Chapter III

RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE SIDIS
a) INTRODUCTION:

According to E. B. Tylor (Cfr. Encyclopaedia: 662) religion is belief in the sacred and the supernatural. James Hastings (Cfr. Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics: 1926: 63) says that "The term 'religion', whatever its best definition, clearly refers to certain characteristic types of data (beliefs, practices, feelings, moods, attitudes etc.)." E. Durkheim (Cfr. Encycl.: 1957: 47) defines religion as a "unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden, beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community, called Church, all those who adhere to them". The word religion is derived from 'religere', which means 'bind together'. So, according to Suryanarayana (Cfr. Kadetotad: 1971: 4 to 13) etymologically the word religion means 'the group
of people who belong to a particular faith'. In India, the word "Dharma" almost gives the same meaning. But the term "Dharma" is used in Indian languages with a much wider meanings. Dharma may be charity, ethics, morality, conduct, way of behaviour etc. It is also used with different meanings in different contexts.

Religion is an abstract term. If we apply certain principles of the abstract concept of religion to a particular religion, some of the facts can be seen more clearly. Attempts have been made to study religion among the primitive and nomadic tribes. According to its broad meaning, we find religion in every society or group of people; we find some kind of belief in every society, and rituals performed according to their beliefs. Religion is primarily propitiation of the supernatural.

A few authors, like Jevons (Cfr.Kadetotad: 1971:4 to 15) have described religion as a concept
with doctrines and dogmas. It is true that every
religion lays down certain doctrines about God
and Nature. At the same time, religious observance
may involve superstition, oracles, mysteries.

Among the simpler societies, it is very
difficult to distinguish Religion from Magic.
Sometimes, what we call 'Religion' will also come
under 'Magic' to some extent. There is also contro­
versy regarding the chronological priority of
religion and magic. A few authors like Frazer,
Marrett and Hartland believe that magic preceded
religion.

Religious rituals and rites are observed
either to make the life of the individual run
smooth, or to mark an important stage or event
in an individual's life. These rites which are also
known as "Life-cycle rituals" are called by Van
Gennep (Cfr.1960:VII) "rites of passage". The
rites observed by the Sidis are very similar to
those of other Hindu castes. According to the
Hindu Dharmashastras, a householder has to perform
many rituals. But, normally, he observes only those which are essential during a life crisis. These rituals normally start when the child is in the womb and end with death ceremonies.

A rite is called Ka:rana, Karya, and Karma. These words signify the magico-religious reality behind these rituals. Etymologically, these words mean "reason", "act" and "rite" respectively.

There are 368 Hindu Sidi families, 444 Muslim Sidi families and 555 Christian Sidi families living in Karnataka State. Of the three religious groups, strong religious identity is observed among the Christian and Muslim Sidis. Muslim Sidis belong to the Sunni sect of the Hanati School. It is observed that, only a few people would not like to be called Sidis at all. Christian Sidis belong to the Catholic church. But Hindu and Christian Sidis do not mind being called 'Sidi' as a kind of surname. Some Muslim Sidis say that their ancestors were originally Catholics but became Muslims on
account of polygamy as there was strict Church laws of monogamy but such cases of conversion from another faith are very few (Cfr. Lobo: 1984).

Originally the Hindu, Muslim and Christian Sidis probably belonged to one stock or one group in Goa. It was a normal procedure in the Portuguese slave trade to baptize the negro slaves in Africa just before they embarked on ships to be sold in India. That is how the Sidis became Christians. Those slaves who were brought by the Muslim rulers in India became Muslims. The Sidis who came under the influence of Maratha rule and specially under Shivaji became Hindus.

b) LIFE-CYCLE RITUALS:

Rituals are the indispensable actions of social life which are also predominantly found in the Sidi settlements which commence from the cradle to the grave. These rituals differ according to each religion. They mark the 'transitions' in the life of an individual. These rituals are
usually based on values held by the tribe or community. But it is worthy of notice that there exists a similarity between the rituals of the Sidis of the different religions. These rites are also sometimes based on those of the dominant castes of that region. The rites and rituals are as follows.

