lead a happy life.

Their occupational attachment linked to the day-to-day life is reflected in their telling riddles also. "You kick him with right leg, he runs left and if you kick him with left leg he will come to right side", is one such riddle. It refers to the shuttle, which adds strands to the cloth. When a weaver pushes the pedal down with right leg, it goes to left side and vice-versa.

Family plays an important role in establishing harmony and cordial relationships among the weaver families. The reciprocal obligations between the family and the individual is emphasised
and maintained through obligatory performance of rituals and economic responsibilities between the parents and children. In this regard, there is a preference for a male child among the traditional weaver castes. Preference for a male child is linked to the continuity of weaving tradition and progeny. The oldest son in the family is considered very important. He assists the family in getting the yarn and raw work involved in weaving. A loom is acquired for him once he attains adulthood. Inheritance of the loom owned by the older member of the family, who is retired or deceased, to the eldest son or to his eldest son's son is widely practised. This practice is to keep the tradition of weaving on the loom that was used by their elders. Usually, the loom would be transferred to the wife of a deceased person first, in case she was depending on her husband's loom, and, only later after her death, to her son.

Siddaramappa (32), a traditional weaving caste member, pointed out that the loom on which he had been weaving was three generations old. His grandfather had owned it from YWCS, which his father had inherited it on the principle of primogeniture. He repaired and modified the loom recently for making it suitable to silk weaving.

Family among the weavers can be considered not only as a domestic unit, but also forms a production unit. As a domestic unit, it consists of all the family members, including children and dependants. The production unit consists of members engaged at
different stages of production with rules of division of labour. The weaver's family as a production unit is seen in terms of involvement and contribution of the family members to the production process. All the members of the family contribute to the family kit.

The family also functions as socio-cultural and recreation group. Members from other families join the weavers in weaving, some times. They share their views on production, technology and also about outside world. They also share jokes on each other, sing songs, tell short stories and riddles pregnant with meaning reflecting on their occupation. For instance, a woman sings song questioning her sister-in-law regarding what she brought with her from her natal family. The lady replies that like the winter brings cold, summer brings hot sun, she brought with her weaving techniques and designs, thus bringing prosperity to the family.

Marriage between a male and his elder sister's daughter is a common practice among the Kurini. There is always a wide age gap between the spouses. Early death of spouses among them leads to widowhood at an early age. The caste elders state that due to early widowhood (due to high rate of mortality) some women might indulge in indiscriminate sex habits. In order to prevent them from indulging in such practices, some social sanctions were imposed. If a Kurini widow has an illicit relation with a non-Kurini member then she gets excommunicated. If a widow has an illicit relationship with the same caste man, offspring born to such union
are called *beriki* Kurini and are regarded as of lower status. Thus, a Kurini caste member would not marry *beriki* Kurini and only a *beriki* Kurini can marry another *beriki* Kurini. The caste elders say that such a practice is to discourage the Kurini caste women from practising illegal sexual contacts, it is pertinent to note that most of the hired cotton weavers were found to be from *beriki* Kurini category, who were either orphans or destitute persons. This has a profound bearing on their socialisation.

The rule of *gotra* exogamy regulates marriage rules among the Kurini and other traditional weaving communities. The marriage ceremony takes place according to Hindu traditions among all traditional weaving communities.

The most preferred marriage among all the weaving families, both traditional and non-traditional, is cross-cousin marriage. Marriage between a person and his elder sister's daughter is common among Kurini families. The reason is that the elder daughter of a family gets married at an early age and her natal family expresses its gratitude, by marrying her daughter to one of her younger brothers, for her contribution from childhood to the family. Ramamurthy got his son married to his eldest daughter's daughter. He stated that all the other children were small when his eldest daughter was 12 years old. She worked hard to bring up the other children. Thus he felt it was his duty to bring her daughter into the family as a mark of reciprocation. Such a marriage practice
is restricted among Muslim and Katiye Muslim families as they consider it a taboo according to their custom.

III

The caste titles of the respective traditional weaving castes signifies a correlation between a particular weaving caste and the production of specific variety of cloth. For example, Padmasale are considered to be attached with coarse clothes; Patnulkare or Sakulasale arc specialised in silk weaving; and the Togata mainly specialised in weaving the coarsest kind of cotton clothe catering to the needs of lower classes. However, these specialisations are not discernible at present. YWCS had brought the entire local traditions of different weaver castes into its fold and unified all of them.

