CHAPTER-II

CUSTOMS, RITUALS AND
ORAL TRADITIONS
Culture" implies a standard pertaining to an individual or group. To be "a man of culture" involves participation in special social values clustering around tradition. But it is not the particular content of those traditions that is vital, indistinguishing the cultured person from others. Everyone who is cultured lives in a certain realm of specific feeling, deriving not only from those attitudes and typical reactions traditionally prescribed for him, but also from a feeling of security that comes to the person within the cultured circle.

In the Sugali society, too, there are "cultured" groups accepted as such by the folk. These are the repository of the tribal lore, an oral tradition ancestral legends, impersonal myths, folklore, and songs. So strong is these Sugalis' connection with the glorious past that they speak of an ancestor as if they feel that they are the dramatic impersonators of tradition. The word 'Naik' itself is the symbol of their glorious past.

The anthropological idea of culture concerns all those aspects of human life that are socially inherited, as contrasted with those types of behaviour that are biologically inherited and with those that individual reactions lacking historical continuity (perhaps the best known anthropological definition is the one proposed by Tylor in 1871). "Culture or civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."1
In this chapter an attempt is made to analyse the significance, and function of the culture namely beliefs, customs and practices. We cannot fully understand social institutions unless we understand the place of beliefs, values and customs – culture – in these activities. According to the American anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn, that the definition of culture consists of different components, it is dynamic, structured and the means by which individuals adjust to social life and learn ‘creative expression.’ Kluckhohn argues that culture has content and structure. The Sugali culture is a ‘design for living’, formed through historical processes. The Sugali culture functions for integrating the individual into the group. Their culture is functional for the continuation of their society. The Sugali rituals act as forms of communication. They communicate social information and help renew collective sentiments. They are the transmitters of culture. The ritual function is to reaffirm the group’s solidarity, the stronger the ‘group’ the more collective reality therein, shared beliefs and values are strong, boundaries separating it from other groups are clearly drawn.

CUSTOMS AND RITUAL STRUCTURE

The rituals of the Sugalis better known as the ‘disjoined’ past of myth is expressed, on the one hand, through biological and seasonal periodicity and, on the other, through the ‘conjoined’ past, which unites from generation to generation the living and the dead. This synchronic – diachronic system has been well analysed by Sharp who divides the rites into three
The rites of control are positive or negative. They aim to increase the totemic phenomena for the benefit of the community, by fixing the Gods to emanate from the totemic. Centres established by the ancestors at various points in the thanda. The commemorative or historical rites recreate the sacred and beneficial atmosphere of the past. The mourning rites correspond to an inverse procedure: instead of charging living men with the personification of remote ancestors, these rites assure the conversion of men who are no longer living men into ancestors. It can thus be seen that the function of the system of ritual is to overcome and integrate three oppositions: that of diachrony and synchrony; that of the periodic or non-periodic features which either may exhibit, and finally, within diachrony, that of reversible and irreversible time, for although present and past are theoretically distinct, the historical rites bring the past into the present and the rites of mourning the present into the past, and the two processes are not equivalent: mythical heroes like Hathiram Bāva, and Sevabhaya, can truly be said to return, for their only reality lies in their personification, but human beings die for good.

Some rites are concerned with changes of social status and the interaction of social groups. In the Sugali society the large number of people whose adherence to their religion is merely nominal occasions, all concerned with changes of status – at birth when a new person enters society, at marriage and at death when a person leaves it. The occasions for rites concerned with

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* For accounts of rites referred to in this chapter, the researcher has referred V.W. Turner’s *Ndembu Divination, Rhodes-Livingstone papers*, who brought new insights into the ritual process.
changes of social status, which Evans Pritchard calls ‘confirmatory’ are similar all over the world. These are rather termed as ‘transition rituals’.

In the Sugali society every change that could be thought of as a passage from one state to another was ritualized. Changes in the social status of individuals, the movement of the community to a new village, the entry of a couple into a new house, or even entering or leaving any house. The attainment of social adulthood is marked by ritual, as are marriage and death, and one of the effects of mortuary ritual is to establish the status of the dead person as an ancestor. Their rituals usually include elements directed to the person’s success in his new status; for example, marriage rites are concerned with fertility, the ritual of birth with the safety and health of the infant and his fortunate progress through life.

Totemic Clans

Among the Sugalis, the totem is thought of as a kind of spiritual agent for which special ceremonies are performed, so that it is the object of totemic cult. The term ‘totem’ has been widely used to refer to animal or plant species and occasionally other things which are held in special regard by particular groups in a society. A number of features are generally associated with totemism besides the reference to some thing, the totem. First, it is usually a group institution, though the group is not invariably one based on unilineal descent. These totemic groups are exogamous. But they are not always so. There may be a mythical belief that members of each totemic
clan are descended from the totemic species associated with it. Hence it may be concluded that the totem is rather a symbol and a custom of giving respect and avoidance of the totem is wide spread.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Clan</th>
<th>Deity</th>
<th>Totem</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rathod (Bhukya moiety)</td>
<td>Khokrochi</td>
<td>Jilledu (<em>Callotrophis giganta</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chouhan (Jat moiety)</td>
<td>Nagarochi</td>
<td>Tulasi (<em>Ocimum Sanctum</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pamhar (Jat moiety)</td>
<td>Asavali</td>
<td>Jammi (<em>Prosopis Spicigera</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vadathiya (Jat Moiety)</td>
<td>Panavali</td>
<td>Marri (<em>Ficus Bengalensis</em>)</td>
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The Sugalis have the ritual regard for certain important features of their natural environment. The totemic worship in marriage and death ceremonies suggests that totemic plants like jilledu are chosen not just because they are easily represented, but for some other reason too. Radcliff – Brown argues that they are selected because they are already objects of practical and therefore ritual, interest to the community. The Sugalis attach ritual significance to things that are important to them. They attach a very high value to cattle, but among were of them do cattle form the object of a cult, though they may be and are used in religious cults.

**Rites de Passage**

In every society as people get older they move through different statuses. Sometimes these statuses are strongly
institutionalized in systems of age grades and age sets. Initiation into an age set, and the transition from one grade to another, are usually accompanied by extensive ritual. A Sugali marries to get children. Sons are considered to be a sign of the prosperity of the household. Childlessness is attributed to one’s bad luck. A man without children is pitied and a woman, howsoever good, is despised if she fails to bear children within four or five years.

Like other communities a barren woman is looked upon as a curse in the Sugali family also. Women with children enjoy better status than a barren woman. So special interest is shown on the pregnant woman till the delivery. The Sugalis have a ritual regard for objects and events which are of great practical importance to them. The relatives of the pregnant woman arrange a feast on an auspicious day and present the gift and sweets to her. They wish a safe delivery and the well being of both the mother and the child. Usually the ‘conception feast’ is arranged in fifth or seventh month of pregnancy.

It is a well known fact that male child has great importance in the Hindu society. As it is said ‘childless person has no salvation’. The Hindu engages in performing rituals prior to the birth and pregnancy. These rituals start with pregnancy and end with the death of a person. At various stages of life they are being practiced.

Among the Sugalis too there are some rituals prior to the birth of a child and are carried on through different stages of
life culminating in death. These rites may be classified from the
time of pregnancy to adolescent period.* They are as follows:

1. Vekalpero (celebration on the birth of the child)
2. Dalawā Dhokāyēro (the ceremony during the bedding of a
   woman after the birth of the child)
3. Jheliro Nokta** (the cradling ceremony)
4. Phagalya Phadero Nokta (the socialization of the child)
5. Bālalatta Kadayer (the first hair clipping ceremony of a
   child)
6. Dhund (birthday celebrations)

Vekalpero (Celebration on the birth of the child)

Since times immemorial, the Sugalis have preserved their
culture and still practice their customs in the modern period
also. It is customary for the Sugali women to take the first
delivery in the husband’s house. The elderly women of the
thanda sing the songs of questions and answers to lessen the
pangs of labour. She is made to lie on a cot placed at some
distance from the house for the sake of privacy. A curtain is
erected around her. Some women gather around her but
unmarried women and children are not allowed to come into this
improvised maternity booth. One of their elderly women,
generally, serves as a ‘dai’. She is not a professional midwife
but having given birth to several children and assisted in several
births she is considered to be quite experienced in the job. After
the delivery, the umbilical cord is cut with any sharp thing such

* Though these ceremonies are very common to the Sugalis, they are not aware of the
nomenclature of these ceremonies.
** Nokta means ceremony as well as ritual. It is commonly used in Sugali society so as to denote
their cultural practices.
as sharp strip of a bamboo. The umbilical cord is buried inside the dark corner of the house. Sometimes it is kept dried and is tied in a red cloth. This is used as a ‘yantra’, which is tied to the waist of the child, so that the child may not caught by the evil eye or spirit.

A knife or some iron implements are placed under the woman’s pillow to keep the evil spirits away. A broad piece of cloth is tied round her waist. “The disposal of the lochial blood, of the placenta and naval cord” rightly observes Margaret Mead, “all depend on the society’s conception of the body and of the continuity within the unit.”

Among the Sugalis, the umbilical cord and some grains of rice and a piece of jaggery are placed in a pit dug in a dark place inside the house. A stone is placed over it, lest it should be dug out and eaten by dogs or jackals and the health of the child and its mother may be affected due to this. This corroborates Professor Ghurye’s statement, “the people, who bury the placenta, believe that if it is eaten away by an animal, something terrible will happen to the child’s mother.”

The birth of a male child is announced to all the people of thanda by beating drums. Bronze plates (Thali) are beaten on the birth of a female child. After listening the drum beating the people of the thanda assemble at the house and express their joy through dance and drink. This happy occasion is called as ‘Anand parado’ or ‘Vekalpero’. Elderly women offer prayful songs for the best future of the child. These songs are called as Ekalpoyero Gīd.
The new mother is supplied ‘Dharu’ (liquor) to drink daily. It is believed that the constant use of the ‘Dharu’ will clean the womb and improves the health of the mother. She is also given the food items like sweets, meat, masalas, ghee and dry coconut.

The pollution is observed for one month. The new mother takes bath on the first day of the delivery itself. In case of menstruation woman who takes bath after its completion on 5\textsuperscript{th} or 9\textsuperscript{th} day, she is considered as untouchable and is not allowed to touch the utensils in the house. As stated earlier, the new mother and child are kept in a separate room or thatched hut for a period of one month. Her husband is not allowed to see the wife for 4 to 6 days.

This precaution is taken to protect mother and child against obnoxious draughts of air. But clearly they are also a protection against evil spirits and the evil eye. For sometime no body should have access to the mother except the midwife.

**Dhalava Dhokayero (Ceremony during the bedding of a woman after the birth of the child)**

This ceremony is performed on the 5\textsuperscript{th} or 7\textsuperscript{th} day after the delivery. This is also known as ‘Jhalava Dhokayero’. On this day, the elderly women offer prayer to Goddess Chatimātā. These songs are known as ‘Voolang’.

According to the custom of Dhalava Dhokayero, water is filled in three copper vessels and in each vessel coal powder, turmeric and vermilion are added respectively. These vessels
are decorated with vermilion spots and their mouths are tied with a rope made of goat’s hair and cowries are also tied to the hair. These three vessels are kept over each other. The Sugali women, dig a small pit in front of the house and the pit is filled with water and rupee coins are also thrown into the pit. Now, the new mother keeps the three vessels on her head and a sickle is tied to her waist. She walks towards the pit and the thumb of her left leg is dipped into the water for seven times. After that the pit is covered with soil and she carries the three vessels on her head and reaches her home. She strikes the door with the sickle for seven times and steps into the house. Finally the ‘churmo’ made of rice flour, jaggery and ghee is distributed to all the attendants.

Dagdero (Branding of the child with a needle)

After one month of the delivery, the newly born child is taken out of the house for removing the ritual impurity. A needle is heatened up and is marked on the stomach. The information for the necessity of branding given by Sugalis is that evil spirits may not harm the child.

Jheliro Nokta (Cradling ceremony)

Cradling ceremony of the child is known as ‘Jheliro Nokta’. The married women of the thanda are invited and the child is kept in a cradle by singing the ‘Jheliro Nokta gid’. Finally the married women are given the fruits and betel nuts.

The rites of naming ceremony among them do not have much importance. On an auspicious day women put the child in
a bamboo cradle or a cradle shaped like gunny bag and sing the songs known as Phalanem Ghāler Gīd. The naming ceremony is performed in a brief way by offering some coconut and vermillion to the tutelary deity. After this, the paternal uncle of the child whispers the words ‘Kurra Kurra Kukadi Kurra,” in the child’s ear. Finally the guests are given five kinds of grains and pulses.

**Phagalya Phadero Nokta** (Socialization of the Child)

As soon as a child is born, close kinsmen as well as other members of the family and of the society in addition to parents, have the moral obligations to give him or her proper training so that it may become member of the Sugali society. Family members play an important role in this regard. When the child starts walking, then a ceremony called ‘Phagalyar Ghugari’ is performed.

However, this celebration is not part and parcel of every birth. Only the rich families can afford to organize all these ceremonies. On this occasion, women of the thanda are invited and the cooked green gram or Bengal gram is thrown on the way where the child walked.

**Balalatta Kadayer (The first hair-clipping ceremony)**

The first clipping of a child’s hair is given much importance by the Sugalis. This rite gives a new spirit to the life of a child. The hair is clipped with the chanting of names of family goddesses like Durgamata, Seetlamata and Tulaja.

* Phagalya Phadero Nokta is not commonly performed in both the thandas, as these people are not interested in performing this ceremony.
Bhavani. They offer animal sacrifices to all family gods during the sacred ceremony except Balaji. They worship the Goddess and offer prayer song. This song is known as Volang dero.

**Dhund Ceremony (Birthday Celebrations on the birth of a male child)**

The dhund ceremony is performed during the Holi festival. This rite is performed in a house where the male child is born. The age of the child is counted on the celebration of the birth day. The child is made to sit under a tent erected in front of the house and a lot of Sunvali (wheat puri) and plateful of lapasi (a sweet made of wheat flour) are placed on all four sides. The elderly people, youngsters and children bless the child with a song of good luck wishing and this is known as ‘Dhund geed’ or ‘Vanjana’.

**Adoption of Out Castes into the Sugali Community**

Among the Sugalis, the ‘adopted child’ is called as ‘Jangad’. Another name for the ‘Jangad’ is ‘Polo Passo’. According to Shyamala Devi Rathod, in order to become a Sugali, it has been the tradition for Jangad families to spend large amounts of money for the psychological satisfaction of belonging to a community. In the event that Sugalis are hired by non-Sugalis, all Sugalis are treated alike by the non-Sugalis. The Jangad carries a burden as he is untouchable for the non-Sugalis as well as for the Sugalis among whom he has lived and worked for generations. To overcome this social ostracism, and also to derive economic benefits, the Jangad will save all his earnings for a single purpose – to become a Sugali. The number
of Jangad families living in thandas varies from one thanda to another. In the Singampalli thanda, there are 5 Jangad families whereas in Pampanuru thanda only two Jangad families are residing. These families make a collective attempt to become Sugalis. It is customary for the Jangad family to offer gifts in cash and kind to all the Sugalis in their own and surrounding thandas. The Naiks of various thandas are invited. If more than two families were involved, the Sardar Naik had to participate. Here, the Sardar Naik is the head of the four to five thandas.

Each Jangad family had to present two tolas of gold to the Sardar Naik or Naik whoever may be. He is also expected to bear the expenses to and from the thanda for the Naiks and Sardar Naik. The gathering is to be feed and the meal always consisted of mutton, country liquor, white toddy and sweets. A Jangad family suffers great mental strain and is a victim of Sugali social discrimination. They cannot take water from the common Sugali wells; in the fields Jangad women and children were verbally abused; in Sugali ceremonies they were not given ‘Kavholo’ (Tāli) but “Plato” (leaves). To reduce discrimination they live on the outskirts of Sugali thandas, often at quite a distance away. In order to reduce the costs of the Jangad dawat, a Jangad mobilizes the other Jangad families from their respective thandas to his thanda.

During the Dawat, the Naiks of the Jangad’s thanda persuade the Sardar Naik and to accept the gifts offered by the Jangads. The request will not be taken seriously by the Jangads.
An outcaste Jangad seeks the permission of Sardar Naik for ritual purification, and pay him in gold. These are nothing but the caste and class differences created by men who were in the minority in order to control the majority. Customs and traditions were created only with this in mind. Through the consensus of all those present at the dawat, the Sardar Naik performs the ritual purification by placing the gold in the fire and placing it on the tongue of the families, including small children of those becoming Sugalis. The people who recommend the Jangad families for inclusion into the Sugali community receive their gifts, pay their travel expenses.

It is the duty of the Sugalis to condemn the rigidity of unjust customs and traditions. The Naiks agree that they cannot get away with what they could in the past.

The social position of a family bears intimate relationship with the way the ceremonial performances are arranged. In case of socially superior families, the ceremonies are observed with great pomp and show. They invite more people and hence spend more. The procedure demands that higher the social standing more is to be invested on such occasions.

The organization of feasts at various stages mark some functional uniformity. These are an expression of happiness and joy. In addition to rejoicings the performances call for a social gathering of relatives who get into kinship reciprocity are also displayed. The marriage ceremonies pose for a strong sense of community living.
SUGALI DRESS AND ORNAMENTS

Their physical features, dress and ornaments are unique, colourful, attractive and decorative. The traditional dress and ornaments distinguish them from other tribal as well as non-tribals. These people are easily identifiable by the traditional dress as well as their ornaments.

Various scholars like S.G.Deogaonkar, F.S.Mullay, K.S.Singh, Burton Stein and S.A.H.Rizvi are of the opinion that men are fine, strong, energetic and capable of enduring long and fatiguing muscles.