c): MATERNITY:

The first pregnancy has a ritual celebrated by all the three religions of the Sidis. Usually the parent or the brother of the pregnant woman visits the house of the husband during the 8th month and presents her with a sari at a feast to celebrate the coming birth. The relatives and friends attend the function. Then she is sent to her parent's house. The first delivery always is in the parents house. There the mother is to be given special food so that she is physically strong and healthy for the delivery. This ritual is observed among all the three communities of Sidis.
d) CHILD-BIRTH OF THE HINDU SIDIS:

After delivery woman is considered impure for twelve days. On the 4th day some 'Tirth' (holy-water) or 'Panchamrita' (mixture of honey, cow's urine, cow's milk and ghee and curds) are sprinkled on the brother of the delivered woman. The mother and father of the child are purified by sprinkling the panchamrita and there will be a feast after the purification ceremonies. The 'Tirtha' is given again on the 12th day to the mother, after which she is considered to be purified and is allowed to participate in household activities. After the feast the father of the child names the baby. The baby is then shown to all who are present and they shower the baby with presents. A bit of sugar is put in the mouth of the baby. Five "Muttaides" (married women) take the baby and place it in the cradle. The father sets up the cradle.

e) FIRST HAIR-CUT OF THE HINDU SIDI BABY (JAVALA CEREMONY):

Cutting the hair is done by a barber.
who is then presented with a gift. A feast follows. The maternal uncle does not perform an important role here. This ceremony is usually performed within a year of the birth of the child.

f) PIERCING OF EAR-LOBES OF THE HINDU SIDI CHILD:

This ceremony is performed by Hindu Sidis only and takes place usually after one year. The piercing is done by a goldsmith. The ceremony is organised by the maternal uncle who gives gifts to the child according to his capacity.

g) CHILD BIRTH OF THE MUSLIM SIDIS:

The new-born baby is given a bath with warm water and then placed in a winnowingpan. Sugar is placed in the mouth. The mulla performs bang-namaz (prayer) and gives bath and finally gives the child a name which he utters in the ears of the child. The mother is considered to be polluted for forty days.
On the third day, "Panjeri" is celebrated. It is a ceremony in which turmeric, neem leaves, jaggery and a lamp are set up at the place of delivery by the woman who looks after the mother and the child.

On the sixth day, "Satti" is performed. The child and mother both are bathed. After this, prayers are chanted. Food, five betel leaves and coconuts are arranged in a winnowing-pan near the place where the mother delivered the baby. An offering is made to Shatavitai (goddess). The food is later given to the mid-wife who assisted in the delivery. The worship of Shatavatai is taken over by the Muslims from their Hindu neighbours. The mother is allowed inside the kitchen on the twelfth day but she is not allowed to go outside the house. On this day in the morning prayers are offered to the deity of the house and new clothes are offered to the mother and baby. Then a meal is arranged for relatives and friends. In the evening, the naming ceremony
takes place. The cradle is given by the brother or the parent of the mother. The cradle is rocked accompanied with songs.

h) FIRST HAIR-CUT FOR MUSLIM SIDI BABY:

During the second or third month, the child is decorated with flowers. The maternal uncle cuts off few hairs of the child and the rest of the hair is shaved by the barber. The maternal uncle is presented with a shawl or a towel. This ceremony is performed as early as possible soon after hair appears on the head as it is believed that if a menstruating woman touches the child then the child falls sick. The role of the maternal uncle is probably taken over from the customs of Hindu low castes who were the immediate neighbours.

i) CIRCUMCISION AMONG THE MUSLIM SIDIS:

This ceremony is performed for Muslim Sidi boys only. Nowadays a doctor does the circumcision. After this ceremony for a period of fifteen days, the boy is not given rice and fish.
He is given special food so that the wound heals quickly. On the 15th day after the wound is healed the boy is made to sit on the father's shoulder and is taken in procession through the settlement. Those who can afford to kill a goat for the meal or a feast is organised.

j) CHILD-BIRTH AMONG THE CHRISTIAN SIDIS:

Among the Catholic Sidis there are ceremonies only after the child's birth. They worship at their family altar and on the sixth day is the custom of "Satti" when the delivered woman is made to sit in the centre of a room and rice, coconut, honey and blouse-pieces are placed in the fold of her sari. Then a feast follows for close relatives and friends.

k) BARSO RITUAL AMONG THE CHRISTIAN SIDIS:

The cradling and the naming ceremony takes place on this day. The cradle is given by the brother or parent of the delivered woman and it
is placed in a convenient place. Five married women stand around the cradle and the baby is passed from one side of the cradle to the other, once above and once below the cradle. This passing of the baby from one married woman to the other is accompanied by a ceremony of question and answer. This is repeated five times and then the baby is laid in the cradle for the first time. Everyone puts little bit of sugar in the mouth of the baby and kisses it. The cradle is then rocked accompanied by a lullaby.

Sometimes the two ceremonies are celebrated on the same day either on the sixth day or on the twelfth day.

If a child dies after the Satti ceremony but before the Barso ceremony then for the children born later no Barso is performed. The naming ceremony for Christian Sidis is done during the Christian rite of baptism. The parish-priest either visits the settlement or the child is taken to the church.
1) FIRST HAIR-CUT FOR CHRISTIAN SIDI BABY (JAVALA):

Within a year, usually during Ugadi, the first day of the Hindu calendar, the maternal uncle of the child shaves all the hair of his nephew or niece. He is presented with a shawl or a towel. He also gives a present to the child and then everybody enjoys a feast.

m) RITES OF PUBERTY AMONG THE SIDIS:

These are celebrated among all Sidis. The girl is not allowed to go outside the house for five days. On the sixth day, she is bathed and draped with a green sari and adorned with green bangles by five married women. She is then made to sit in a room and all the guests wave aarti before her (small burning lamp) and some offer her gifts. This ceremony is called "Mudilu Tumbuvadu".

The girl is offered rice along with areca—nuts, flowers and money which are filled in the
front fold of the sari (pauch) near the waist. Songs are sung which are suitable for the occasion.

Among the Hindus, menstruation is considered to be polluting for three days. For Muslim Sidis, the girl takes a bath on the day of the menstruation and then does her work in the kitchen. Among the Christian Sidis, the girl does enter the kitchen after three days.

n) DISTRIBUTION OF BETEL-LEAVES AND SUGAR (IDEM GHALUNK VEEHEM):

After the preliminary approval of the marriage, the boy's party goes to the girl's house to present her with new clothes and during this occasion 'Idem' is distributed to everyone in the settlement. The elders who are not present in the settlement are sent the 'Idem' later.

The marriage day is fixed with the consultation of the parish-priest and the necessary arrange-
merits are also made. Widow remarriages are practiced in all the three religious groups of the Sidis.

Marriages are celebrated with great grandeur and elaborate rituals which bring forth the significance and the importance of the ceremony. The event is celebrated with slight variations among the three religious groups of the Sidis.

o) ENGAGEMENT CEREMONY:

Christian Sidis call this function as "Deed Bhat Jevak Veeham" meaning is "going to eat rice cooked in milk". A few decades back it was the practice for the boy's parents and other elders to go to the house of the girl to ask her hand for the boy. But nowadays the boy also accompanies his parents to the girl's house and participates in negotiations. On entering the house of the girl the guests are offered water to wash their feet and face and are then invited to enter the house. A mat specially kept aside for such functions
is spread and the relatives "Nentaru" sit if the
girls parents are willing. Then if they agree
to give in marriage, they serve rice cooked with
milk. and if they are unwilling to give the girl,
they refuse this request saying that they have
to consult the girl's grandfather or her uncles
who are not living in that settlement. This lame
excuse is a formality to avert the marriage settle­
ment.

p) MARRIAGE CEREMONY AMONG THE HINDU SIDIS :

Usually a day before the marriage, the
groom is smeared with turmeric paste and is given
a bath. He puts on new clothes and wears a marriage
coronet known as "Basinga". He also holds a stick
with a lemon wrapped in a white cloth known
as Khanjari in one hand and a coconut in the other
hand.