There exists a hierarchy among the traditional weaver castes. The Padmasale practices Upanayana ceremony and dons the sacred thread and claim to be superior in the social hierarchy among all the weaving castes. They conduct rituals (pooja) in the presence of a Brahmin priest and thus claim that they are closer to the status of a Brahmin. Where as the other castes do not claim the higher status but conduct rituals under the supervision of a priest from their own respective castes. However, Kurini consider themselves next to the Padmasale in social hierarchy. Though some of them don the sacred thread it is only to imitate the other sanskritised castes. Another distinction between Padmasale and other weaver castes is
that the Padmasale are Vaishnavites as they wear horizontal marks on their forehead and also venerate the sanskritik (great tradition) deities. Whereas Togata, Devanga and Sakulasale, venerate the local deities like Poleramma, Yellamma, Sunkulamma, Maremma, besides venerating their respective caste deities.

A nominal ritual is generally followed in initiating a weaver boy, formally, into the occupation. The boy of 14 years age or depending upon the accomplishment of the synchronisation of feet and hands of an individual to start wefting. This is necessary because, if the legs are short, the pushing of thread with the feet will not be possible and the same problem occurs while pulling the harness with the hands, when hands are small. The boy visits the temple early in the morning on the day on which he is introduced to wefting. He would offer a coconut to the god. The boy's caste background would influence his visit to a particular temple, which belong to their respective caste deity. Kinsmen from the mother side of the boy would be invited that day and feast would be offered to a few related close families in the village.

The life cycle rituals play equally significant role among the Muslim weavers also. Children below the age group of 6 to 7 years are not involved in weaving. The child is initially taught about the raw processes like winding, reeling and sizing. The formal initiation of a boy among them is pursued through a ritual ceremony. The initiation ceremony generally takes place on any Friday. House is cleaned for that day. The Muslim boy is initiated to loom with
fateha ritual conducted by a Mullah. Thus they seek blessings of the Mullah to the boy who assumes loom-hood. The household serves feast to few people on this occasion.

The Kara panduga (festival) at Yemmiganur has a lot of significance for the weaving castes. It is celebrated in the name of Neelakanteswara Swamy, venerated mainly by the Kurini. Somappa, who was a Kurini caste man, became leader of all weavers due to his contribution to the occupation. He motivated the weavers to participate in a common occasion like this.

This festival generally falls in the month of January, which marks the harvesting season also. Hence, the agricultural families also equally participate in the festival. The members of YWCS receive loans and bonus on this occasion. The weavers who are working under Master Weavers also get such benefits from their patrons on this occasion. As the fair is conducted for about one month, the weavers occasionally work on looms during this period as they actively participate in the celebrations. They buy new clothes for all family members and invite their kinsmen and friends from different places to attend the festival. The kinsmen who visit them during this occasion discuss about the new weaving designs and marketability of particular varieties of clothes (Plate 6.1).

They give equal importance to other festivals like Dussera, Deepavali and Ram Navami. On Naraka Chathurthi, which falls a day before Dussera, they perform pooja to the loom. Generally, the
elder member of the household performs the *pooja*, in which all the family members, including children, participate. They apply vermilion to the loom and light incense sticks and places them on the main frame of the loom. As part of the prayer, they break a coconut before the loom. The looms are kept idle for a day after the festival.

Some people initiate their children to weaving on *Vijayadasami* day during Dussera. Since Dussera is considered to be an auspicious day, they prefer to start new looms on this day with the belief that their venture would be successful and would bring them prosperity. Many Hindu weavers invite their fellow Muslim weavers for food on Dussera. Even some of the Muslim weavers prepare sweets in their houses to share them with fellow weavers' during this occasion. This is also the occasion when Middlemen Weavers and Hired Weavers enter into contracts with Master Weavers in silk. Even Cotton Weavers hire out their looms on this day to Hired Weavers.