The traditional dress of a male Sugali consists of white or red turban (Pagiree) and a pair of white broches or knickerbockers, reaching a little below the knee, sometimes dhoti, covering the body up to the hips, with a string of red silk tussles hanging by the right side from the waist band. Dhoti and turbans are frequently worn during the festive occasions. Men also wear considerable amount of jewellery, such as silver bangle worn on the upper arm of the right-side and the waist thread decorated with laden beads and tassels. Dhoti with short trousers and red turban, pan supari pouch and hookah are used. 6

Commenting on the physique of Sugali women, Thurston says that “Women as a rule are above the average height of women of the country.” Their costume is a lainga or gown of karwar cloth, red or green with a quantity of embroidered choli or bodice, with the embroidery in the front and on the shoulders covering the bosom. The distinction can be easily made out between married women, unmarried women, widows as well as
in the case of matrons. All the ornaments and dressing pattern would be different in these cases.

**Dress**

The present day costume and personal adornments of the Sugali females have been variously described by different writers. The Sugali woman’s dress usually consisted of three garments. They are:

1. Phatia – lower garment usually called as Lainga.
2. Kaali – Blouse
3. Chantia or Ghungato - Veil

The traditional dress of the women, made of coarse cloth with strongly sewn patchwork and gaudy colours had been designed to suit the occupational needs of passing through jungle tracts flanked by thorny bushes in order to collect wood and other forest produce. The thin sari worn by the non-Sugali peasant women would be unsuitable for such work. Perhaps this is the reason why there is no change in the dress of the women, as the women still continue to collect forest produce and firewood.

‘Chantia’ is usually red in colour and is embroidered with silk thread. The embroidery on these garments is called by various names viz., Māki, Jheto, and Rele. On either side of the ‘Chantia,’ the silver coins are decorated and this is called as ‘Ryper Ghungat’ or ‘Choule Ghungat.’ Sometimes the ‘Chantia’ is also decorated with silver bells and rings which is called as Ruper Ghangarar Ghungat. The middle part of the chantia is covered with silk threads (Phunda) and cowries. The embroidery
design of the middle part of Chantia is called as ‘Phulya’. The Sugalis present at least 4 to 5 pairs of chantia to their daughter at the time of marriage. This chantia is a covering cloth fastened in at the waist and hangs at the side with a quantity of tassels and strings of cowries.

**Kaali**

Kāli is the blouse and it contains 4 parts. This is also known as chola or choli, with embroidery in the front and on the shoulders, covering the bosom, and is tied by variegated cords at the back, the ends of the cords being ornamented with cowries and beads.

The sleeves of the kali or choli are called as khadapa or khavyya. The cloth which covers the either sides of the breasts is known as Pāta. Dhandhanyā is the cloth which covers the breasts. Backside of the blouse is called as Peti.

**Phatia**

Phatia is the lower garment and it consists of five parts. They are as follows:

1. ‘Lepo’ – the cloth which covers the waist.
2. Boro – this cloth is attached to the lower side of the ‘Lepo’
3. Sādi – this is the lower-part of the Lainga which covers the knees and legs.\(^8\)
Sādi

This is the lower part of the Lainga which covers the knees and legs. Sādi is beautifully decorated with silk threads and the embroidery on the Sādi is termed as ‘Pesoteko’. ‘Laman’ is the cloth which is attached to the lower-part of the Sādi. The embroidery on this cloth is known as ‘Khilemodero’.

The Sugali woman’s dress is very thick and heavily embroidered. The garments have many ornate fixtures, such as small mirrors, cowries etc. On account of all these, the women wash such clothes very sparingly, and are for the same reason their clothes are dirty. Therefore, as a reform measure, they were asked to discard the traditional dress and adopt sari, the unintended consequence of which has been to make them more attractive. Women stitch these garments in their leisure time. They display their creative and aesthetic skills in stitching these garments. They usually keep three dresses with them. One dress is kept for use during marriage ceremonies or religious congregations. Another dress is used in long journeys. They use the third dress as casual wear. In recent years, the thick and ornate dress is reserved for special occasions and ordinary one which can be easily washed, is used for daily wear.

Ornaments

Similarly, in ornamentation and hairdo, the Sugali women stand out clearly from other non-Sugali women. They are as follows:

1. Bhurya – it is the nose ring made of gold and is in crescent shape.
2. Kānya – these are the ear hangings.

3. Medalo – it is the silver necklace which weighs 3/4 kgs to 1 kg.

Women are fond of wearing the toe rings. They are called by different names viz., Pulia, Vinchua, Chatiki etc. Their jewels are very numerous, and include strings of beads of tens or twenty rows with a cowry as a pendant, called the cheed, threaded on horse-hair and a silver hasali (necklace), a sign of marriage equivalent to the tali. They also wear the anklets and silver rings to their legs. The Sugalis in the Rayalaseema region, wear the anklets and rings made of silver. But in the Telangana region, they wear the bronze and copper anklets. They are called by different names viz., Jhanjharia, Kasse and Bodha. The Sugali woman’s ornaments are so singularly chosen that we have, we are confident, seen who have had eight or ten pounds weight in metal or ivory round their arms and legs. Their bangles are called as ‘Balya’. These are of two types. They are:

1. Chuderbalya, 2. Balya. Married women wear the ‘chuderbalya’ which are made of ivory which extend from the shoulder to the elbow covering the two arms. The unmarried and widowed women wear the ‘Balya’ from the elbow to the wrist. Women also wear ‘Kasatia’, a piece of embroidered silk, one inch wide, with cowries and bells, these being presents from the mother to her daughter.

In describing the dress of the Sugali women, Rev. G.N. Thomssen writes that, “the sari is thrown over the head as a hood, with a frontlet of coins dangling over the forehead. This frontlet is removed in the case of widows. The dearest
possession of the women are large broad bracelets, made some of wood, and the large number of bone or ivory. Almost the whole arm is covered with these ornaments. In case of the husband’s death, the bracelets on the upper arm are removed. They are kept in place by a cotton bracelet, gorgeously made, the strings of which are ornamented with the inevitable cowries."

The ‘chuderbalya’ are sometimes dyed red, silver, lead, copper, or brass in ponderous bars, encircle their shins, sometimes round, others in the form of festoons, and truly we have seen some so circumstanced that a criminal in irons would not have much more to incommode him than these damsels deem ornamental and agreeable trappings on a long march, for they are never dispensed within the hottest weather.

The Sugali women divide their hair into four parts: They are as follows:

1. Chati
2. Chotla
3. Front part of the head

Unlike the Hindu women, the Sugali women don’t like to comb their hair to the backside. They would like to cover their cheeks with hair, so that they may not be attracted by men folk.

* B.G. Halbar, in the article ‘Socio-Cultural Identity of the Lamani in the North-West Karnataka’, tried to delineate the cultural mechanisms that have enabled the Lamani to maintain the critical minimum of their cultural identity in spite of interaction with the dominant culture of North-West Karnataka. He also refers to the colonial officers’ report on the Sugalis in this context.
In the medieval period, the Sugali women wanted to protect themselves from the Muslim intruders by covering their head and face with a Ghungat and plaited hair. For the married women, the symbolically significant ornaments are ivory bangles on the upper arms in addition to those on the forearms, chains in the pinnae which connect the plaits, and pendants called ‘ghugris,’ attached to the plaits hanging from the temples.  

The hair which covers their cheeks is neatly plaited and to the end of these plaits, silver ornaments called ‘Ghugri’ and ‘Topli’ are attached. ‘Topli’ is a silver pendant from the upper part of the ear attached to a silver chain which hangs to the shoulder and it is worn by both married and unmarried women. The absence of heavy pendants or ‘Ghugri’ is a sign of widowhood.

Women also wear a silver ornament called ‘Aadkānt’ which hangs over from the forehead and each of its ends are clipped to the hair on the ears. They cover the forehead with a silver button called ‘Tikli’, Bhurya, Anklets, Ghugri, Chuderbalya, and Tikli are the signs of a married woman. They are removed on the death of the husband. Their bangles are of two types. They are as follows: 1. Chuderbalya, 2. Balya.

The married women wear the ‘Chuderbalya’, which are ivory bangles, extending to the elbow on either arm. The unmarried and widowed women wear the ‘Balya’ on the lower side of their elbows extending upto the wrists. ‘Kasotia’ or silk
embroidery adorned with tassels and cowries is also worn covering their elbows.

MARRIAGE SYSTEM

The Sugalis do not make it easy for a man to enter matrimony. They take it as a serious matter and is not accomplished in a day. It needs considerable time on their hands. The leisure, whether voluntary or involuntary, they particularly like to fill with the many and varied ceremonies connected with betrothals and weddings. The bustle and activity with which the Sugalis surround the marriage contact speak better than words of the fundamental importance which they attach to this institution. They arrange the marriage ceremonies only in the rainy season, as they are free of their trading activities in this season. Hence it became customary for them to arrange the marriage rites in rainy season.

It is very often said that Sugali children change considerably when reaching puberty. This change is not only physical but also mental. While physically they now quickly grow into adults, mentally they slow down considerably. While their innocent gaiety and unbounded energy of childhood turn into slow, clumsy and awkwardly shy youths, puberty set in between the age of 12 and 14. When the girl attains puberty, then a ceremony known as ‘Kalipero Aero Nokta’ is performed. On this occasion, she wears a ‘Topli’ to her plaited hair. Anklets and Bangles (Balya) are also worn by her. She looks much more beautiful in the adolescence stage.
Sagair Nokta (betrothal ceremony)

The betrothal ceremony of a Sugali boy usually takes place when he is about eighteen or twenty years of age, while a girl is betrothed from the age of fifteen to eighteen years. Neither the boy nor the girl is informed of the intention of their parents to arrange their marriage nor they have any right of choosing their own partners. The betrothal of the children is entirely the affairs of the parents, and romance is not allowed to pay a part of it. Owing to the fact that the Sugalis are migratory community, the Dhadis or the professional singers are carrying on the work of engagement of a bride and bridegroom. Usually the boy’s father or the elder brother is on the look out for a suitable bride for him. Relatives, friends and Dhadis help him to select the right girl. As a rule, the Sugalis prefer daughter-in-law from a distant thanda, to avoid the interference of the young woman’s relatives, later on, in case she does not find everything to her liking in her new home.

Occasionally, at a wedding or a funeral banquet, the fathers of a boy and a girl acquainted, and each is informed of the other’s character, family and economic status. If this first acquaintance turns out favourable to a future union, the boy’s father expresses his desire to see the girl. Also the girl’s father wants to know if the prospective husband of his daughter is sound in limb and mind and on some pretext, pays an occasional visit to the boy’s house.

If the enquiries made are satisfactory, the Brahman is consulted to cast the horoscope of the boy and the girl
concerned. If the constellation of their stars appears favourable to a marriage, the betrothal is arranged soon. However, a bad forecast does not deter the Sugalis from a betrothal, if it is otherwise satisfactory. After these preliminary enquiries, the date of the betrothal is fixed.

The betrothal ceremony is known as ‘Sagai’. Usually the ‘Sagai’ takes place before the rainy season i.e., in the first week after ‘Ugadi’. Monday is considered as an auspicious day for them. Hence all the marriage ceremonies are fixed on Monday but never on Saturdays and Sunday as they are considered as inauspicious days. They would like to settle all their major affairs on Monday only.

On the day of the ‘Sagair Nokta’, the boy and his relatives proceed to the girl’s house. In the presence of the Naik of the thanda, they assemble at the holy temple of Sevabhaya for performing this engagement ceremony. The dowry system is prevailing by way of giving either in cash or cattle by the bridegroom to the bride. It is customary for them to pay the bride price known as ‘Karar’ either in cash or in kind. For the ‘Jat’ clan, the bride price is fixed as Rs.101 and for ‘Bhukya’ clan it is Rs.100. However the custom of bride price has vanished in the Sugali society. Now-a-days, there is a great demand for the bridegroom, and hence the girl’s father has been struggling to pay the large amount as dowry, as demanded by boy’s parents.

On the day of ‘Sagai’, the boy’s father brings a huge quantity of jaggery, dry coconuts, betel leaves, supari, hukkā and locally made liquor called ‘Sarai’. All these items are
offered to the people of the thanda. Not long after, the Naik of
the thanda and the girl’s father appear upon the scene to
welcome the boy’s party by saying ‘Ram Ram’ and hugging
them wholeheartedly. Then they start praying Lord Sri Rama
and utter the word ‘Pachcharero’. The boy’s father gives “Saker
Rupiya” i.e., a rupee coin to the girl’s father. This signifies an
assurance from the boy’s side, of the marriage with the girl.
After this, the young man’s father distributes the jaggery, betel
leaves and betel nut, first to the girl’s father and then to all the
attendants. ‘Hukka’ is also offered to the girl’s father. The
Naik of the thanda gives the order for the general distribution of
Sarai so that all present can enjoy drinking. A man of the girl’s
party is charged by the Naik to see to the pouring out. He first
attends to the guests (the boy’s party) in the order in which they
have sat down, then to his own party. The Sarai is drunk out in a
kind of cup or cup shaped alluminium vessel. From time to time
some older or more important persons will remind the
distributor, of the Naik and similar worthies so as to make sure
that they get their full share, for special attention and
consideration are due to such folk. On this occasion, they use
characteristic sayings as follows:

1. Sagayeer kadi (engagement saying)
2. Gatër kadi (Sugar saying)
3. Panër kadi (pan saying)
4. Sapâreer kadi (Betel nut saying)

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1. The distribution of jaggery to the relatives during the ceremonies is common in their society.
2. They regard it as auspicious and without which the ceremony becomes incomplete.
After the completion of these sayings, finally they make the ‘Sagai’ more delightful, by sprinkling colours over each other.

The distribution of jaggery to all the attendants is known as ‘Golkhäyëro’ which means ‘the eating of jaggery’.

From the moment of the Sagair Nokta, both parties regard each other as Kinsfolk. For the girl in particular this entails new duties as regards avoidance and veiling. The words in the betrothal sayings convey the faith of the Sugalis in the fate and the relationship. Generally there will be a gap between the betrothal and the marriage ceremony.

Marriages are celebrated generally in the month of July or August. The reason behind it may be that they remain busy in all the seasons except in rainy season. They feel it discomfort to move from one place to another for their trading activities. Secondly, because of the custom of bride price i.e., ‘Karar’, the Sugalis borrow money, and since borrowing and repayment of money depend on their progress in trade, getting money in this period is much easier. They fix the marriage date on Monday or Wednesday, as these are considered as auspicious days for marriage ceremonies. The consent of both the parties for the marriage is known as ‘Kanasa Mali’. The bride price called as ‘Karar’ or ‘Teru’ is given on the day of ‘Sagai’ itself. The bride price in the form of livestock is known as Ramsäde Karär, and cash is known as ‘Vansali Karar’.
Generally the Sugalis’ marriage rites start from the bridegroom’s house and continue at the bride’s house and end at the bridegroom’s house.

**Vadayir Kadi (Initiation Ceremony)**

The initiation ceremony is performed at the bridegroom’s house prior to proceeding to the bride’s house for wedding ceremony. The word ‘Vadayi’ in Gorbouli language means ‘to grow’. The child has grown up and he requires permission to enter into family life. This rite grants permission. This rite is also observed when a Jāngād is converted into Sugali. The leader of the thanda will brand a mark with the heatened needle on the right shoulder of the bridegroom and utters Guru Mantra into the ears of the bridegroom. It is customary for the Bhukya clansmen to prepare a sweet porridge known as ‘Moy Bhunjero’, which is a mixture of rice flour jaggery and ghee. The Jat clansmen performs the initiation ceremony by sacrificing two goats and cooking it without salt. Here the bridegroom, accompanied by his younger brother, performs the puja by offering the cooked meat to Sevabhaya. This is known as ‘Dhabaker’. The branding of the right shoulder with the heatened needle for three times is termed as ‘Gosayir Daq’. On the occasion of the initiation ceremony, all the relatives of the boy are given the feast.

After this, the ‘Viar Nokta’ is performed. When of the groom’s family invites all the Sugalis in the thanda for the ritual known as ‘Sādi Tāner Nokta,’ which takes place at night. They decorate the doorsteps with rangoli and fix a branch of
‘Dhobanerdola’ tree (Jilledu), in front of the house. A woolen blanket is laid on the floor. Two brass vessels are filled with water. In one vessel, sugar is added to water and a rupee coin is put into it. In the second vessel, jeera and jaggery is added to water. Turmeric and Vermilion are applied on the outer sides of these vessels and their mouths are tied with the hair of a goat or sheep. The first vessel is fixed on the mouth of the second vessel and these two are tied to the ‘Dhobanerdola’.

For the marriage ceremony they pitch a tent in lieu of the marriage-shed and they draw the rangoli on the floor and place one rupee coin in its center. A long cloth is twined like a ring and this ring is called as ‘Pulyargala’. Two pots are filled with sugar water and they are fixed over the ‘Pulyargala’. It is covered with a cloth known as ‘Gônno’, which has many ornate fixtures such as mirrors, cowries etc. The initiation ceremony is performed on the first day before the marriage ceremony.

On account of their nomadic way of life, the Sugalis could not employ a Brahmin priest to officiate at the marriage rituals, for they invariably camped away from villages and towns. So, one of their own elders from Vadatiya clan well-versed in the rituals officiated. But when they came into increased contact with the other Hindu peasants who make use of the Brahmin priest at marriages, the Sugalis in the process of permanently settling down, began to seek the services of a Brahmin priest whenever available.

On the next day, the bridegroom is given a bath and he wears the shirt and a lungi. An embroidered silk ribbon known
as 'Gādi' is tied to his waist. His hair is covered with a red
coloured cloth and a turban is worn over his head.

It is customary for the Sugali bridegroom to carry a
traditional bag known as 'Viar Kotali', which consists of pan
leaves and betel nuts. The bag should be carried on the left
shoulder and hukka on the other hand.