KASHIGE HOGUVADU ( GOING ON PILGRIMAGE
TO KASHI ) :

Five low stools are kept in the pandal and
the groom crosses over the stools as a symbol of going to Kashi in search of a girl for marriage. After the crossing of the five stools, the maternal uncle comes with an umbrella and tells the nephew that he will give his daughter to him so he need not go to Kashi. So saying he brings him inside the house to the shrine of the family deity. The groom removes his Basinga (coronet) and keeps it aside. After this a special feast follows.

On the same day or the next day the groom's party leaves for the bride's house. The bride had also been smeared with turmeric paste on the previous day and given a bath.

The groom's party waits in a separate house until the auspicious time (Muhurta). At the auspicious moment the bride's father leads the groom inside the house by the hand, meanwhile marriage songs are sung.

A white curtain is held between the bride and
the groom. Each holds a garland in their hands. Then the groom and the bride garland each other. The groom ties a necklace of black beads (Karimani) around her neck. The couple is made to sit on a low platform decorated by plantain trees at its four corners. The couple goes around five times before sitting down. The bride's father leads the groom by the hand and the groom leads the bride holding her hand. Then the bride washes the feet of the groom. Five married women apply turmeric paste to both bride and groom. After this they are given a bath, dressed and then taken inside the house. The groom removes his Businga and then a grand feast follows.

On the same day or the next day the marriage party proceeds to the groom's house. Bagilu Muhurta ("Auspicious time to enter") is made on their arrival at the groom's house. A rite for removing the "evil eye" is performed. The bride's father leads the groom and the bride inside where turmeric paste is applied to both and they are given bath.
About five rings of copper are worn by the groom and four rings are worn by the bride and these are dropped in a vessel filled with water. The couple search for the rings sprinkling water at each other. When the vessel thus becomes empty, the groom places it upside down on the bride's head. Then the vessel is filled again and the couple are given a bath.

The groom's father leads the couple inside the house. At the entrance of the house a rice pestle is kept horizontally obstructing the way. The groom's way is blocked by his sister with a measure of rice. She requests her brother to promise to give his daughter to her son in marriage. When the groom agrees, the way is cleared and the couple enters the house. The groom removes the Basinga at the shrine of the house diety. The Basinga is tied to a pole (Kolkamba). Then it is removed from the pole and left to float down a stream.
MARRIAGE CEREMONY AMONG THE MUSLIM SIDIS:

They call this ceremony as Meeti Bhat Khane Ka Din ("Day of eating of sweet rice"). The boy's party excluding the groom goes to the girls' house accompanied by the mullah and they decide about the marriage. The boy's party has to give saris and seven blouse pieces to the girl. In the olden days the boy was required to give money according to his means.

A day before the marriage the ancestors are remembered and offerings of wheat-cakes and jaggery are offered to them. Turmeric paste and coconut juice is smeared on the groom by five married women.

The next day the groom and his party go to the bride's house. They are welcomed with onion, jaggery and water. The groom bathes and dresses in new clothes. Five married women tie a mangalsutra around the bride's neck. Then all the guests enjoy
marriage feast. The groom's costumes consist of underwear, dhoti, shirt, rumal (turban) and a sword along with white loin-cloth. The presentation of new dresses takes place between the bride's party and groom's. But on the whole, the marriage ceremony of Muslim Sidi is very similar to that of the local Muslims.