Deepavali is also an important festival that is celebrated in grandeur, by the weavers from all traditional and non-traditional weaver castes, except Muslim and Katike Muslim families. This is an occasion when relatives of weavers from different places visit Gudekal. During this period they exchange information relating to their profession and other familial concerns. Different communities celebrate them differently. For instance, Kurinis from Sultan Banda *Gotra* gather on the day of Deepavali Amavasya at Daivam Dinne.
village, located 15 kilometres away from Gudekal. It is customary that every household from this particular Gotra should be represented on the gathering. If someone is not able to attend, they should send offerings in kind and cash through their neighbours. Thus, people who had migrated to different parts of the country like Ahmedabad, Bhopal, Bombay, Sholapur, Mysore, Raichur, Kurnool, etc., attend the ritual. Much of their discussion during this gathering would be related to their occupation. They discuss the weaving techniques, trends and designs of their products.

Muslim weavers venerate Hazrat Alleepeeran, a famous spiritual leader in this area. A Dargah (tomb) was constructed in his name. They visit the Dargah on every Thursday to seek his blessings. Urs, an annual fair, would be held in his name every year and both Muslims and Hindus participate in this function. The families engaged in weaving would request the Mullah (the priest) to conduct special prayer for benevolence in weaving.

The weavers of Gudekal show little interest in the political activities or local conflicts, as they will be on the loom most of the time. It is only in the night that they would be free, and only during that time they would be able to meet the others. But by the time they retire from the work at the end of the day, they will be tired and usually go to bed early. Given this, there are little possibilities for them to participate in non-weaving activities. So the weavers in the village do not have any major disputes or factions amongst themselves. However, when compared to the
past according to the weavers, the social relations of the traditional weavers with the other non-weaving castes is somewhat strained. In the past, as narrated by some of the old weavers, there existed a close and friendly relationship among different castes, including weavers in the village. Before starting of the YWCS the non-weaving caste members used to visit the weavers' houses in order to purchase or to order a cloth for different occasions or purposes. During their visits they used to exchange pleasantries and also gossip (called lokabiramayanam).

The YWCS began to play a crucial role in the weaving occupation. Starting from the supplying of yarn to the weavers to the receiving of finished clothes from them, the YWCS is directly involved in their activities. YWCS markets the cloth to the consumers through its outlets in different parts of the state. Now the consumers no longer need to go to the weavers for procuring the cloth, which they can now get in a doth shop. This has snapped the traditional relationship between the weavers and the non-weavers.

Previously, the weavers were respected by the non-weaving castes, which is no longer the case. They lost their functional importance in the village social system and in a way the organic unity is disrupted. Of course, the development of electronic media brings them closer to what is happening outside their world. They are also supplemented by the knowledge brought by their fellow weavers who, as a consequent of emergence of silk weaving visit
the urban centres. Some of the Independent and Master Weavers visit the centres like Madurai, Vijayawada, Secunderabad, etc, for silk yarn. They would explain their family and fellow weavers about the happenings in other places. Silk business started attracting the customers from other places like Gadwal, Bellary, Raichur, etc., thus drawing weavers into a wider world other than their own.

Generally, most of the people know the technicalities like tying the warp, adjusting the size, etc. If one faces a problem in warp fitting, loom repair, etc., the neighbours or friends will help them. Sridhar, who was seen preparing a Ladi Kommu, (a cock like implement), which is a key instrument in the loom, for his Mend whose loom has lost it, since his friend lacked knowledge in this regard he volunteered to help him. People from the other weaving communities also attended such works voluntarily. Suleman, a Muslim weaver from a non-traditional weaving community, felt happy to help the fellow weavers when they face any technical problems in weaving. He felt that one does not lose anything by sparing some time to help fellow weavers, when one possesses the knowledge and skill. A person, who helps, irrespective of their background, receives good appreciation. During visits to houses, they may enquire about their family and discuss occupational matters.
The sister-in-law replies:

Oh Aada Bidda! Oh Aada Bidda!
Vudikuthe Kundalo Neelu Olukuthundi
Vaana Kaalam Iona Vaane vasthundi
ChaliKaalam vasthe chalipilavakane vasthundi
Laxmi Devi vachinadante Siri vasthunatle kadaa
Ee Saali Bidda vachina chotiki Saali kalale venta techindani
Nee Illu Singaram Chesindani