The bridal saree known as ‘Savalerar Sādi is brought out
of his house and they perform puja in the temple of Sevabhaya.
The sugar water in the pots is to be served to the Naik, Kharbari
and other members. The bridegroom is accompanied by his
younger brother who is called as 'Leria’. Sometimes he carries
the hukka and viar Kotali in the marriage.

In the night they reach the girl’s house. They immediately
send a word to the bride’s family, about their arrival. After
hearing the news of bridegroom’s arrival, the bride starts
‘weeping’.

The Sugalis give full vent to their feelings in the form of
their loud conversation, peels of laughter or waiting – perhaps a
hangover from their past wandering life. Their women weep and
wail on different occasions: the death of a relative, departure of
the bridegroom to the bride’s home for marriage, during the
marriage ceremony itself, at the departure of the bride to her
husband’s place as well as at chance meetings of mothers and
their married daughters, or of married sisters.

The wailing habits could be viewed as vestiges of old
ways of life, when transport and communications were scanty
and the Sugali caravans of pack-bullocks were always on the move, and there was no certainty of meeting again the person who parted on marriage. Despite changed conditions facilitating frequent contacts, the Sugali custom of wailing persists.

The Sugalis say that they wept in the past over the shoulders of the bridegroom when he set out for the bride’s place for marriage, because there was no knowing whether he would return to his people because of his possible death in the encounter while capturing the bride. These days, the custom of bride capture is not in vogue and yet the custom of weeping persists. Thus, highly emotional situations like marriage and consequent separation bring forth the expression of deep feelings of joy and sorrow, followed by gift giving as a material expression of the psychological dimension of life. The kin, marriage and friendship alliances which a particular family has with others, become explicit through gift giving, which have not only economic but social implications.

The deep sorrow expressed while sending off a married woman to her husband’s place is heightened and expressed without any inhibition, probably because, in the past such a woman was not likely to return to her natal home because of the nomadic life.

Here it is to be noted that “weeping” is a culturally learned practice, involving poetic features and stylistic conventions, that is often conducted in Sugali social settings. The ‘weeping’ of the bride on different occasions indicate the desertion of her parental house. It also indicates a ‘desire for
sociability’, a latent or actual intent to use ‘weeping’ as a vehicle of social interaction. It is a spontaneous, personal and emotional response. The bride is adhered to culture-specific stylistic conventions.

The reason for the ‘customary weeping’ of the bride is narrated by the Sugalis of the Singampalli thanda. Cheenya Naik of Anantapur narrated a legend related to the weeping. The legend is known as ‘Bhadur Bandā – Patter Nasan.’ It explains a memorable event and is preserved in the ‘memory bank’ of the Sugalis. Here it should be noted that narratives about persons, places or events involving real or pretended belief are legends. The tales about the local places and heroes tend to idealize.

The legend is that the Bhukya clan which comprised three sub-clans, were engaged in salt trade and they used to meet at a place known as ‘Bhadur Bandā – Patter Nasan.’ They fix the marriage of their children at this place itself. After the marriage, they leave the place and engage themselves in their economic activities. In the next meeting at the same place, the women share their griefs and anxieties with each other and start ‘weeping’. It is a stand-in, distraction, or buffer between grieving relatives and the emotions caused by their dispersion to various parts of the country for their trading activities. The ‘weeping’ of the women is called as ‘Kodatero Davalo’. Since then it has become customary for the Sugalis to weep or ‘mourn’, after seeing their relatives. The meeting together of the Bhukya clan is termed as ‘Mud-Chukyar ekaj – Malan.’ The tradition of weeping could be seen in their marriage ceremonies.
After reaching the bride’s residence, the boy’s relatives distribute ‘Ato’, a mixture of rice flour, ghee, and jaggery, to all the attendants. The bridegroom prostrates before the elders of the thanda and offers hukka to them. The Viyarkotali, Pagadi or turban, blanket known as Kholo and hukka are carried by the bridegroom, till the completion of all the marriage rituals.

The marriage rituals in the bride’s residence are varied. They are as follows:

1. Tiker Nokta
2. Viyar Nokta
3. Chuder Nokta
4. Goter Nokta
5. Navalerin Olayero Nokta

Prior to the wedding, the bridegroom goes and stays for a month or so in the bride’s residence and during this period, the bride’s father must provide liquor daily for the bride’s relatives. The period was formerly longer, but now it is reduced to one week at the most. While he resides at the bride’s house, the bridegroom wears a cloth over his head so that his face cannot be seen. Probably, the prohibition against seeing him applies to the bride only.

Tiker Nokta (Bride Seeking Advice from the Elderly Women)

The bridegroom invites all the people in the bride’s thanda. It is customary for the bride to seek the guidance and advice of the elderly women, as to how to behave in the bridegroom’s residence. The suggestions and advice are
conveyed by the women in the form of songs and dance. This is known as ‘Dhavalo’. A pile of two pots with sugar water are kept in front of the house and they are covered with Gonno.

In the next morning, the bride is given a bath by elderly married women. The widows are not allowed to do it as they are considered to be inauspicious. The bridal couple is sprinkled with the turmeric powder. Vermillion powder mixed with corn is applied on their foreheads. The bridal couple along with five relatives on either side sit together and take the food in a plate. It denotes the functional unity of the two parties. The institution of communal feasting on such occasions conduces to the maintenance of social cohesion. They feel that the more they are together now, the more likely it is that they will be so in the future.

It is evident that the Sugali social institutions are interdependent, sometimes apparently distinct institutions, how they fit together in various institutional complexes, such as political, economic or ritual systems.

Viyar Nokta (Bridegroom inviting the householders in the thanda for the dinner)

On the fourth day, the bridegroom and ‘Leria’ invite the Sugali householders in the thanda, by offering the pan leaves and hukka (hubble bubble) to them.

For the marriage ceremony, they pitch a tent in lieu of the marriage shed and beneath it, the ground is cleansed with cow dung. Puja is performed to the cow dung and this is known as ‘Vakaldi dhôkâyerô.’ They fix two rice pounding pestles by
digging the pits. The idea behind this is that their future life should be strong and sturdy like the rod. In some thandās, they substitute a pack saddle with two bags of grain for the pestles in order to symbolize their camp life.

At each of the four corners of the pandal, a pile of 5 pots are fixed and they are covered with leafy twigs of calotropis giganta. The couple sit near the pestles and then their hands are pasted with Mehendi. After a wave offering to ward off the evil eye. The bride has to catch the hand of bridegroom and walk around the holy fire for seven times. This is known as ‘Saat pera paran via kido.’ During this circumcision, the ends of the couple’s upper garments are tied together with a silver coin. This ceremony resembles the usual Hindu type. The bride then, ties a string round neck of the bridegroom. Now the bridegroom ties the mangal sutra around the neck of bride. This is known as ‘Dorana bhāndērō.’

After the nuptial rounds, the bride sits on the right side of the bridegroom, since according to the Hindu tradition only a legally married wife is entitled to sit on the right side of the husband.

There is a custom called as ‘Koliya Khora Aero,’ by which the bridal couple puts the ‘Churmo’ in each other’s mouth. After this, the pan and betel nut are chewn by them and later on they exchange the chewn pan.

In the evening they are given fresh bath and asked to sleep together in wet clothes. With this, the viar bandhero ceremony is completed.

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In the next morning, the bride’s mother pour water on the head of the bridegroom for seven times and she sips that water for seven times. This custom is known as ‘Chottir pani piyero’. Then the couple put on the new clothes. An interesting game is played by the bridal couple. It is known as ‘Mand Ramero’. A meal tub with rice starch is taken. A conch shell, a gold ring and some rupee coins are dropped into the starch. As the starch is non-transparent, the things dropped into it may not be visible. The couple pounce their hands into the tub to snatch the things. Whosoever of them is successful is considered to be victorious and influential over the other one. The importance of this game seems to be to initiate friendship between the bride and the bridegroom.

**Chuder Nokta (Bangle-wearing Ceremony)**

On the fifth day, the bridegroom and the leria go to the Sugali households and invite them to the ‘Chuder Nokta’. This is the bangle wearing ceremony. The girl’s mother or near female relatives tie to the locks on each side of her temples, the curious badges called ‘Ghugri,’ and ‘Topli’ (a bunch of tassels) is attached to the hair. She then, wears the chuder-balya and starts ‘weeping’ by hugging her relatives. The bridegroom offers hukka to the elders and prostrates before them. With this, the ‘Chuder Nokta’ ceremony is completed.

**Gōt (Veneration of the Ancestors)**

This ceremony indicates the veneration of the ancestors. On the last day, the new couple carries hukka and kotali to all the households and invite the relatives for the Gōt ritual. This
custom has economic implications. It is customary for the bridegroom's father to bear the expenditure of the feast. Gōt means 'departure'. On this day, they clean the ground with cow dung and light a lamp and a he-goat is sacrificed. It is then cooked and all the relatives are given a feast.

Finally the bride put on a new dress known as 'Navalerin ves'. The married women are the bride out of the house. The moment of departure having arrived after all, the bride and the members of her family weep loudly for several minutes. The leading women of the thanda assemble under moon lit sky to teach the bride different procedures of weeping. She is taught how to weep when her relatives come to her house, and how to express her pangs with tears. The bride weeps by putting her face close to the chest of her father, mother and all the relatives and elderly males of the thanda. In this pathetic environment she is forcibly brought near the bridegroom and make her sit on an ox (Deju) and this ceremony is known as 'Haveli.'

It is obligatory for the bride’s parents to give their daughter, dresses, a metal plate and other articles which are kept in a customary bag called ‘Goon’. The ‘Goon’ is kept on the ox and the bride stands over the ox and start singing the pathetic songs known as ‘Dhavalo’, by shedding incessant tears. She then gets down from the ox, hugs the parents and reveals the sweet memories of her childhood days. After that, the elders on both sides salute each other, saying ‘Jai Ramjiki’.

The bride’s relatives beg the bridegroom’s father and his party to excuse them for the imperfections or mistakes that
might have crept in their hospitality. The bridegroom touches
the feet of all the elders and offers hukka to them. The bride’s
relatives then give the utensils and ornaments as the gifts to the
bride. The balance amount of the bride price (karar) is paid to
the bride’s father. The offering of gifts to the bride testifies
great regard, affection and duty consciousness on the part of the
relatives towards the bride.

Rituals at the bridegroom’s place

The bārāt to the bridegroom’s residence is termed as
‘Tāngadi’. The bridegroom’s relatives invite all their fellowmen
by saying Tāngadi Aicha Gharen bālelāmā Ao.’

All the people of the thanda assemble at bridegroom’s
residence. On reaching the bridegroom’s encampment, the bride
is happily received by the women. She bows down before them
to offer respectful salute. The ‘churmo’ brought by the bride
from her house is distributed to all the people. The women start
singing songs by praising the bride’s agnatic kin.

After this, the couple is taken out to the temple to salute
the Sevabhaya. The distribution of ‘Churmo’ among the agnatic
kin is expressive of the happiness of the bridegroom’s family.
The bride hides her face by covering it with ‘Ghungato’. She
then called as “Ghugatili Navaleri’.

On the second day, a feast is given in honour of the
bride’s party. This is called as ‘Telo’. In the next morning the
bridegroom collects the branches of kanuga (Pongamia Pinnata)
and neem twigs. All the attendants are given these branches.
The bridegroom’s mother then shows the traditional
dresses brought by the bride. This is known as ‘Tangadi
khelero’.

The first wedding night is fixed on an auspicious day and
this is known as ‘Vetadu Navalerina Bhedero Nokta’.

Widow Remarriage

Widow remarriage is known as ‘Bhang Karu’ or ‘Suko
Ato Chata Aero’. No ritual or ceremony is performed in the
remarriage of a widow. The man desirous of marrying her
comes with the pre-settled amount of bride-price and a new pair
of clothes for her. Her parents give a small feast of ‘Churmo’
(baked rice flour, sugar and ghee) to the bridegroom, some
friends and elders of the Gor panchayat. The couple put churmo
in each other’s mouth and with this the marriage ceremony is
completed. This is known as ‘Bhang Karn ghalero’.

Death Ceremonies

The Sugalis have almost the same sort of death rites as are
practiced by the Hindu castes. They believe that ‘Yama’, the
God of Death, comes to take away the life of a person. All the
members of the household and the close relatives begin to weep.
If a man dies, his wife beats her breast with her fists and cries
very loudly. She and her sons bow down at the feet of the
corpse with their folded hands in order to salute it. The dead
body is wrapped in a white cloth. Some men prepare bier by
tying seven bamboo chips across two bamboos placed parallel to
each other. When the bier is ready, some broom straws are put
on the bier and the body is laid on it. It is believed that broom straws possess the power to ward off evil spirits from the body placed on them. A small coin of 5 annas is tied to the left leg of the corpse. Flower garlands are put on the corpse. The widow is asked to move seven times round the dead body of her husband in the anti-clock wise direction that is from left to the right. When she was married to him, she has taken seven nuptial circumambulations with him round the sacred fire from right to the left. They were symbolic of their mutual promise to remain united forever. But now when the husband is departing for the next world, it is customarily obligatory for the widow to free his soul from her attachment by nullifying the seven rounds. This is a very tense moment in her emotional life, as the whole reel of the memories of her married life with the departed one runs in her mind. Her feet falter to take these rounds, so she is forcibly dragged or lifted up and taken round the corpse seven times by the younger brothers or other relatives of her husband. She is then asked to break the ‘Chuderbalya’, a symbol of her married life. Thus she enters the stage of widowhood. The custom of retaining the seven rounds may be explained in terms of other popular practice of remarrying the widow in their society. A husband does not do so when his wife dies.

Four men lift up the pier and the funeral procession starts. Women and children are not allowed to join the funeral procession. The elder son of the departed one, carries an earthen pot having a burning cow dung in it. In the middle of the journey to the cremation ground, the bier is put down for some minutes on the ground. This is in accordance with the traditional
Hindu belief that the soul must feel the need of halting for a brief rest during its journey to the other world. They believe that if a crow, a jackal, a rabbit or a snake pass on from right to left, on their way to the burial ground, then the dead person will take rebirth. On the way, a close agnate of the deceased throws rice or ragi over the bier.

On reaching the cremation ground, the bier is placed on the ground. Seven or eight mounds of wood fuel are purchased by the son or the members of the family of the deceased. A funeral pyre is prepared by placing the logs of wood one over the other. The corpse is placed with its head in the northern and in the southern direction. The youngest son of the deceased lits the pyre.

After this, the traditional Hindu ceremony of Kapal Kriya is performed by the son or in his absence, the brother of the deceased. It signifies that the deceased has been a very fortunate person having a very well flourished family. It is done by striking the head of the corpse with a seven feet bamboo stick. This is called as ‘Tincho dero’. It is customary for them to place the corpse in an inverted form. The reason behind this is that the deceased person may not become a ghost. After this, the sickle and other implements used to dig the pit, are kept in an inverted form.

Then they disperse from that place after the pyre is half-burnt. They leave the clothes and the bamboos of the bier there at the crematory. These persons reach some tank or well nearby and take their bath before returning to their thanda. They
circumbulate around a thorned tree and spend their time in the dead person’s home. Usually they bury the unmarried persons, those dying of small pox and persons suffering from Parkinson’s disease. The Sugalis strongly believe that if a person dying of small pox or Parkinson’s disease is not buried, it may lead to famines. No rituals or ceremonies are performed on the death of the above persons. If a pregnant woman dies, then the baby is taken out of the womb and the mother and child are buried separately. Usually children are buried nearby the thanda, as they believe that there is no harm from the dead children. Their rites of mourning are not strict, and are observed only for three days. They pour the milk on the heap of the buried child for 3 days.

The Sugalis have a saying, “Death in a foreign land is to be preferred, where there are no kinsfolk to mourn, and the corpse is a feast for birds and animals.” But this may perhaps be taken rather as an expression of philosophic resignation to the fate which must be in store for many of them, than a real preference, as with most people the desire to die at home almost amounts to an instinct.

In the evening all the relatives are offered Sarai by the members of the family of the deceased. If they are not offered Sarai, then it is considered as a humiliation. The ashes of the dead are kept in a plate and it is covered with another plate and a tumbler with water is also kept. In the next morning, if any marks or footprints are seen on the ashes, then they believe that the dead person has taken birth in the form of a bird or animal. On that day, one of the families in the thanda prepares food for
the members of the bereaved family. Since by custom no cooking can then be done in the household of the bereaved family, this offer of meal is merely an expression of formal hospitality which all people know.

The mourning ceremony on the third day is called as 'Dhado Kereroe' or 'Kandhya Kereroe.' Death on Saturday or Sunday are not paid any homage on the third day. They believe that death on these days denotes that the deceased person is cruel and he may become a ghost. If a person dies on any of these days, then the 'Dhado Kereroe' ceremony is performed on that day itself. Sunday is regarded as 'Kaldo dado' or 'day of sorrow.' They believe that death on Monday may leads to an entry into the heaven.

Kandhya Ceremony (Mourning Ceremony)

On the third day, a funeral feast called as 'Kandhya' is performed in a place nearby the tank or pond. They prepare the chapathis which are cut into pieces. Jaggery of equal equity is added to it and this is called as 'Kandhya' or 'pindya.' The cremated place of the dead is groomed with the twigs of Jilledu and then ghee and milk are spread around the place. The 'Kandhya' is served to all the people. The elders of the thanda speak a few words about the virtues and deeds of the dead person.

Hado Bandhero (Animal Sacrifice as a symbolic gift-giving)

In the evening a goat or sheep is sacrificed. Here the sacrifice is symbolic gift-giving. In giving a gift a man gives, in
a sense, part of himself. In sacrifice this identification is often made explicit. This is why the sacrifice of animals, is so often prescribed. A goat or a chicken shares the quality of life with the human who sacrifices it, and so may appropriately stand for him. But always the gift giving is a symbolic act, a rite and in the last resort it is the rite and not the object sacrificed, that matters most.