The fathers of both groom and bride clasp their right hands with grains of sugar held between the thumbs. Five men from each side ask for the agreement and when the answer is affirmative, the mullah (Muslim priest) chants verses from koran. After this, grains of rice are thrown on the couple by all the people. After the marriage rituals are over, 'Mahar' - the amount of money is to be given by the groom in case of a divorce is decided upon, which ranges from Rs.4000/- to Rs.15,000/-. This is recorded in a book by the mullah.
GHAZ BHARANI AMONG MUSLIM SIDIS (FILLING THE HOUSE):

The next day the marriage-party goes to the groom's house and a feast follows for the next five Fridays. A special ritual is celebrated. The newly married couple is made to sit in the middle of the pandal on a stool. Sandal wood paste is smeared on them by five married women and they are given a bath by them. The 1st, 3rd and 4th Fridays are spent in the groom's house. The couple do not sleep together until the five Fridays are over.

r) MARRIAGE CEREMONY AMONG THE CHRISTIAN SIDIS:

Marriage ceremonies of Christian Sidis in church precede the ceremonies at home. But recently for the last ten years the ceremonies are first performed at home and then they go to church for the solemnization of the marriage. Because of the strict laws of both the government and the church, there is a minimum age for marriage
for both boy and girl (21 and 18 respectively). Hence, when the marriage is celebrated below the required age of the bride and the groom then the ceremonies are performed at home and later the formal ceremony in the church is sought.

The bride and the groom are blessed by the elders in their respective houses. They are then blessed in the church. After the nuptial ceremony both the families go to the bride's house. On entering the house a coconut is broken and the juice from the kernel is smeared on both the bride and the groom. The next day the groom goes back to his house with his people.

1) GHAAR BHARANI AMONG CHRISTIAN SIDIS (FILLING THE HOUSE):

About eight days after the nuptial ceremony the people of the settlement erect a pendal in front of the groom's house. The groom and his best man are made to sit in the centre of the pendal. One of the female relatives of the groom or the
sister of the groom breaks a coconut and the juice from the kernel is collected. On another plate the paste of trumeric and coconut oil is brought. This paste and the juice are smeared on the groom by the womenfolk collected there. Only coconut juice is applied to the forehead of the best man in the form of cross. They are then bathed by the womenfolk. Later a festival meal follows.

The next morning the groom is dressed in his best clothes. With a knife and lime wrapped in a new white cloth and hung on the left shoulder, he proceeds to the bride's house accompanied by guests. After reaching the settlement of the bride, they are given a separate house to stay. Onion, jaggery and water to drink are offered in welcome.

2) HALAD HORCHEN (SMEARING TURMERIC PASTE):

The groom's party brings along with them some turmeric paste and the juice of the coconut kernel which had been used for applying on the
groom in his settlement. The groom's party are made to wait outside the house of bride as long as possible while songs are sung in a kind of festive competition. After the termination of these songs by some elderly person, five women are allowed to enter the house to hand over whatever presents they have brought for the bride. The bride's party bring some more turmeric paste and juice of coconut kernel and mix them with what is brought by the groom's party. This paste and juice is then applied by the five married women to the bride and then she is given a bath.

3) JAVALI HADCHEN (OFFERING NEW CLOTHES TO THE BRIDE):

The five married women of the groom's party bring new clothes for the bride and all the people gathered there get to view and appreciate the clothes. The bride is then dressed in a sari and a blouse over this she wears a mantle called "Valli" around her waist and another around upper
part of the body covering the head. She is dressed in this manner during the Christian nuptial ceremony in the church.

4) WELCOMING THE GROOM'S PARTY:

After the bride is dressed the groom's party and the groom are welcomed into the pendal. The maternal uncle of the bride brings her and gives her away to the bridegroom at the entrance of the pendal. Before receiving the bride folksongs suitable to the occasion are sung by both the parties. After this the bride and the bridegroom enter the house kneel down and say prayers. Then all enjoy the festival meal.