However, the animal sacrifice is often a moral cleansing, a washing away of evil, a means of disposing of what Radcliffe-Brown called ritual impurity. If the deceased person has become a ghost, then it may be ritually transferred to a chosen goat or sheep by performing puja and that is sacrificed.

Sugalis, during their death ceremonies offer the cooked meat of the animal along with sarai. In case any person is unable to attend it, then that person comes on some other day and lit a beedi or hukka, which is given to the son of the deceased. This custom is called as ‘hukka piyero’.

Mourning continues for 12 days. During this period, the bereaved persons do not dance or sing. They should not shave their beard also. Men put on white turban on their heads to express their grief. The rituals on the 12th or 13th day are known as ‘Therobaro’. On the 12th day, the relatives of the deceased serve cooked rice with ghee, only to their family members. The funeral feast is given to all the people in the thanda, on the 13th day. They strongly believe the concept of ‘Rebirth’. Cooked rice is kept in an earthen ware and it is covered with an earthen plate, its edges are neatly pasted with cow-dung. On the next
day, they could find the footprints of an animal, or man. If the footprints are of an animal, then they believe that the dead person has taken rebirth in the form of an animal.

The Sugalis of Pampanuru thanda, put ashes on a plate and a tumbler is filled with water. Next day if any footprints are found on the ashes, then they believe that the dead person has reborned. If the water in the tumbler is lessened, then they believe that the dead has become a ghost.

On the 13th day, a barber or Nāvi is invited to shave the heads and beards of all those who attended the cremation. A Brahmin is invited to perform the puja. It is believed that this will give solace to the soul of the departed. It is interesting to note that the Sugalis forget the blood feud and enmity, during the death ceremonies. This denotes a strong sense of unity and solidarity among them. It can be understood that expressive, ritual patterns of behaviour are much more complex in Sugali society. For Sugalis, rituals almost always embody beliefs and these beliefs provide acceptable explanations for events which would otherwise be inexplicable. Rituals serve for them as a factor of social stability and cohesion. There are many social consequences of the religious institutions of the Sugalis. The institutionalized beliefs and practices which we call religious fit into their social context. They are mainly concerned with what R.K. Merton called ‘latent function’ rather than manifest function. That is, the researcher tries to say that we are dealing with consequences of human behaviour of which most of the actors are or may be quite ignorant. However, the Sugalis will be more or less aware of some of the social implications of their
ritual institutions. The best example for the social implications of a ritual is that in the medieval period when the Sugalis were engaged in trading activities, they used to sacrifice a body of their own community, so that there might not be any disruption to their economic activities. They canalized and gave institutionalized recognition to this belief. It not only provides an unacceptable way of thinking about the economically disruptive experiences, but also socially disruptive experiences like illness and death. Human sacrifice is a socially sanctioned institution which had important implications for the life of the Sugali community. However, this cruel practice has been prohibited by the Sugali society.

However, the other forms of ritual have important social consequences. They provide a means of ordering and co-ordinating every-day practical activities. Collective participation in the rituals is mandatory. Again, the duties implied in particular kinds of social obligation maybe more willingly performed as their importance is emphasized and driven home by ritual.

An example is the death rite, common in Sugali society, whereby through the performance of a special rite men enter into a relationship of mutual help and support. Since people’s behaviour is largely determined by what they think to be important, the performance of ritual may have important social consequences. This was the central theme of Radcliffe-Brown’s theory of ritual, which he derived from Durkheim. He argued that ritual’s main social function is to express certain important social sentiments or values, such as the need for mutual support.
and solidarity between the members of a community. Unless enough people held and acted on these values the society could not survive, and through the performance of ritual, they are kept constantly in the minds of the performers, and so the maintenance of the social system is secured.

**DRINKING IN THE SUGALI COMMUNITY**

Although drinking is an universal characteristic of the tribal world with a few exceptions, the analysis of the phenomenon suffers from inadequate conceptualization. In most of the treatments of the subject by both analysts and tribal development administrators, alcohol in taking among tribals is conceived either as a problem behaviour needing remedial action or as a behaviour functional to reducing anxiety and fostering integration. Analytical interests are better served in conceptually setting off ‘normal’ from ‘problem or pathological’ drinking. The lack of a cultural focus results in mixing up the two forms of drinking which are conceptually distinct phenomena. Normal drinking is cultural and pathological drinking is culturally disruptive and deviant. The drinking behaviour of the Sugalis may be conceptualized as Normal. The meanings, functions and contexts of normal drinking are culturally defined. Their culture regulates the modes, kinds, and quanta of drinking. They drink always for momentary pleasure or tension relief.

If a functional perspective is called for, it should be realized that drinking serves not one or two or three functions, but a broad spectrum of functions. Their drinking behaviour
appears to serve social, ceremonial, economic, nutritional, medicinal, magical, religious, psychological and integrative functions. It is a corporate behaviour and not individual.

It is an integral part of the process of Sugali tribal life itself which can only be accounted for in terms of pervasive, value laden culture themes underlying drinking. The Sugalis drink in the morning, in the evening and sometimes continuously. They drink for social integration and as a token of social solidarity and unity. They drink in friendship and in enmity. Success is to be ensured or celebrated with a drink. Birth, death, ritual, festival and harvest are occasions for drinking. Sarai precedes and accompanies hunting and marriage. They drink for divorce or reunion; in war or peace. They drink in action and inaction. A drink is a privilege of the host and an honour to the guest. It is a barter in exchange of help and a coveted gift to the chief. Free Sarai jars and hukka are gifted as tokens of recognition of tribal excellence and heroism in hunting, trading and virtual behaviour. It is a sort of property and a medium of co-operation. It is a dietary supplement in hard work, play and dance. For the Sugali man or woman it is a gift of gods and a reverential offering to them. Punishment involves keeping the criminal out from all occasions of sarai drinking. It is also a prescribed medicine for bodily ills. From dawn to dusk liquor-dominates their thinking and interacting. Hence such a deeply embedded custom of drinking implies the existence and operation of pervasive and powerful cultural behaviour.
Sacred Complex of Tribal Drinking

An extensive survey of the Sugali drinking behaviour denotes the existence of a complex culture theme underneath normal drinking behaviour. Using Durkheinian sacred-profane dichotomy, this theme is designated as the “Sacred Complex” of drinking for want of a better label.* The sacred theme is seen as a pervasive concern of Sugalis with strong motivational energy. Drinking is regarded by them as a sacred act which pleases the gods. It is believed that the gods are not merely pleased by the drinking act but they themselves are believed to participate in drinking through chosen human media; They believe that liquor and its brewing formulae are divine gifts. The process as well as the places of brewing are treated with sanctity and special rules of ritual purity have to be scrupulously followed at the time of brewing and drinking. For instance, the brewer has to take a purificatory bath; use vessels made ritually pure and brew it in a ritually prepared spot. Further persons hot from sexual intercourse and menstruating women are prohibited from drinking and places of drinking. It is said the Sugalis rationalize their drinking behaviour by investing with sacredness. For instance, Varma in his paper “Problem of Drinking in the Primitive Tribes” accepts that the habit and tradition of drinking are very old but offers an unconvincing explanation for its prevalence.¹²

At one place he writes: A tribal thus cannot be without drinks and in order to have a clear conscience he has purposely

* Durkheim’s *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, written in 1914 translated by Joseph Ward Swain, 1954, is a classic study on Primitive Religion, in which he argues that habit of drinking among tribals is closely associated with religion.
lent to his habit a religious and social garb. He thus gets moral fortification by such a camouflage and maintains his respectability in the eyes of the world.” The untenability of this view becomes obvious when it is realized that sacred attitudes are the cause and not the effect of drinking practices. They use liquor as a symbol, source and method of expressing their inner feelings of awe, fear, respect, regard, love and homage to omnipresent and omnipotent powers external to them. They use sarai in solemnizing important pacts, agreements and contracts.

FESTIVALS

The Sugalis periodically set aside portions of time for celebration. These are moments of special significance to their group or community. There are moments of transition, from one season to another or from one stage of life to another. They may be anniversaries of historical events, of the legendary day of the birth or death of a hero or a god; or symbolic re-enactments of events in the life of Sevabhaya etc. They may be moments set aside to honor their Gods or occasions for communal work, with feasting and play added. These recurring moments of special significance, with the celebrations that fill them, are better termed as festivals. The festivals of the Sugalis are survivals of their old community magical ritual whose purpose was to make the days grow longer, to appease gods of the fields, forests and most, especially to promote fertility. Their festivals involve a great expenditure of energy by the entire community, have a number of very important functions, which can be either positive or disruptive. Economically, they can provide occasion
for redistribution of wealth. Negatively, their festivals hurt the economy by taking people away from work.

However, the ritualistic and ceremonial functions of the festivals are to bring prosperity, to foretell and influence the course of the coming year, to honor someone or something etc.

The central function of the festival seems to be to give occasion for the folk to rejoice together to interact in an ambience of acceptance and conviviality. In the case of general participation festivals, it is often the only occasion in which the members of a community come together. On this occasion, they interact with each other. If the interaction is satisfying, it is likely to be repeated. The satisfaction creates a bond between the participants, they have had pleasure in each other's company. They identify with each other; in a general participation festival the individual relates to and identifies himself with, the community. Thus, the festival is a prime device for promoting social cohesion, for integrating individuals into a society or group and maintaining them as members through shared, recurrent positively reinforcing performance. It is, indeed "the most concrete expression of collective emotions and loyalties."

Occasional, limited-participation festivals, especially those associated with the "rites of passage," have other functions. The celebrations are performed when a Sugali comes of age, and when he is betrothed and married, mark the occasion of the assigning of a new role to the individual. From this moment, he can no longer behave in the old way; he must
behave in the new. Much of the joking and crying associated with weddings are traditional ways of communicating the significance of the occasion. At the same time, these celebrations function to honor the individual and confirm his membership in the group.

Here the Sugali festival cannot be defined as a particular kind of behaviour, as can song or story telling; rather it is a set of traditional behaviours. The festival itself is often the context for the other genres of folklore. It is only occasion of the year in which they wear their traditional dress. It will almost certainly include a feast (put together with traditional recipes) and drink. There will be proverbs and sayings associated with the festival.

The Sugalis festivals are strongly related to mythical events. They surrender themselves to different gods. They have created different kinds of presiding deities for different diseases. They also worship the nature gods and many festivals are arranged for the worship of these gods. Different families observe these festivals in their own characteristic traditions and conventions. Almost all important festivals of the Hindus are observed by them. They believe that salvation ultimately depends upon the grace of the Almighty. Therefore, they worship these gods and sing devotional songs with fervour.

The Sugalis observe the Hindu festivals but they observe them with their own distinct tradition and heritage. These festivals show that they are religious minded and also follow traditional culture. Their cycle of important festivals are as follows:
The Sugalis celebrate the Ugadi festival with pomp and gaiety. On the eve of Ugadi, they perform "ÄtamerVori" i.e., the people in the thanda, collectively sacrifice the goats and distribute the meat to all the families in the thanda. They cook the meat and celebrate the feast along with liquor (dharu). It is customary for them to prepare a sweet dish known as 'Pisipasi Lapsi'. They pour this liquid like sweet dish along with ghee into the fire by uttering their ancestors' names. Later on, they play their folk games, women start singing songs and dancing.

Teej is a very important festival celebrated by the Sugali women. Actually this festival is celebrated by the Hindu women in Rajasthan. As the Sugalis trace their original place in Rajasthan, they follow the similar festivals in South India also. The festival of Teej is also known as 'Molakala Pournima' by the Sugalis in Anantapur district. On this day, unmarried girls keep fast and pray to god Shiva and his consort Parvati to bless them with suitable husbands. The unmarried girls (Gerani) seek
the permission of the Naik of the thanda to collect the soil from the fields. They sow the wheat in the collected soil. Then they try to get the water from the well. On their way to the well, they will be obstructed by the unmarried boys (Geria). These girls overcome all these hurdles and get the water, to pour it on the soil.

The Teej festival is generally observed during Dashara and Ugadi, with a background of offering prayers to Lord Krishna.

The girls have a dominant role to play but men have partial role. The baskets of wheat sprouts are placed on the altar and the maidens worship them with devotion and observing rituals and on the 10th day they carry them to the temple. There is a significant association between the worship of sprouting wheat and Sri Krishna. Sprouting of the wheat symbolizes the birth of Sri Krishna and Sugali women imagine that they are Gopika women who love Krishna. In this 10th day festival, they would be brides and marriageable maidens participate in the dances with enthusiasm. They pluck all the sproutings on the 10th day, by weeping aloud. They being anxious to meet Lord Krishna feel the pangs of separation. Then they distribute the sprouts to the Naik of the thanda, women and children. The distribution of the sprouts is known as “Teej.”

Holi

Holi, a symbol of Indian culture and tradition, is celebrated throughout India in a variety of ways with enthusiasm and fervour. It is also an important festival of
Sugalis which they celebrate in their own way. It is celebrated in the mouth of phalgun (February or March). A major focus of Sugali Holi is Dhund, the ritual for male children who have been born during the year. It honours kama, the god of love and Holika, who is seen as being essentially powerful evil with a benevolent side. Holi for the Sugalis is a time for merry making, a time for saying good-bye to the anger and previous hatred of the year by using canes, and staging ritual battles between men and women, the time for lighting an enormous wood effigy of Holika. The burning of wood is symbolic of the burning of Kama and Holika. On this day, sprinkling of coloured water, gambling, singing, dancing and obscenity of all sorts are done.

For celebrating Holi festival in their respective thandas, the Sugalis obtain permission from the Headman or ‘Nayak’ of the Thandā to begin preparation in advance. Every night for ten to fifteen days, young men form groups to sing the romantic ‘lengi’, song meant for entertainment. Sometimes, the singing leads to the obscene subject. Men go out during the nights in search of firewood to prepare the burning of Holika.

For ‘Kamadahan,’ the wood bonfire during which they burn Holika, two unmarried young men are chosen by the Naik and Panch. One must be of Bhukya clan and the other from a jat gotra. These two men (geriya) are responsible for the success of the celebration of the festival.

The people of Singampalli thanda, celebrate dhund, the first year of a male child. To observe his son’s dhund, a father seeks the permission from the Naik. To initiate the festivities,
the Naik along with the Karabhari goes to the child’s home, singing lengi and dancing. Dhund is celebrated according to a family’s status with special sanction from the Naik, the people erect a tent, made of wooden plough and other agricultural implements covered with hand-woven woolen blankets. This creation of the Pandal heralds the festival of Holi and Dhund. Women gather later to celebrate the whole night, the outdoor preparation of ceremonial vegetarian, sweet food, accompanied by singing, dancing and cock-fighting etc.

In the pre-dawn hours of the first day of Holi, the geriya tie red bands around their heads and go to the Nayak house holding sticks in their hands and formally invite him, his family and his people to join in Holi. They lead all fathers and their tiny sons born since the last Holi to the fields, more often those that lie to the east of thanda. The Naik lit the fire. After burning the effigy of Holika, they run to a well or stream to wet their red clothes so that they can sprinkle water on the water and go round the dampened bonfire seven times with reverence. The young and old men of the thanda carry the sacred ash of the Holika to the temple of their revered saint, Sevabhaya to offer the special puja. They return to their homes to worship their family deities and to give Kamabasma ashes of the Holi fire to their elders. In return the elders bless them. The boys move from home to home singing Lengi and also a song called ‘Vanjana’. It invokes the blessings of the deities for the coming year. The Naik and Karabhari greets the people and accept token offerings in the form of money. Throughout the day, the young men dance the Kolat (stick dance) while singing romantic
and devotional songs in groups. Holding hands they dance in a circle and occasionally joking, squat on the ground with tiredness. Revived by ceremonial gifts of alcohol they rise again on their feet. At times they dance vigorously. Arrayed in lives they go down on their haunches, kicking their feet out. The songs that accompany the kolat are specially composed and sung exclusively on the day of Holi. Having completed 36 hours of celebration, an atmosphere of abandon, weariness and laughter pervades the thanda. The Naik advises his people to lead a pure spiritual life and prepare for the next Holi. Finally, the next day a goat or sheep is sacrificed to bring the Holi festival to its closure.

Dassara is celebrated during the month of October/November. During the festival, the Sugalis observe the worship of their own family gods and goddesses like Sevabhaya, Mariamma, Durgamma, Mitubhukya and Hanubhukya. Though their gods are offered prayers, in community, they also offer worship to their ancestors and presiding deity goddess Durga in the community worship.

On the eve of Dassara, they invite all relatives to the festival. The people of the thanda collectively offer the prayers to Durga and then sacrifice the goat or sheep. They perform the puja of Goddess Durga only on Tuesday. The reason behind this is that the Goddess has taken her birth only on Tuesday. On this day, they place a knife called ‘katari’ over a gunny bag in front of the house. They treat the ‘katar’ as Goddess Durga and offers a blood sacrifice.
It is customary for the Sugalis to sacrifice a goat or sheep in front of their ancestral home. All the brothers and their family members perform this ritual unitedly.

Seetalayadi Puja

Like all other castes of the Hindus, the Sugalis also worship Sheetla Mata, the goddess of small-pox, in whose honour the festival of Sheetalayadi is observed in Ashad month (July/August). They install an idol of the goddess, which has the shape of a rough stone, under a neem tree. They install 6 stones on either side of the idol. Seetla Mata is also known as Satbhavani. The arrival of Ashad month brings different kinds of diseases. Therefore they pray the Goddesses of Energy like Tulaja Bhavani, Seetala Bhavani, Bhojari Bhavani, Manthral Bhavani, Masoor Bhavani, Vagzayi, Iegalama and Lukkad (servant of seven Goddesses) to protect them from any kind of diseases and distress. The communal worship of Seetala Mata is very popular in Anantapur district.