5) GAMES:

The next day after breakfast, the newly married couple is made to play various games in order that they may came to know eachother.
6) **BAJI PALO (GREEN LEAVES)**:

Twenty areca nuts are placed on the floor in two rows of ten. Each one in the gathering holds a handful of rice to throw when the groom and bride collect the nuts. All shout twice that they are ready to throw the rice and immediately fling the rice with much shouting as the bride and groom busily pickup as many nuts as possible. So the winner can be the groom or his bride. This game is repeated many times with great merriment. The psychology behind the game is to help the bride and groom to break the ice by personal contact and interaction. This is a game with a pile of betel leaves. The groom divides the pile into five sections with a knife. As he carries one of the sections on his shoulder. The bride names one of her relatives as the person to get the leaves. This is repeated five times.

7) **SUPARI KHELOV CHIN (PLAYING WITH THE ARECA NUTS)**:

Twenty areca nuts are placed in two rows.
The people gathered have a handful of rice when the bride and the groom are ready to collect the nuts. The people shout twice that they are ready to throw the rice and immediately throw the rice with much shouting. The bride or groom are busy collecting as much nuts as possible. This game is repeated several times.

8) PAISE KHELOV CHEN (PLAY WITH THE COINS):

If the bride holds a twenty-five paise coin in her fist then the groom holds a fifty-paise one. The bride is required to force open the left fist of the groom and take the coin. She is encouraged by the guests watching the game. Then it is the turn of the groom to obtain the coin from the bride's fist. The bride is allowed to use both her hands or to change the coin from one hand or to the other or just throw the coin in the air.
9) BALLI DHARCHEN (CATCHING A CREEPER):

A group of guests form a circle. The bride is kept inside the circle and the groom is made to stand outside the circle. The groom is required to break into the circle and catch the bride.

After all the games a festival meal is served. Later the bride and the groom are made to sit in the middle of the pendal and the elders invoke God's blessings on them. After this the marriage party goes to the groom's house.

10) CEREMONIES IN THE GROOM'S HOUSE:

After entering the settlement, the marriage party is accommodated in a separate house and is welcomed with onion, jaggery and water. When all the arrangements are ready in the groom's house the bride's party is welcomed to the house in a procession. A number of festivals are celebrated during this time.
11) REMOVING THE EFFECTS OF EVIL EYE (DIST DADCHI):

Five lamps and five dolls are made of wheat flour mixed with fine charcoal and chilly powder. These are brought by the five Muttaidees (Married women) and placed in front of the couple standing before the entrance of the pendal. The dolls are taken on by one by the married women and waved in a semi-circle in front of the newly married couple. They start on one side and then throw it on the other side of the couple.

During this ritual, folksongs are sung by the bride's party and the groom's party. Then the bride's party is received inside the groom's house.

12) SISTER OF GROOM REQUESTING HIS DAUGHTER TO BE GIVEN FOR HER SON (BHAIN CHEDNA MAGCHEN):

The sister of the groom brings a vessel of rice soaked in turmeric water and she washes
the right leg of the groom's brother and the left leg of her sister-in-law. Then she places the rice on the toes of the couple and presses her forehead on the toes and asks the brother to promise his daughter in marriage. On their request the groom with his grandfather and father i.e. elders of the house and finally agrees to give his daughter to his sister's son. Then the sister raises her hand from the toes of the feet of her brother and his bride.

13) MUSAL AND KARCHEN (BLOCKING THE PASSAGE WITH THE RICE PESTLE):

The path of the couple is blocked at the entrance with a rice pestle and the people put a number of questions to the groom and he has to answer all of them. Only then they are allowed to enter. Then they offer prayers to God the feast follows.

14) DANCE AND SONGS:

Songs and dances are sung to the accompaniment
of drums. This goes on throughout the night. The next morning the bride is dressed in the clothes given by the groom. After breakfast the games are played in bride's house. One additional game is "Novareivekinpoonchen" (Hiding the bride). The bride is hidden among the women. The groom is required to find her and make her stand in the middle of the house. This game is played five times.