Diwali

The Sugalis call this festival as ‘Kalimas’, which means ‘holy hours’. They observe this festival in their own distinct tradition. On the day of Naraka Chaturdasi, the Sugalis after having food at night, observe the worship of the Goddess Lakshmi women dressed in colourful dresses with lighted oil lamps in their hands, go to the house of the chief of the thanda. They obtain the permission for the rite of mera (Arati). The rite of performing arati in every household is known as ‘Mera Karero’. They offer of Arati or light in the name of family gods.
They even offer light to the animals and to all the people of the thanda.

Men folk give them presents in cash according to their capacity. Prof. D.B. Naik in his book ‘Art and Literature of the Lambanis,’ says that the ‘mera’ tradition resembles the Antika-Pantike of Malenadu (coastal Karnataka). All these traditions originate from the same source but they are observed in different regions according to their own methods.

On the morning of Diwali, the young women dress in colourful garments and assemble at one place with bamboo baskets and go to fields and gardens for collecting flowers. Collecting newly bloomed buds of the new corn and different wild flowers, they return home before the sunrise. They offer these flowers with veneration to Saint Sevabhaya and Mariyamma. They clean the cow-shed with cow dung and decorate the shed with flowers. Making little lumps of dung, collected from the sheds of each house, they offer flowers to them. They worship of cow dung is symbolic of the worship of sacred cow, which has a prominent place among their cattle, and deserves foremost worship. They worship cattle with love and devotion. They consider them as their wealth. The cow dung worship of the Sugalis is known as ‘Gobardhan Puja.’ On the same day the Sugalis also offer prayers to the ancestors.

On this day, they prepare two types of kheer known as ‘Pisipasi’ and ‘Patal Lapsi’. They lit the domestic chores and pour the ghee and ‘patal lapsi’, a liquid like sweet into the fire. Then they utter the names of their ancestors and worship them.
with great veneration. Finally, they give feast to all the people in the thanda.

Like all the other caste Hindus, the Sugalis celebrate the Makar Sankranti, Siva-ratri, Sri Ram Navami, Ganesh Chaturthi and also Nagula Chaviti. They are the staunch devotees of Lord Venkateswara whom they call as ‘Balaji’. The Vasant Panchami is the festival of great happiness and this is not so popular among the Sugalis of Anantapur district. However, they usually fix up their engagements on ‘Teej’.

In former times, the Sugalis, before setting out on a journey, used to procure a little child and bury it in the ground up to the shoulders, and then drive their loaded bullocks over the unfortunate victim. In proportion to the bullocks thoroughly tramping the child to death, so their belief in a successful journey increased.

It is possible that this custom of driving the cattle over the head of a buried pig may be connected with the worship of an agricultural goddess, since in ancient Greece, the pig was sacred to agricultural deities, e.g., Aphodite, Adonis, and Demeter, but it may also be a survival of some former custom of infanticide or human sacrifice such as prevailed among the Sugalis.

They are believed to have originally descended from the Rajputs, and have a myth to the effect that they became nomadic after Chittoor was conquered by the Mughals. They are now Vaishnavaites and profess Hinduism. Their chief deity is Krishna, and incarnation of Vishnu. They also call Krishna as Balaji, the divine child and cowherd, and this conception of
their high god as a cowherd is significant in view of their past tradition as cattle people. Therefore, the Sugalis since settling down in South India, show great reverence for lord Venkateswara. On each side of the lord’s image, they plant a white flag. In times of distress or in consequence of a vow, these flags are replaced by new ones on the full moon day of Jestha (June-July) or during Diwali (October-November). Cows and bullocks are revered by them because Krishna himself had tended cattle, and cattle have been the means of livelihood for them earlier as pack-animals, and now as agricultural draught animals. The change from the earlier animism to sharing of the pantheon and ideology of the higher Hindu religion must have been a slow and gradual process after settling down.

They also have a great reverence for their patron saints, who are seen as intermediaries between God and man; the Sugalis do everything to gain their favour. Every settlement has a shrine for Sevabhaya, who was a total vegetarian and teetotaller, and died as a saint. Similarly Mitu Bhukya who was a meat-eater and drinker of liquor and Hathiram Bava are also culture heroes for whom the Sugalis have great reverence. A hunting expedition begins with an offering of fruit or coconut to Mitu Bhukya in the belief that the offering ensures the success of the hunting expedition.

They also worship their ancestors on festive occasions. After smearing the houses with cow dung for ritual purity, once a year, the emblems of the ancestors are worshipped during Dasara by sacrificing a goat or sheep. This ceremony is repeated
when some one in the family recovers from sickness in order to propitiate the ancestors, who are supposed to cause sickness.

During the festive occasions, they worship the community gods and goddesses, by offering sweet dishes. But on the final day of each of these, they also sacrifice goats or sheep and offer cooked meat, in which the Panchayat plays an important role in collecting money for purchase of animals and distributing meat.

Through a study of the observance of rituals and celebrations it may be inferred that kinship, economy, polity and religion all meshed up. The animal sacrifices and the feasts in honour of ancestors, family deities, gods and goddesses connected with agriculture involve heavy expenditure, which is usually shared among the brothers. Even brothers who are separated pool their contributions to perform a common ceremony and arrange a common feast. This sharing calls forth the sibling solidarity with the Sugali emphasis on agnatic kinship.

**WORLD VIEW**

“A World View”, says Honnigman, “proclaims how man and nature are organized and also registers decisions about the value of such knowledge. World View consists of perceptions formed by values.” Let us find out the World View of the Sugalis. Among self, god and group, the self comes first of all according to their point of view. The individual family demands the greatest loyalty, but due loyalty must also be paid to the caste group also. Due priority must go to the ‘Gor Panchayat.’ The most significant time dimension is believed to be the past.
where have come their nomadic mode of life, trade, myths, traditions and values. The present must be utilized to act according to the high ideals and actions of the ancestors. They believe that they cannot dominate nature effectively, but they are not prepared to surrender to it also. So they try to live with it harmoniously. Originality and variety are of little importance in their society for they lay the greatest stress on tradition and conformity.

It is believed that those who do not conform to the traditions of the community are bound to displease the gods and goddesses who inflict illness, barrenness, accidents or death to them in this world and inflict more punishments in the next world. Hence they must be pleased by traditional ritualistic observances in the form of worships, sacrifices, offerings or charity etc. Fatalism is their dogma of personal adjustment. The losses and gains are attributed largely to one’s fate, but at the same time they are aware of the importance of making efforts. They conduct some tests to see whether the deceased has gone to heaven, reborn somewhere. According to him when the elders go to the cremation ground on the third day, they examine the ashes. If there are no foot marks they presume that the deceased has gone to heaven. If they see any foot marks belonging to animals they believe that he has taken the form of an animal. If the marks are indistinguishable they presume that he has turned into a ghost. They believe that a person dies when his jeev (soul) leaves his body. A person suffering from a dreadful disease will not die as long as his soul is there in his body. Even a man without any disease may die when his jeev leaves his
body. After death one's soul may either go to heaven or hell or he may be reborn according to his deeds when he was alive. Sometimes if a person dies with some unfulfilled desires he may turn into a ghost and try to satisfy his desire. They say that the jeev is responsible for the rebirth of a person or transmigration. Again they apply the same standard to say who takes rebirth and the form they take. The person who has done ‘Punya’ may be reborn in a higher caste, otherwise he may turn into the form of an animal.

They feel that their religious beliefs, practices and symbols are effectively instrumental to maintaining their social cohesion and in providing personal adjustment of the individuals in the community. The greatest characteristics of their religion is that it is very tolerant and liberal. It allows them to worship all sorts of gods and goddesses of the Hindu people without any fanaticism or bias. It further shows that in spite of their being a backward community, they have not yet cut themselves off from the religious beliefs and practices of their neighbouring and host population.

They are worshippers of the Shakti Mata, Mariyamma, Kariyamma, Durgamma, Krishna, Balaji and the patron saints like Sevabhaya, and Hathirambava.

They perform the puja of Saktimata which is known as ‘Somanekerpuja’. It is performed when the diseases like smallpox, chicken pox and typhoid are broken in the thanda. They sacrifice the oats and beasts by facing the east direction and cook the goat’s meat on that night. The food which is left after
the consumption is thrown out. They believe that the bacteria which is responsible for the outbreak of the diseases will attract to the food which is thrown out and because of this, these diseases will be prevented in the thanda.

The old custom of offering such prey for satisfying the family gods and evil spirits is practiced even today. Their economic life for centuries has revolved around their cattle and the trade in salt and lime mortar. Because of the failure of the monsoons, they breed the buffaloes, on whose milk and butter they live. Roughly speaking there are two categories of Sugali buffaloes: “temple or sacred animals and the ordinary domestic beasts which are the mainstay of the Sugali pastoral economy. The former are the buffaloes whose pedigree in the female line sets them apart as possessing special ritual importance”. The temple or sacred animals especially buffaloes and goats are sacrificed to their deities at the time of fairs and festivals.

Behind the observable patterns of human cultures, seem to lie certain assumptions about the way the world is put together. There are certain postulates which deal with the nature of reality the organization of the universe, and the ends and purposes of human life. Along with these assumptions, each society has its own norms and values which differentiate between good and evil, right and wrong etc. The people’s total response to their universe which is called ‘world view.’

It is to be noted that the concept of ‘world view’ deals with the way a people characteristically look out-ward upon universe (Redfield 1968).

Human world views include self,
other, relationship, classification, causality, space and time. Self-image or self awareness is also an aspect of world view. However, self-image, social, cultural, ethnic identity of the people is the way they conceive of themselves, as well as the way others look upon them as a separate social (ethnic or cultural) group, distinct from all other groups with which it comes into contact. Ethnic, social or cultural identity may be conceived as the total and distinctive clustering of roles, cultural inventory and social system exhibited by a group and derived from the group's own historical tradition. It gives both a sense of continuity and the background for common analogies to occur to produce inventions permitting change (Lurie, 1968: 297).16

It is very difficult to speak with certainty about the Sugalis past cultural identity for want of sufficient published evidence. However, certain observations about the Sugali made by others who came in contact with them viz., colonial officers, missionaries and travelers, are quite useful in tentatively reconstructing the cultural identity of the Sugali during their nomadic days.

Their world view has been changing radically over the last hundred years from tribal to peasant, because of changes in their economy. However their myths and legends relating to their origin, migration and culture – heroes are replete with religious beliefs, and concepts of morality and good life.

A major value change among them is from a virile, brave, martial Rajput tradition to one of a peaceful, docile peasant life
where the dominant value is agricultural prosperity. Therefore, their concept of a good life now is that a man must have a sufficient number of children, enough to eat, good health for human beings, cattle and crops, and enough land. A good woman must be married, be fertile and beget a fair number of children. Secondary marriage has a lower status. Barrenness in a woman is considered unfortunate. A woman should not speak ill of parents and in-laws. All kinds of prohibited sex relations both pre and extra marital, violations of lineage and clan exogamy and community endogamy are immoral. Those who indulge in such immoral acts undergo divine retribution like accidental death, natural calamities and incurable diseases.

RELIGION IN DISEASE AND DIFFICULTY

The ritual cycle of the community covering firstly the rites and observances concerning the major crises of life and secondly, the festivals and ceremonies within a normal calendar year. These cycles are rigidly observed, as their observance constitutes the dharma or the appropriate way of life, and leads to the prosperity and well-being of the family as well as to a desirable future for the individual after death. With the exception of these festivals, under normal conditions of life, there is very little spiritual or devotional activity in the community. But persistent difficulties, uncommon diseases, and frequent deaths then the people's thoughts to supernatural factors; events are interpreted in terms of supernatural interferences, and are sought to be remedied by magico-religious procedures.
Most of the common diseases are interpreted as a fault in the physical system, and are treated with herbal medicines or modern drugs obtained from the dispensary. But persistent headaches, intermittent fevers, continued stomach disorders, rickets and other wasting diseases among children, menstrual troubles repeated abortions etc., are attributed to supernatural forces. In all such cases medicinal cures as well as propitiation of the ‘unseen powers’ are attempted simultaneously. Similarly, such calamities as the failure of crops, total blindness, repeated failures, in undertakings, deaths of children in quick succession and too many deaths in the family within a short time are taken to indicate ‘misfortune’ and the handiwork of malevolent supernatural forces. Small pox and cholera are always attributed to the wrath of Seetla mata. For these diseases worship is regarded as the only remedy; and no medicines are administered to the patients. The difficulties, distresses and deaths are attributed to the following:

1. The wrath of ancestor-spirits
2. Ghosts and spirits
3. Black Magic and witchcraft
4. The wrath of gods

If ancestor-spirits are ignored and ‘not given their due’ they warn the family by causing some minor but noticeable trouble. It is for the members of the family to take this ‘timely warning’ and remove the cause of the ancestor’s anger. Failure in this after leads to serious consequences and irreparable losses. Ill-luck, and misfortunes persist all along the way of a person whose ‘stars are unfavourable’. Hysteria, fits and possession by spirits’ are the result of spirits and ghosts. Enmity
may lead to the use of black magic or witchcraft, which may be the root cause of the trouble in many cases of persistent disease and ill-luck. In the Sugali society, the magic (choomattar) may be divided into two types. They are as follows:

1. Destructive Magic
2. Protective Magic

**Destructive Magic:** It is performed especially by the Sugali women who are called as ‘Dākkān’. Dr. Sannarama in his work, ‘Lambani Samskriti’, says that the Dākkān is a specialist in black magic.\(^{17}\)

On every New Moon day she goes naked to the graveyard and perform the puja with a bone of the left hand of a deadly New mother. The magical powers acquired by her are called as ‘Munjya’. The sudden death of animals and fellow beings are attributed to the witchcraft of Dakkan. If a person wants to use the Black Magic against his enemy, then the Dakkan asks for the blood of hen or pig and the cloth used by a menstruated woman. Here totemic ideas may have helped in identifying the man with the animal or fowl sacrificed. The Sugalis believe that the effectiveness of the witchcraft depends upon the blood of the living beings. It is a technique employed by the Dakkan to keep the Divine powers away from protecting the victim. Nails, Hair and footprints of the victim are needed to perform destructive magic. The puja is performed by the Dākkān with the physical belongings of the victim. A black magical poison called as ‘Maddu’ is prepared by the Dākkān. The person who is disliked (victim) by the Dākkān is invited and offered the food in which the ‘maddu’ is mixed secretly. Though the food is
offered to all the people, the person for whom it is intended, is affected by black-magic. When he consumes the food, it becomes undigestible and it takes the form of a ball around which the hair is grown. He loses the appetite and finally he dies. But now-a-days this type of black magic is not believed by the Sugalis, as they are slowly getting acquainted with the education.

Against sorcery and witchcraft drastic steps are required. For action under both these categories i.e., against black magic and witchcraft three techniques are employed: mantram (chants and spells), yantram (use of secret formulae and designs) and counter black magic.

Under the protective magic, the people of the thanda consult the priest known as ‘Bhupa’. Amateur practitioners succeed in some cases, but all difficult cases require the intervention of an established specialist. The techniques of these specialists are their closely guarded secrets. When the ‘Bhupa’ or a specialist traces the witch, then the people consult the Naik of the thanda. The Naik convenes the meeting of the Gor panchayat and the Dakkan or witch is given death penalty. It is customary that the Dakkan is to be killed either by her husband or son. All her belongings used for witchcraft are destructed. A ‘Dakkan’ has been traced in the Pampanuru thanda. She is driven away from the thanda. The information given by the Sugalis reveals that now-a-days they are consulting the non-Sugali witches for witchcraft, as the Dakkans are not found in their tribal community.
The folk medicine of Sugalis consists of two kinds:

1. Natural folk medicine
2. Magico-religious folk medicine

The first of these represents their earliest reaction to natural environment, and involves the seeking of cures for his ills in the herbs, plants, minerals and animal substances of nature. Natural medicine, which is sometimes called “rational” folk medicine, and herbs in its material medica, is shared with primitive cultures and in some cases some of its effective cures have made their way into scientific medicine. The second branch of folk medicine is the magico-religious variety, sometimes called “occult” folk medicine, which attempts to use chances, holy words and holy actions to cure disease. This type commonly involves a complicated, pre-scientific worldview that will be described in detail later. Folk medicinal ideas of the Sugalis are met most frequently in the mountainous areas that had little communication with the outside world and more among women than among men. Sugali women especially patronize occult medicine, astrology, pseudo-radiology, and other modern cultic forms of popular medicine. Their folk medicinal knowledge has grown organically out of the whole of folk belief and custom, thought, life, speech and geography. It varies from place to place.

Folk medicine comprises those beliefs and practices relating to health and diseases, which are products of indigenous cultural development and not explicitly derived from
the conceptual framework of modern medicine. In addition to “Ethno Medicine” various other teams have been used to refer to the domain under discussion or part of it “Folk Medicine”, “Popular Medicine”, “Popular Health Culture” etc.

The Indian sub-continent abounds as it were in a variety of diversity of health traditions. The Indian Medical tradition prevails at two different levels, namely the classical system and the folk system. By the classical system, we refer to the codified systems such as Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani traditions. They are characterized by institutionally-trained practitioners, a body of texts and highly developed theories to support their practices. As against this we also have a folk tradition which is an oral tradition passed on from father to son or mother to daughter or from guru to sishya in tens and thousands of our villages and tribal settlements through the ages.

Folk medicine dates back to the caveman who started consuming raw vegetables and fruits when he had to satisfy his hunger and also imitate the action of the animals, which consumed plants for any health disorder.

The Sugalis of Anantapur district who are a nomadic tribal community have with them what is perhaps the largest unbroken health tradition. They have diverse health practices that may have become a part of their culture and evolved through many years of experience in the inhabited ecosystem. These folk traditions are non-codified and most of them are locality specific. This is further bifurcated into household level health traditions and “Natu Vaidya” traditions. The household
health tradition comprises home remedies; health related customs, seasonal regimen, rituals, ceremonies, food and regimen. It not only utilizes the spices and condiments from the kitchen but also a wide range of plants and its products available in the locality. Some areas of Andhra Pradesh have reported over 200 herbal plants and other resources used for health care at the household level of the Sugalis. These various herbs have been playing a major role in the traditional curative and preventive medicine of the Sugalis. The traditional medicinal derivatives of these medicinal plants have also been sanctified with magico-religious incantations so, as to fortify natural medicine with supernatural power. It is a vital component of the concept of “Nature Man Spirit Complex” postulated by Vidyarthi L.P. 18

The natural or herbal folk medicine in its commonest form is old-fashioned, domestic, household medicine normally practiced by the Sugalis. “Home remedies” were passed down from generation to generation. Herbs that are thought to give them special curative ability are gathered in the surrounding areas of the thanda. Almost every wild plant and many domestic plants had their curative uses. In addition to the women of the average Sugali household, there are herbal specialists in the community, usually men, who gather herbs widely, professionally, one may say. They also possess magical cures for their animals.

Herbs are not the only source of the materia medica of the natural healer. Minerals and animal substances were widely used, including such things as clay, mud etc. “God almighty
never put us here without a remedy for every ailment,” exclaimed Bhukya Naik, an old man of Singampalli thanda. The local liquor which is extracted from the Acacia Arabica is used in other ways by the granny-women. It is generally used for cuts, stings, bites, bruises and wounds. Severe abdominal pain, and appendicitis are apparently relieved at once with a poultice of tobacco leaves soaked in hot water. Most widespread is the decoction or tea from the bark of Neem tree (Azadiracta Indica).

In many cases herbs and other rational cures are overlaid with magical ritual either in the preparation or in the healing technique. Rational medicine may be “strengthened” by a magic spell and thus be drawn into the irrational zone. Sympathetic prescriptions are followed in gathering herbs, bark and roots. Leaves plucked upward from a plant have efficacy as an emetic; downward, as an enema. The direction in which Acacia Arbica is cut make a vast difference as medicine. If it is shaved upward, they believe that then it is sedative. If the bark is scraped downward, the tea made from it is regarded as a toothache reliever.

The time of year in which the herb is picked and dried also is prescribed by Sugali-folk medical tradition. Even the recent botanical studies have shown that the time when plants are picked does in some cases affect their medicinal efficacy.

Here the first factor in the success of folk medicine is the use of “objectively effective medicines”. Most of these “natural cures” are used without magical spells or rites to accompany them.
Nature Support

In the Sugali health tradition system all parts of the plants have some use. It can be the root, stem, leaf, stamens and pistils. According to the “All India Co-ordinate Project on Ethno Biology” about 7500 wild plants are used for medicinal purpose by tribes and 950 are found to be new claims and are worthy of scientific scrutiny.

Magico-Religious Folk Medicine

The principles of religious healing, rooted in antiquity, are channeled into the Sugali society, where healings in the name of the deity Seetalamata are permitted, and the growth of the cult of the patron saints like Sevalal and Hāthiram bhāva, a special category of medicine arose which is known as Magico-Religious folk medicine. Through its systems of blessings, benedictions, and its wide use of sacramentals (essentially expressing the belief in the holiness of material objects) the Sugali society ministered to and encouraged the principles that they consider basic to folk medicine of the magico-religious sort: the ideas of the availability of supernatural powers for healing, and the mediation of that power through material objects as well as human healers. The magico-religious healing, on the folk – cultural or traditional level, using words, charms, armlets, and physical manipulations in the attempt to heal the ills of man and beast. It is based on the worldview of the unity of all things, earth, man, animal and nature. The diseases like small pox and chicken-pox are believed to be sacred which are associated with Seetalamata who is regarded as the Goddess of
diseases, and hence the diseases are to be cured of by worshipping the Goddess ritually. Children who are suffering from small-pox are treated with a cold medicine. Ragi, jowar and other millets are soaked in water of an earthenware. The earthen pot is attributed 'purity' and is regarded as sacred deity Seetalamata. A menstruated woman should not even touch the pot. Sometimes the Sugalis tie the armlets which are provided with written charms involving holy words.

Folk diagnosis is kept to a minimum while there are many folk names for diseases or conditions, generally it is conditions rather than precisely defined ailments that are recognized and "treated". In speaking of folk dermatology, they do not differentiate the small pox and chicken-pox. They name them according to the symptoms and rarely according to the etiology, which they do not know. They believe that the negligence of the Goddess Seetalamata causes sickness.

The Sugali folk medicine also includes veterinary practice. It is more difficult than treating human beings, since the patient is incapable of self diagnosis, it is of utmost importance in the Sugali thandas. The livestock are the living capital of the Sugalis, who sometimes, it is rumoured, paid more attention to the health of their stock than to that of their families. Elaborate rituals involving stalk and stable as well as farm house and farmyard, during the festive occasions like Diwali, protected the animals on the farm.

The Sugali folk traditions are rich and diverse and include several practitioners as the following list illustrates.
1. Home remedies and cures for common ailments.
2. Traditional practitioners who learn through oral traditions and who treat a variety of ailments.
3. Knowledge and beliefs regarding foods – i.e., foods to be preferred or avoided during specific conditions such as pregnancy, nursing mothers etc.
4. Individuals/families specializing in the treatment of specific diseases e.g., jaundice, asthma.
5. Knowledge of diagnostic procedures
6. Knowledge of preventive measures
7. The traditional birth attendants who perform home deliveries.

The Sugalis in spite of the dynamic situation created by the programmes of directed change intended for bringing the benefits of modern medical and health practices within their reach, still persists with the age-old and time-tested herb based native medical practices for the following reasons:
1. The modern medicine is costly and its efficiency not time-tested to the native tribal.
2. The naturally grown medicinal plants are still available in the tribal areas.
3. The tribal medicine is a product of native genius. The knowledge of the bio-diversity has a vital bearing on ethos of the Sugalis. Herbal medicine is cost effective.
4. Herbal medicine preparation requires no sophisticated process or formulae. Even patient’s family can prepare the medicinal extracts from the herbs either on their own or on the prescription of native medical specialists.
5. Herbal medicine has magico-religious sanction also.
The Sugali folk healers (Natu Vaidyas) cater to a wide range of conditions covering promotive, preventive and curative aspects of health. They handle simple ailments like the cold as well as emergencies like snake bites, traditional ophthalmology, gynaecology, pediatrics and many individual organ related conditions and specific diseases. The Sugali Natu Vaidyas can take care of bone setting, delivery, and vet care also. They have a holistic understanding about diseases, backed with specialized diagnostic techniques and disease management. They have vast knowledge about the wide and narrow spectrum use of a resource used for specific conditions.

Skilled Dais

In recent decades there has been an increasing interest in the West to attempt to bring back childbirth into the household. It is interesting to note that Sugali dais are the largest group of practitioners who take care of ante-natal and post-natal care and also attend to deliveries. WHO, having understood the lack of additional human power for attending to deliveries in rural areas of India, have trained these dais for conducting asceptic deliveries. All through the pregnancy the mother is attended on advised and guided by the dais. Pregnancy is confirmed early by the dai by the unmistakable symptoms that appear soon after conception. These dais also detect pregnancy by observing the pulse of the mother. The pregnant mother is administered herbal preparations made from locally available herbs. For example for swelling in the legs, water boiled with Dania, dry ginger and palm sugar is administered.
All the health problems of women during pregnancy, such as constipation, urinary ailments and false labor pains and sometimes even premature abortion are managed efficiently by the dais. In the case of premature death of the foetus inside the womb, the Sugali dais are able to clearly understand the signs and symptoms and conduct a safe delivery. To remove a dead child from the womb, the paste of the leaves of veduru (Bambuse arundinacea) is given to the woman.

Since the dais belongs to the same village or a near by thanda, she is often familiar with the social and family background of the mother. This enables her to provide tremendous psychological support to the mother.

Women having difficult labor pain is given a special powder made of crushed dry ginger curry leaves, pepper, amino, clove, boiled in jaggery and after it is cooled, a little mixture is given to woman to drink. By administering simple preparations such as the juice of drumstick leaves with salt or a decoction of jeera and daniya, they are able to detect whether labor has set in after that her pains stop if the delivery is not really imminent or else she has a quick delivery.

The delivery position followed by Sugali dais is radically different from the "Lithotomy" position (lying down with the feet up in stirrups) preferred by modern obstetric practice. The preferred posture is the kneeling position, which makes it easy for the mother to strain and bear down. These daises say that Lithotomy brings the foetus up into the chest region of the
mother and makes it difficult for the mother to bear down when the contractions begin.

Another area where the traditional practice of the dais is radically different from that of the hospitals is in the cutting of the umbilical cord and the delivery of the placenta. The current practice is to cut the umbilical cord as soon as the child is delivered. The dais does not sever the connection between the child and the placenta. The umbilical cord is retained until the baby cries or starts breathing. In cases where the child fails to cry, resuscitation is achieved by pumping the placenta in warm water with salt. At times, this procedure may last up to an hour before the child is revived; the other reason for retaining the umbilical cord is that this helps in the easy delivery of the placenta. In cases where breast milk is insufficient, the mother is given the curry of drumstick leaves, the cooked food of the head of the sheep, fish, etc., which increase the lactation.

**Bone Setters**

The second largest group of Sugali folk practitioners are the traditional bone setters who take care of sprains, dislocations, simple to complex fractures, mal union etc. The resources they use are comparatively lesser than the other branches of traditional healing specialties. This includes bamboo for splints, egg, black gram, jaggery, castor oil and few plants. The root bark of the kanuga (Pongamia Pinnata) boiled in gingili oil is stored in earthen pot and given to patients suffering from chronic body pains and arthritis. This oil is given both internally and applied on the affected parts also.
Vish Vaidyas

The Vish Vaidyas are the third largest group among the Sugali folk healers. They are estimated to be 1000 in number in Anantapur district. They treat all kinds of poisonous bites like bite of krait, cobra, scorpion, rat bites, dog bites, spider poisons, etc. Their diagnostic and treatment techniques are crucial in the management of poisonous bites. The service rendered by this field is immense because the allopathic medicine for the poisonous bites is not readily available in the primary health centers of the villages. In the Indian health scenario, it is estimated that there are 4000 deaths occurring in India annually due to poisonous bites. This requires the immediate attention for further research so that the service rendered from this tradition could be utilized in a large way.

At the household level, Tulasi, neem, curry leaves, hibiscus, castor plant and local liquor (Sarai) made of the bark of acacia arabica are frequently used to cure the ailments. Local liquor called sarai is a dietary supplement in hard work, play and dance. It is prescribed medicine for bodily ills. From dawn to dusk liquor dominates their thinking and interacting. Nature is very much a part of the tribal consciousness and liquor made of rice, millets, maize, flowers, fruits and trees, etc., is the nature’s gift to Sugalis.

Some of the herbal medicines prescribed by the Dais are:
1. Nela Usiri (Physllanthus amours) paste is given on an empty stomach to cure the jaundice.
2. Fruit rind of Dhanimma (Punica granatum) is given to the patient suffering from loose motions.

3. Neer Brahmi scientifically called Bacopa Monneri is used as a brain tonic.

4. The brain shaped leaves of Centella asiatica is used as brain tonic.

5. The touch-me-not plant (Mincosa pudica) is used to stop uterine bleeding. Its paste is also used to cure filariosis.

6. Kondapindi aku’s (Aganosma dichotama) leaf paste with milk is given for the stones in the urinary tract and bladder.

7. The datura leaves are heatened in a pan and used for the piles.

8. In the neem plant, the root and stem are used for fever, leaves for skin diseases, flower for malaria, oil from seeds to destroy lice.

9. After the delivery, the nursing mother is asked to sit in a plate filled with Sarai. So that the wounds in the mouth of the birth canal will be cured off.

Some of the medicinal plants in their natural form or after processing have social, religious and medicinal application. Eg: Turmeric powder is smeared to the deities, sacred spots and other religious artifacts besides being used as an antibiotic in treating human ailments similarly neem leaf has both sacred and curative application.

Samph (*Foeniculum Vulgare*) - (drying property for binding stools). They chew the seeds daily. Generally used for Diarrhoea, loss of appetite, indigestion.
Lavanga (*syzygium aromaticum*) – It is a dried unopened flower bud used for toothache. Also acts as mouth freshner eaten after taking a seafood or non-veg food.

For vomiting – they lick burnt buds with honey

Nutmeg (*Myristica Fragrans*) – Dried seed powder with milk is taken to cure loose motions.

For foul smelling unformed stools – This powder with dried ginger and cumin seeds is given.

Kumkum (*cocus salivus*) - The Dried Stigma and style of flower is used for head-ache. It is applied externally on forehead with white sandal and camphor

For intestinal parasites – in children it is used with camphor and milk

Pudina (*mentha piperita*) - It is used as worm destroyer in the intestine.

**Mandara** (*Hibiscus Rosa Sinensis*): It is used in greying of hair and falling hair and baldness. The paste of flowers, prepared in cow’s urine is applied to the scalp. The buds of white variety, are fried in ghee and eaten with sugar in repeated abortions.

**Kumari** (*Aloes Vera*): Fleshy portion of leaves, juice or solidified juice which is of two types:

(a) Hepatic aloes – it is made by heating on low heat

(b) Glassy aloes - it is available, after treating at high temperature.
The Sugalis grow it, in every kitchen garden. They use it in painful swelling and in enlargement of spleen. The pulp is applied, with turmeric as hot fomentation. In chronic ulcers, the dry powder is applied. In conjunctivitis, drops of its juice are put into eyes, and the pulp is applied over the eyes. The pulp is also applied, in headache with burning sensation. Aloes is the main drug in the treatment of jaundice, cirrhosis of liver and other liver complaints.

The Sugalis believe that the Aloe vera has hot properties. The dry extract is a stimulant to the uterus and is also given in irregular and scanty mensus. It streamlines the functions of female reproductive systems. It may cause abortion. It is also used for involution of uterus, after delivery and hence is given routinely. It purifies blood and is given in blood diseases.

The Sugalis prepare a pain balm from Peppermint (Menthol piperite). Usually they believe that Pudina causes anaesthesia. A mixture of Mint leaves, Pomegranate, salt, asofoetida and raisins is given for good appetite.

They preserve honey for at least three months and this older honey is considered particularly valuable, specially for reducing blood sugar in diabetes and for cough.

In cases of obesity honey is given with hot water. This is the only case in which honey is given in hot drinks. They believe that honey promotes intellect and strength and has many healing properties. It is taken as first aid for bleeding. To quench the excessive thirst, they take honey with lemon water.
They hang over the Aloes vera plant inside the house, just to avoid mosquitoes and other insects. This is the best traditional mosquito repellant which is used by them.

The castor oil plant (*Ricinus Communis*) is a very variable annual herb or perennial tree extensively grown in Anantapur district. The Sugalis grow this plant in their kitchen gardens and also in fields. Its flowers are male below, female above, both without petals. It’s oil is used in cases of Rheumatoid arthritis, stones in kidneys etc.

Pomegranate (*Punica grantum*) is frequently used by them to stop bleeding in women. Fruit is given for pregnant women with a little rock salt, from the 2nd month onward, for easy delivery. The bark of the fruit is given to children suffering from loose motions. The black pepper has been used by the Sugalis as an expectorant. It increases watering from the nose and later dries up phlegm.

Sesame is cultivated as an internal crop in the field of groundnut. Sugali women use it to regulate menstrual cycle and also for urinary disorders.

**Hingu** (*Ferula Asafoetida*): The Sugalis have been associated with the Vysyas, who are the trading communities. They used to sell their agricultural products to the Vysyas, who acted as the intermediaries. The food habits of the Vysyas have a profound influence on the Sugalis. Vysyas have been using Asofoetida in cooking food. The Sugalis use the asafetida as a uterine stimulant with Cumin and garlic. It is taken in by women to increase lochial discharge after child birth.
Fried Drum stick leaves (*Morihga Oleifera*) are taken for excess cold.

The cooked bitter gourd is given for a sugar patient for at least three months.

The cumin seeds (*Cuminum Cyminum*) powder is given to cure off indigestion, loose motions, loss of appetite etc. After delivery, a Sugali women is given cumin seed powder for scanty or irregular menses.

Externally, the Cumin seeds are used in itch.

**Gachakāya** (*Caesalpinia Crista*): Seed is used as anti periodic, anti pyretic in asthma and snake bites. Tender leaves and barks are considered as emmenagogue, febri fuge and anthelmintic. The young leaves and pods of Nallatumma (*Acacia Arabica*) are used as an astringent in diarrhoea and a decoction of the bark is used as an astringent lotion.

The Sugalis who are engaged in lime mortar kilns are given the juice of stem bark of Seekaya (*Acacia Sinuata*) as an effective remedy to asthma. They usually get this bark from the forests of Srisailam in Kurnool district, where the trees are grown. The ashes of the burnt leaves of chinta (*Tamarindus Indica*) are used as an alkaline medicine in acidity of the urine and gonorrhoea. The pulp and leaves are applied externally in the form of poultice to inflammatory swellings. A poultice of the flowers is used in conjunctivitis. Its juice is also given internally for bleeding piles.
However, the Sugalis treat a patient as an integral part of their community; the loss of life and the loss of work at crucial times during the year are losses to the community – a disturbance of normal rhythm of life and the community enterprise. The community itself is endangered and a folk medicinal practitioner must reunite the broken community. However, for the permanent recovery of the patient, “the ritual-mechanism was more or less infallible in dispersing the clouds of uncertainty and fear of the mystery of disease. With the end of ritual, the crisis which has overtaken the group is overcome and normal order is restored.”

Vumetta (*Datura innoxia*): Seeds, leaves and roots are used in insanity, fever, diarrhoea, skin diseases and antiseptic. Leaves are warmed with castor oil and they are applied for piles.

Ustikaya (*Solanum forvum Swatz*): The plant is used in the treatment of coughs and diabetes. Its fruits are edible and the fumes of burning seeds are inhaled for tooth-ache.

Nuvvulu (*Sesamum Indicum*): Seeds are useful in piles and as a poultice applied to ulcers.

Tella Uttareni (*Pupalia lappacea*): The fruit is applied locally for cuts and the paste of the leaves is applied as a dressing for boils.

Gurugaka (*Celosia argentea*): The leaves are useful in blood diseases and mouth sores.
Uttareni (*Achyranthes aspera*): The juice of leaves mixed with dried ginger powder and applied to eye injuries of cattle. The plant has the reputation of being a powerful talisman and is now popularly supposed to act as safeguard against scorpions and snakes.

Nela Palleru (*Tribulus terrestrics*): The leaf paste is given for the treatment of stones in the bladder.

Maredu (*Aegle marmelos*): The Sugalis believe that Maredu is a favourable plant for Lord Shiva. The small unripe fruit is given with ginger in decoction for piles. They usually warm the unripe fruits and then the pulp of the fruits is mixed with butter milk into a paste and is applied over the head, followed by head-bath to get the cooling effect to the eyes.

Velaga Chettu (*Limonia acidissiua*): The fruit is eaten to check diarrhoea and dysentery. The leaves are aromatic and they are mixed with hot water to take a bath.

Karivepaku (*Murraya Kowenigii*): The bark or root is applied externally to the bites of venomous animals. An infusion of the roasted leaves is used to stop vomiting. The juice of the leaves is given to the pregnant woman who suffers from labour pains.

Vepa (*Azadirachta indica*): This tree is regarded by the Sugalis as sacred one. It is grown in front of the temple of their deities and before their houses. The seed oil is bitter to taste and is used in skin diseases such as ulcers, sores and ringworm. It is applied in cases of rheumatism and it also possesses insecticidal properties. The bark of the tree is a bitter tonic, astringent and...
anti periodic. It is also used as a tonic in malarial fever. Usually the Sugalis use the fresh tender twigs to clean teeth and to cure off gum diseases. The paste of leaves is mixed with turmeric powder and applied externally over the body of children suffering from small-pox and chicken-pox.

**Turaka Vepa** (*Melia azadirachta*): The flowers and leaves are applied as poultice to relieve nervous head-aches. A poultice of the flowers is said to kill ice and cure eruptions of the scalp. Its fruit is worn as a necklace to avert contagious diseases.

**Regu** (*Ziziphus nauritiana*): Bark is powerfully astringent. The fruit is dried and powdered. This powder is used as an article of diet. The young leaves are pounded and applied to scorpion stings.

**Kunkudu** (*Sapindus emarginatus*): The Sugalis use kunkudu kāyalu as a hair shampoo.

**Mango** (*Mangifera indica*): The ash of burnt leaves is a household remedy for burns and scalds. Fumes from the burning leaves are inhaled for relief from hiccups and throat infection.

**Munaga** (*Moringa Pterygosperma*): The Sugalis cook the curry of munaga leaves and is regarded as the best medicine for piles. The fruit is used in diseases of liver, spleen, articular pains, tetanus and paralysis.
Guruvinda (Papilionaceae): The bruised seed have been used criminally for poisoning cattle and for homicidal purposes.

Kandulu (Cajanus cajan): Leaf juice with honey is useful in treatment of jaundice. It’s flowers are fried with dal and is used to purify blood.

Vulavalu (Macrotyloma Uniflorum): The seeds are cooked and the water extracted from the cooked seeds is taken as a medicine for cold and cough. The seed paste is used for relief in debility.

Kanuga (Pongania Pinnata): The juice of the leaves is considered as a remedy for leprosy, gonorrhoea, diarrhoea and cough. The stem bark is given internally in bleeding piles and for beri-beri.

Ganneru (Nerium Oleander): All parts of the plant are poisonous. The Sugali women who are disgusted with the economic and health problems take the fruits of this plant to commit suicide.

Jilledu (Calotropis giganta): This is the totemic plant of the Sugali community and it is used on all occasions in Rites de passage. The latex is a strong irritant to the skin and mucous membrane. A tincture of the leaves is used in the treatment of intermittent fever.
**Genusu gadda** (*Ipomoea batatas*): The root is considered as laxative. The root is given to allay thirst in fever and paste of leaves is used as an application to scorpion bites.

**Thangedu** (*Cassia auriculata*): This plant is found throughout Andhra Pradesh. The Sugalis use the powder of the dry seed as an external remedy in certain cases of ophthalmia.

**Bonthajamudu** (*Cereus pterogonus*): The fresh young shoots of the plant used as a cardiac stimulant and also used in cases of dropsy and various cardiac affections in the form of liquid extract of tincture.

**Nagajemudu** (*Opuntia dilleni*): The baked fruit is said to be given in whooping cough and a syrup of the fruit is said to increase the secretion of bile and control of spasmodic cough.

**Tella Ganjiraku** (*Trianthuva decendra*): Its root is used in hepatitis and asthma. A decoction of the root bark is credited with appetite properties. The juice of the leaves is dropped into the nostrils to relieve partial headache.

**Yerra ganjiraku** (*Trianthema Portulacastrum*): The Sugalis use the leaves and tender stems as a vegetable. Sometimes it produces toxic effects in the form of diarrhoea and paralysis.

**Vaamu** (*Trachysspermum ammi*): The Sugalis use it as a household remedy for indigestion. Taken with butter milk, it is a common remedy for relieving difficult expectoration due to dried up phlegm.
Seetha Palamu (*Annona Squamosa*): The unripe fruit, seed, leaf and root are used for destroying insects and lice. The crushed leaves are applied to the nostrils in hysteria. Hydrocyanic acid is present in leaves. The juice of the leaves is used in skin diseases.

**Gasalu** (*Papaner Somniferum*): These are the opium poppy seeds used as a narcotic, sedative, anodyne, anti-spasmodic hypnotic and sudorific. Seeds are mixed with sugar candy and cardamoms and is given in diarrhoea and dysentery.

Avālu (*Brassica nigra*): The Sugalis use its paste in snake bite. Its paste is applied to the throat and neck to cure of tonsillitis.

Nela Janumu (*Polygala chinesis*): The leaf paste is used for the suppression of mammary abscesses.

Gongura (*Hibiscus Cannabinus*): The juice of the flowers with sugar and black pepper is used for acidity. Leaves are boiled in water and crushed with turmeric powder and salt and applied on boils for early opening and healing.

**Mandara** (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*): The flowers are made into paste and applied to swellings and boils. Its fresh root juice is given for gonorrhoea and powdered root is used for menorrhagia.

**Gayapaku** (*Sida Veronicifolia*): The poultice leaves are applied to cuts and bruises and also in diarrhoea for pregnant women. Leaf juice is used to cure rinderpest in cattle.
FOOD PRACTICES

Certain illness are believed to have been caused due to intake of “hot diet or substances” and treated with cold remedies. Wild sickness believed to occur because of intake of “cold” diet or substances are treated with hot remedies. The Sugalis classify all the food items and even medicine into 3 categories viz., 1. hot, 2. cold, 3. lukewarm.

Some of the foods classified as hot by the Sugalis are wheat, rice, bittergourd, brinjals, papaya, potatoes, coriander, banana, fish, dry fish, eggs and chicken. The local liquor prepared from the bark of acacia arabica is also included in this category. The foods classified as cold are cabbage, cucumber onion, cauliflower, orange, pineapple, mango, watermelon, lemon, emblica officinalis, curds, milk, latex of ficus hispida and coconut water.

Rice is classified as “Luke Warm” i.e., the combination of hot and cold category. In cold season hot foods are prepared and preferred and vice-versa. Patients with Jaundice or with skin diseases are not given chicken or eggs. Those suffering from body rash and skin ailments are not supposed to eat brinjal, dry and salted fish, as these can aggravate the problems. The ginger chutney is considered as a good appetizer and helps in digestion.

Medicines taken by them are also classified into hot and cold. Thus to treat cold and cough a medical herb (Allium/Sativum) believed to be hot is administered. The Sugali believe that exclusive consumption of hot and cold foods cause
illness. Consumption of too hot and cold foods are considered a taboo for pregnant women as it is believed to affect both mother and child. Raw papaya, banana and dioscorea, bulbiferous are taboo for the pregnant woman, as it is believed that the excess heat in the above may lead to an abortion.

The ethno medicine of the Sugalis is heavily dependent upon the local flora which serve as the important resource base. However, their traditional health practices are on the decline owing to modernization and changes in life style. With increasing deforestation, the loss of local control over forest land and the commercial exploitation of forest, the resource base stands seriously threatened. Another important contributory factor appears to be the indifference of the modern medical practitioners and our health policy makers to these traditions. By and large they are of the view that most of the these traditional practices are at best, harmless and at worst, superstitious and retrograde, unless they can examined and proved by modern research methodology. The loss of the folk medicinal traditions will be a monumental loss to the world and particularly to rural communities because with the erosion of these health traditions one is losing the time-tested medical knowledge of plants, animals and minerals. It is necessary to act urgently in order to save our health traditions, which form an important facet of the Indian medical heritage.

**ORAL TRADITIONS OF SUGALI**

In the historical context now ‘Adivasi’ refers to a wide variety of communities which earlier had remained relatively
free from the controls of the outside states but were eventually subjugated during the colonial period and brought under the control of the state. Today they are classified as ‘Scheduled Tribes’ by the Indian constitution, and more generally they are known as tribal and indigenous people.

What these people do have in common is their oral culture expressed in their language and symbols, their myths and rituals, their legends and sagas. Many tribals have evolved a complex cultural heritage of their own. The way they recorded their own history and preserved their culture was quite different from that of their colonial discoverers. However the oral sources of tradition in the societies are not strictly religious or even mystic. These are the legends and songs and sagas that are part of collective memory of the tribals.

Thus we have legends of origin and also narration of encounters with the environment as well as with outsiders. These give us an understanding of the identity and self perception of these people, how they position themselves both with regard to their natural environment and how they respond to the encroachment of outsiders into their geographical and social space.

It was “rather a fatal loss of manipulative power in the present. The culture that possessed writing could accurately represent to itself the culture without writing, but the reverse was not true.”  

Too easily have tribal societies been considered as societies without a history. Such recollections as they do have
of their past are recorded in their oral traditions, grouped together under the overriding rubric of myth and legend. What would qualify as their history is by and large what has been recorded by the communities and in relation to others, i.e., these historians’ own past. This yields only a reflected history, constructed through the perspective of others, and for these others certainly this is a great cultural deprivation since we know how important historical memories are in the construction of their past to cope with the present.

Recording the oral history of such people where they still speak for themselves, is but a small attempt to redress this huge disadvantage. For tribal societies do have a rich oral tradition in which their collective memories are recorded. It is a living tradition and a changing one precisely because it is still alive today.

However, if historical constructions are to privilege written documents and dismiss oral history, then these oral traditions stand devalued.

We know that every ‘text’ whether written or oral, must be read in its context. And it is precisely this dialectic between text and context that can authenticate an oral historical tradition. To avoid the subjection of an oral tradition, one must use more sources to set the context, then the interpretation will be very rich.

When the colonialists first discovered oral cultures, they assumed that if language distinguished beasts, it was writing that distinguished the civilized from the savages. In the ultimate
analysis, writing as a representational technology was a decided advantage in such an encounter. And when these preliterate people did begin writing it was often the others who wrote about these and seldom in their own language. This could not but alienate these further from an authentic self representation. This presumption served the political purposes of the dominant colonizers to the point where their treatment of such pre-literate people mostly tribals make wonder, as they are more barbarous, the colonized or colonizers. Interestingly, the absence of writing did not lead so much to a “loss of the past” for the formal discourse in an oral culture was in fact dominated by memory.

**Legendaary Heroes**

**Jangi and Bhangi**

The Rathod and Jat (Jadhav) clansmen were widespread in the Berar and Hyderabad regions during the 17th century A.D. They joined the Service of Asaf Jah, Service of the Mughal Governor in Deccan as goods transporters. The Sugalis under the leadership of two persons named Jhangi and Bhangi of Rathod clan supplied the food and other necessary goods to the Mughal armies. The Mughal Emperor Shahjahan recognized the services of the Sugalis and presented a copper plate in which it was inscribed that the Sugalis would be given an annual payment for the commendable service. The copper plate contains the following information.

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“Ranjan kā Pāni, chappar kā Ghās
Din kā Tin Khūni Māf
Our Jahan Āsaf khan kā Ghoda
Vhan Jhangi-Bhangi kā Bai”
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The meaning of the inscription seems to be: ‘If you can find no water elsewhere, you may even take it from the Ranjans (pots) of my followers, grass you may take from the roof of their huts and if you commit three murders a day, I will even pardon this provided that where I find my cavalry, there I must find always Bhangi and Jhangi Naik’s bullocks.’

Legend of Seva Bhaya

There was a thanda consisting of one hundred and one huts, at a place called Gutti Cherlopalli. The Chief tradesman of the thanda was Ramaji Rathod whose main profession was to supply food grains. His 3751 cattle were looked after by Sakya and Patya. He had three brothers Bheema, Khewa and Hema. Bheema Naik got married to Dharwani Bai. They were pious couple. Though they were honest and religious minded they did not bear children. They worshipped the gods and goddesses in the heaven and were desirous to have the most devoted and loyal servants in the human world. They felt that a son should be born to Bheema Naik so that he also should become their servant. So they descended on the earth. They blessed the couple with a child. They told Bheema Naik that the first son will be under his care till twelve years and afterwards he would be given back to them. His name should be Sevalal. Bheema agreed and by the blessing of the goddesses, a son was born and he was called Sevalal. Afterwards he had three more sons Hapa, Baddu and Bhana.

Sevalal was herding the cattle with Sakya and Patya. He used to go to the forest with the food prepared by his mother.
One day he did not carry food. Sevabhaya prepared food out of the mud on the banks of a river. He converted stone into a drum and leaves into flowers. He sang songs to the goddess Jagadamba.

Bheema Naik, after hearing about his son’s miracle, became sorrowful because his son would not be with him after twelve years.

When Sevalal attained 12 years of age, Bheema was not willing to offer his son for the service of the goddess. The goddess appeared before him and reminded him of his promise. He argued that he did not know anything and requested the goddess to make Sevalal agree. Devi said with anger that she would do the same and disappeared.

One day Goddess appeared in Sevalal’s dream and asked him to be her servant and Sevalal refused to do so. He replied that service of the parents was more important than the service of the Goddess. So she grew angry and started torturing him.

She killed the cattle. She made Sevalal not have a morsel. He prepared the smoke of dried grass around them. The Goddess killed Bhana, a brother of Sevalal and destroyed his 3751 cattle and his entire wealth. She even made him not to have a single morsel of the boiled rice. His hands were cut off. Finally she appeared before him by changing her form into super person of the Universe. Sevalal was stunned to see this divine personality and ultimately he became the servant of the deity. One day, Sevalal called his brothers and told them to prepare a bed of neem leaves. He told them not to awaken him
for three days till he got up naturally. Songs and prayers should be sung during the three days. He rescued the Sugalis from many difficulties and epidemics. The temple of Sevabhaya is built at Cherlopalli near Gutti in Anantapur district as it is believed that Cherlopalli was the birth place of Sevabhaya.

“Gor bhai, don’t be scared, camp yourself at least one or two miles away from the city. You will be freed from chicken pox and cholera. If you swallow my ash, all diseases will be cured.” That day onwards he became a divine person. Mariyamma and two flags were planted before the temple. After three days, his mother touched the body which sprang up three times above and fell down to the ground. At last he got salvation. After 12 years, he gave a message to his people from a temple.

Hathiram Bava

In the olden days, when the Sugalis were moving from one place to another for their ‘Ladani’, (trade business) a person named ‘Ramji’ reached Tirumala with his cowherd. He was married to a girl of Âmgot subclan and a son was born to them. As the boy was blessed by elephants in Tirumala, he was named ‘Hathiram’. He was a staunch devotee of Lord Venkateswara and led the life by eating the leaves and fruits. He was obstructed by Brahmins from entering into the sacred shrine of Lord Venkateswara. Then he built a thatched hut in front of the shrine and started playing the dice with Lord Venkateswara. Hathiram gained victory over the Lord in the game. The Sugali called Lord Venkateswara as ‘Balaji’, who appeared before
Hathiram. Since then, Sugalis are permitted to enter into the sacred shrine.

After first they pay a visit to Hathiram Bava Math and later they enter the sacred shrine of Lord Balaji.

Many of the Sugali narrative folk songs are about Sevabhaya, as he saved and protected their community from epidemics. A narrative song about Sevabhaya is the largest narrative song in Sugali folk literature. He occupies an unique place in the culture of the Sugalis. Many folk tales are told about him. Many narrative songs have been composed on the lives of great saints and seers of the community. The important among them are Sura Sevak, Zampa Bhagat, Dharma Bhukiya, Bhagat, Jampa Bhukiya Bhagat, Meetu Bhukya Bhagat, and others. These saints sacrificed their lives for the welfare of the community.

PERFORMING ARTS

Generally, the origin of the folk arts has the background of religious worship. They express different aspects of the folk life. These arts emerge out of their daily life, marriages, festivals, birth and death. The main purpose of the arts is to provide solace to their tired minds.

There are different kinds of Sugali folk arts – dance, music, songs and dramas.

They are classified as follows:

1. Dance
2. Rangoli
Dance

Dance is a means of expressing expressible feelings of man through physical actions in a rhythmic way. The very picture of the Sugali dance wakes us to imagine the beautiful Sugali women having colourful dresses embroidered with small pieces of mirror and dancing rhythmically to the tunes of musical instruments. These dances be which the spectators. These is no scope for the facial expressions. The feelings and sentiments are expressed through physical gestures of the torso, the legs and hands. The dance is generally performed in every thanda but it has been attached more importance during marriage celebrations and religious festivals. The types of dance may be classified as:

1. Dance during festivals and marriage celebrations.
2. Teej dance
3. Lengi dance
4. Kikli dance
5. Kolata dance

The songs and dances are performed during religious festivals and marriage ceremonies at thandas. There are no strict rules and conventions. They assemble in a group at a convenient time and sing the songs which are in tune with their dance. They dance rhythmically with the physical movements to the beating of the drums and to the tunes of the musical instruments. Their
manner of dancing is very attractive. “There is a much labour for legs, hands and loin during the dance. They raise up their heads and move to the left and right and sometimes they bend their hands up to the ground and again raise up their middle part of the body according to the movement. They step forward and backward with the clapping of hands and the same dancing groups dance in circle. They exhibit the different kinds of physical postures which are attuned to the sweet songs of the singers. Women sing the song with five rhythmic movement of the body in accordance with the background music. The rhythmic dance resembles Manipuri dance.

Teej Dance

The Sugali women perform this dance with the purpose of appearing as ‘Sri Krishna’. It is known as ‘Teej Dance’. They grow sprouts in the bamboo baskets during the festival. This festival is observed at the time of Dasara. The spinsters grow sprouts in the bamboo baskets for nine days. And on the ninth day they offer worship to the sprouts. They carry these baskets on their heads and go on dancing and singing throughout the day and finally immerse them into the water.

Lengi Dance

It is performed during the Holi festival. Such dance is strictly prohibited during other occasions. The Sugali women stand in circle with hand to hand and go on dancing in tune with rhythmic songs. The enriched women sing songs sweetly and dance rhythmically stepping forward and backward. Their embroidered and mirrored blouses, long skirts and head shawls
add grace to their circular dance. Elderly men and young men also dance and sing this Lengi songs.

The circle is the symbol for their unity which acts as a fence for protecting their cultural tradition. It is not easy to cross these fences.

The Kolat dance is presented with rhythmic striking sounds of short wooden sticks. There are no strict rules. The characteristic of this dance is singing a prayer song along with rhythmic stepping without the help of the musical instruments. It is known as Kikli dance. The women stare very close enough to each other and clap each other’s hands and bend their bodies backward and forward and dance in a circle. Sometimes they dance without songs. The nursery rhymes are sung rhythmically during this dance.

**The Dance of Men**

This types of dances of men are few in number. The men dance and sing during the fairs and the festival of Holi. The dances of men may be classified as follows:

1. Lengi Dance
2. Lezim Dance

**Lengi Dance**

The Sugali men dance and sing romantic songs like their women during the celebration of the Holi festival. The men stand in circle and sing a chorus song with movements of the limbs and steps according to the rhythm of a song which is known as ‘Lengi Song’ sung only during Holi festival and
prohibited on other occasions. The speciality of this dance is sweet voice, and rhythmic stepping finely blended together,

**Kolat Dance**

Men stand in two opposite rows. Some of them sit and stand and strike the sticks and dance in accordance with drum beating. This dance is called as ‘Danda ramero’. It provides good physical exercise during rhythmic dance.

**Lezim Dance**

This dance is performed with lezims (i.e., the wooden sticks tied with chain of small bells), so it is called lezim dance. The lezims are decorated with coloured papers and dancers wear colourful uniform.

The characteristic elements of Sugali dance are as follows: The dance of women resembles the Manipuri dance and Kathakali dance of Kerala. The Lengi dance with sticks resembles the Punjabi dances, which indicates that the Sugalis are originally from the North.

**The Art of Rangoli**

The Rangoli art occupies a distinct place among the Sugalis. They call it ‘Choko’. The Rangoli designs and pictures are drawn exclusively during the worship of gods and goddesses and other holy functions. The floor of the house is smeared with the cow-dung. The idols and photos of the Gods and Goddesses are kept facing the east on an elevated place either in the house or outside the house by putting blockades with different colours like vermilion, turmeric powder, flour etc. The different designs and pictures represent different gods. While drawing the
pictures scale is used for avoiding curved lines. The lemon fruit, datur, betel nut flower, coconut and other articles are kept on a point where the two lines cross each other. After installing God's idols or photos oil lamp is lit in the middle of the rangoli design. The Sugalis believe that this kind of blockades with colours and powders keeps evil forces away and they reap better fruits in life.

The Art of Embroidery

Of all the folk arts of the Sugalis, the art of embroidery is the most important one. It is not an exaggeration if it is said that women do not put on dress and garments without embroidery. They tailor their garments for daily use with different coloured pieces of cloth in different designs of embroidery art.

Tattooing

Tattoo is the main traditional decorative art among the tribes. According to Golden Weiser almost all societies in the world use tattooing either extensively or sparingly. It is the most popular way amongst Sugalis to decorate their bodies. It is very common with them. It is because the paint or other articles in olden days both male and female members in the Sugali society were tattooed. Presently, it is common among females only, men hardly bear it or have it only partially.

During the present research it has been noticed that more than 99% Sugali females were having tattoos on their bodies though the patterns and ideas may differ considerably.

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Conceptual Ideas

There are so many interpretations and beliefs regarding tattooing. The motivating idea behind tattooing varies from tribe and also does the interpretation of these ideas by the various anthropologists and philosophers. Here are a few quotations and certain popular regional interpretations of some noted authorities.

Sheik Gulab is of the opinion that these tribals work hard bare-bodied in all the seasons of the year. Tattoo develops a sort of resistance power in their bodies. Their injected body makes then able to bear all sort of climate hardships.*

He further mentions in his research paper Bhimma\textsuperscript{22} says that Bhimma and other tribals have a belief that if they will make the tattoo of a scorpion they are sure that it will never bite even if they catch it.

Russell (1916) quotes in his book, “tattooing seems to have been originally a magical means of protecting the body against real and spiritual dangers, much in the same manner as the wearing of ornaments. It is also supposed that people were tattooed with images of their totem in order to identify themselves with it.”\textsuperscript{23}

Tattoo marks are generally drawn on the forehead, cheeks, shoulder, thighs, legs, feet, palms, forearms, chin, two sides of the forehead, chest, loin, knee and on the backside of the upper part of the body. Instead of putting vermilion mark on the

* Shiek Gulan of Kalpi is famous for folk dances of Madhya Pradesh. The above mentioned views of his are taken from his dissertation entitled ‘Bhimma’.
forehead, the Sugali women mark the forehead with tattoos during their wedding ceremony. Such designs may be the pictures of the tree, creeper, wedding head dress, the cradle of Ramea, snake, scorpion, fish, worm, etc.

The Sugali women may be easily identified by observing tattoo markings on the two sides of the forehead and star-like tattoo marks on the chin.

This art has a unique place especially among the folk arts. Having tattoo marks before the marriage is customary among them. This art has aesthetic as well as religious aspect. Both men and women aspire to have the tattoo marks engraved on their body.

Tavernier said, “The Banjara (Sugali) have the tattoo markings right from the forearms to the shoulder. Different colours are prepared out of many roots and painted the tattoo marks with the colours. The skin appeared as a flower-bed.”

The Sugalis believe that tattoo marking sanctifies and beautifies the body. They believe that they will not be allowed to go to heaven without tattoo marks. Tattoo marks are put on the particular parts of the body. Some marks are visible and also hidden. It is said that just to hide their beauty from the public eyes, they started to have tattoo marks upon their body.

For the Sugalis, the patterns of tattooing, that infallible means of identification, rendered it possible to preserve the memories of the individual ancestors through pictoral representation.
Adam says, “Where a tribe is divided into a number of totem clans, the members of each group may decorate their bodies with paintings or tattooings representing or symbolizing their totem.”

The Sugalis are fond of being tattooed on their bodies and this, they believe will protect them from wild animals during their nomadic life.

They also believe that it is the only decoration of body ornaments which remains throughout the life. After death, other ornaments and other types of decoration remain here but this is the only decoration which goes with the body i.e., other ornaments can be removed but it is the only one which cannot be removed by any means.

Verrier Elwin narrates the other aspect of tattooes. He says that they are a form of sexual expression and powerful stimulant. It is customary for the Sugalis to get their bodies tattooed even before the marriage ceremony. For tattoo marks, they take the help of simple geometrical forms such as line, triangle, square, circle, dot, etc. Their tattoo patterns consist of small crude patterns of half moon, stars, crosses, combs, flowers, animals, Gods, Goddesses, scorpions, snakes, etc. They use small patterns for face, specially on forehead. Below neck, on breast, and at back, they have long straight parallel lines (triangular, curved or ‘U’ shaped). On arms, legs and hands most of the patterns are found repeatedly.
Belief System

Evil Eye

The belief in the evil eye is very common in the Sugali society. It is a Hindu belief that the eye gives forth the most powerful of all emanations from the body. "Eat not the bread of him that hath an evil eye," is an ancient injunction and one that has been well observed. The possibility of transferring from one person to another by sight is commonly held. It is not always possible for the victim to realize when the evil eye is being cast, for even a look of admiration may be a cloak for it. This is especially the case regarding admiring glances directed at children and domestic animals, particularly young ones. A look of admiration is regarded as resulting in a cow's wasting away and her supply of milk drying up. Sometimes the owner sees a look of admiration and offers the person some milk with the purpose of counteracting the effect.

In the Sugali society, the evil eye is believed to be rooted in jealousy. Hence the apparently admiring glance of a woman who has no children, or possibly no sons, at the son of mother woman will, it is feared, carry the blight of jealousy. A similar equation may be behind admiration for a cow. The person who is suffering from some physical defect such as blindness, deafness, lameness or one who is a hunch back or an albino is greatly feared, as it is regarded as certain that such a person will be jealous of those blessed with health and soundness of body, and so will be ready to cast evil glances toward them. The Sugali belief is that the crises of life are particularly precarious from the standpoint of susceptibility to the evil eye. So at times
of child birth, puberty and marriage one must be more than usually careful to take precautions against evil influences. Probably the element of spite is mingled with envy, since deformities themselves are commonly credited to the evil eye, and then there is the added belief that “misery likes company”.26

The Sugali believes that the evil eye is commonly cast by women, rarely by men, but occasionally even by deities. The word used for the evil eye is drishti which means sight. They believe that the eye is an instrument for transmitting powerful emanations involves many collateral beliefs. Polluted people are under certain prohibitions about looking at the heavenly bodies.

For example, a pregnant women must not look at an eclipse. In certain unfavourable circumstances a father must not look at his new-born child until a propitious time, and then he must first see only its reflection in a pot of oil. The chief mourner after performing a funeral rite must not look back. As a corpse leaves the house one must not look. In certain rites of casting out demons with mimetic magic, after throwing away the paraphernalia one must not look back. Much care must be taken as to the objects that a woman sees during pregnancy, as it will affect her child. Even idols are susceptible to the evil generated by the looks of an unclean person, and so such persons are prohibited from entering temples. In fact, in some rites of worship the devotee covers his eyes with his right hand, and in a few even the priest is blind folded.

Some of the means in current use in Sugali society for counteracting the effects of the evil eye are as follows:
1. It is customary to wave and throw in eight directions balls of variously coloured rice, to free the bridal couple from the effect of the evil eye. Marriage is of course one of the critical periods of greatest susceptibility.

2. To remove the effects of the evil eye at times people will burn an old broom, chillis and salt together before the person who is affected. At other times coconut shells, salt, chillies and some grains are burned before the affected individual. In some instances camphor is burned. In such cases, special precautions are taken that small children should not see these things, because they have been magically charmed and are potential sources of danger.

Amulets are frequently worn to attract the first glance of a person and thus avert the possibility of evil. Bright and shining amulets are considered most efficacious.

3. In fields the common method of diverting the evil eye is to erect a pole with a pot on it on which spots of lime are daubed. Rags are used sometimes instead of the pot.

Besides wearing the amulets and charms, they sometimes rely upon the celebration of religious rites. They have in connection with these beliefs and practices another illustration of the intimate association of the religious and magical. Though the operations of the evil eye are interpreted from the magical point of view, one of the means considered to be most effective for control is the religious. Religious rites themselves are commonly supposed to contribute to the merits of those who celebrate them, and to put him in possession of a power that will
enable him to counteract such malevolent influences as that of the evil eye. They believe that it is well always to have the gods on one’s fide in struggles against evil. Hence they perform the rites to please the gods.

A poor Sugali in Pampanuru thanda secretly performed the mock funeral rites of his daughter because she was accidentally hit by a crow. The purpose was to exorcise the “bad Omen” and save her from ‘Saade Saath’ (seven and a half years of bad luck). The Sugalis believe that contact with the crows is most inauspicious. Ganga Bai, the daughter of Bheema Naik in Pampanuru thanda was hit by a crow, while she was working on the farm.

Bheema consulted community elders and made arrangements for the mock ceremony. Accordingly, he told his close relatives in neighboring Singampalli thanda that his daughter had died of the electric shock in the morning. While all the relatives arrived at his home, Bheema and his family members completed the mock funeral rites. His daughter, even lay on the ‘paade.’

At the end of it, all the relatives started weeping by surprise. Later, they offered hens to the patron deities Maremma and Sitha Bhavani to exorcise any “bad spirits” left over in the thanda. Bheema hosted a dinner to his relatives to “complete the rites.”

The exercise set Bheema back by about Rs.5000. Both Bheema and Ganga are farm labourers.
Not all were appreciative of Bheema’s exercise. A section of villagers found fault with him for believing in superstitions and inconveniencing every one. But there were supporters aplenty. He did it all for the well-being of his daughter, said Bheema. It is evident from the above incident that the belief in Omen is very common in the Sugali society. The belief in the evil eye is also very common in their society.

**Saman (Omens)**

If a fox enters into the thanda, they believe that some bad event is going to occur. To prevent this, they sacrifice a goat.

The entering of a crow into the house is treated as a bad omen.

If a hen is bought, then they revolve around the house with the hen for 3 times, so that it may not go into the next house. If an owl makes sound over the house, then the Sugalis believe that a person in the house is going to die.

If an ox urinates when a man is going out on some urgent work, then it is considered as a bad omen.

If a dog erects its ears then it is a bad omen. A Mongoose passing by during journey is a good omen.

A sight of the sexual intercourse of the crows or snakes makes Sugalis take a bath and lit the lamp in the house.

They believe that the planting of a drumstick tree by a boy will reduce the life of the boy.
Human Sacrifice

Several instances are known also of the Sugalis having practiced human sacrifice. Thurston states: “in the former times the Sugalis or Lambadis, before setting out on a journey, used to procure a little child and bury it on the ground up to the shoulders, and then drive their loaded bullocks over the unfortunate victim. In proportion to the bullocks thoroughly trampling the child to death, their belief in a successful journey increased.”

Abbe Dubois describes another form of sacrifice. “The Sugalis or Lambadis are accused of the still more atrocities crime of offering up human sacrifices. When they wish to perform this horrible act, it is said, they secretly carry off the first person they meet. Having conducted the victim to some lonely spot, they dig a hole in which they bury him up to the neck. While he is still alive, they make a sort of lamp of dough made of flour, which they place on his head, then the men and women join hands and forming a circle dance round their victim, singing and making a great noise until he expires.”

Cumberlej records an event of child kidnap by a Sugali Caravan in 1871. A person was kidnapped and the tip of his tongue cut off to give him a defect in speech.

* Ethnographic notes on Southern India, p.507, quoting from the Rev. J.Cain, Indian Antiquities, VIII (1879).
The Sugali dialect known as ‘Gor Bouli’ and is an independent and distinct tribal dialect, similar to the dialects of some other tribes included in the list of aboriginal or scheduled tribes. There is, however, no script for the dialect. One of the most interesting observations made by the scholars is that certain root-words in the Sugali dialect are not found in any dictionary of any of the constitutionally recognized languages in India. Just as Sanskrit words are found in all 14 Indian languages, we can also find Sanskrit words in the Sugali dialect. From this it is clear that the Sugali dialect is an ancient one. Another characteristic of the Sugali dialect is that the Sugalis have assimilated certain words of local languages of the region in which they have settled down. The Regional languages exert their influence on the dialect spoken by the Sugalis in that region. The Sugalis with their 27 synonyms and 17 sub-tribes recorded in the report of All India Banjara Sevak Sangh have spread out in as many as 21 states of India. All of them speak single dialect, i.e., Sugali (Banjara) dialect (Gor Bouli). Even to this day they can freely converse among themselves in the same Sugali (Banjara) dialect through out the country.

In several government records, the references to the Sugali or Banjara dialect are found. The Government of India Census Reports also make references to the dialect.

To prove that the Gor Bouli is an independent dialect, Ranjit Singh in his report cited the following few examples.
comparing words in their origin used in relation to: (1) various parts of human body, (2) dresses, (3) ornaments, (4) food, (5) profession, etc. It is found that the following words of Sugali or Banjara origin are not in vogue in any other regional language.\textsuperscript{28}

**Human Body (Anatomy)**


**Dresses**

**Female:** Kachali, Petya.

**Male:** Gudeki or Gadaki, Jangya, Pherma Dhoti, Banat, Kothli, and Molya.

**Ornaments**

**Female:** Ghoogari, Topli, Kaniya, Bhuria, Har Haslo, Choodo, Choondo, etc.

**Male:** Marki, Kalda, Kanadoro

Hence it may be concluded that the Sugali community is a colourful tribe with rich potentialities of their traditions and customs and still retain their cultural identity. They are syncretising their north Indian origin and its world view with the south Indian culture, and still retaining their age-old social institutions despite living in the midst of other cultural groups.
References


8. Ibid., p.173.


10. Ibid., p.174.