After five days the newly married couple goes to the bride's house and stays there for five days. After spending about a month with the bridegroom, the bride goes back to her parent's house and stays there with them for a month, after which she is sent to her husband's house to stay there permanently.

s) FUNERAL RITES :

In all human groups funeral rites are universal. We have here the funeral rites of Sidis as mentioned below:
1) AMONG HINDU SIDIS:

About two or three decades back they also buried the dead but now they cremate the corpse.

2) ELEVENTH DAY RITUAL:

On this day the house is purified with cow dung. The favourite dishes of the deceased are prepared. An unhusked coconut is kept on a small brass pot, the coconut is smeared with turmeric paste and kept in the place where the person died. Some food is placed on a plantain leaf and kept in front of the coconut. A person of the same age and sex of the deceased is made to sit near the coconut and is given a set of new clothes and served with the food offered to the coconut.

3) AMONG MUSLIM SIDIS:

The dead body is washed and dressed in new clothes and scent is also sprinkled on the body. Incense is burned till the funeral rites
are over. The male corpse is clothed in dhoti and shirt and the female in sari and blouse. A Bhurkha is also added which may not be necessarily of black colour. The body is covered with a white cloth and flowers are spread all over it. The Mullah offers namaz (prayer).

The coffin is lowered into the grave. A roof is made over the coffin and then the grave is half-filled with mud by the people gathered. The grave is then filled with mud shovelled with a spade. Two seedlings of sandalwood are then planted at the two ends of the grave.

4) **BANDHI (OFFERING OF FOOD AT THE GRAVE)**:

Varieties of dishes are cooked on the third day and taken to the cemetery. Only the men go, they offer prayers at the grave, eat the food brought there and then return.
5) DINA KARMA (SIXTH DAY RITUAL):

This is the ritual of the sixth day. On this day the favourite dishes of the deceased are cooked and placed in the room the person died. Rice flour is spread on a cloth. The next morning some imprints are seen on the flour which deposits the next life of the deceased. If footprints are visible on the flour then they believe that the dead person will either be born again either as an animal or a human being. If the imprint is of a hand then it is believed that the person has become God. On the twentieth day the same ritual is observed.

6) BARSO (DEATH-DAY):

On the anniversary date of the death, new clothes are kept at the spot where the person died and the above described rituals of the sixth day are performed.
7) AMONG CHRISTIAN SIDIS:

The Christian dead are buried. No cooking is done in the house when a death occurs. The grave where the dead body is to be buried is sprinkled with holy water by the parish-priest and incense sticks are burnt. The corpse is carried to this place in a wooden coffin and buried.

8) THIRD-DAY RITUALS:

On the third morning all the members of the house-hold take a bath. The house is also purified by smearing the mud floor with cowdung. Rice is cooked in three small vessels and an omelette is also fried. The cooked food along with water is taken to the grave and placed at the side corresponding to the position of the head. A bamboo staff of about six feet is also placed there. This ceremony is usually performed by the son of the deceased. Candles are placed round the grave the prayers are chanted.
9) FIFTH-DAY RITUAL (DEVATH KARECHEN):

This is receiving the spirit of the deceased inside the house. Relatives and friends in the settlement are invited for a meal. They are required to bring with them some eatables and candles. A blanket or a mat is spread on the spot where the person died. Two plantain leaves are placed on the blanket and the cooked food is spread out on one leaf. The eatable bought by the relatives and friends are placed on the other leaf. The handful of rice flour is placed on another small leaf. It is believed that the dead person will visit the house and have food. This is noticed by the foot prints which are left behind. From the foot prints or hand prints left by some creatures it is believed that the next life of the deceased can be known.

The gathering of relatives and friends is served with a meal. The next day after observing the imprints on the flour a cake is prepared out
of the flour kept on the leaf. The food and the cake are eaten by all the men present and the eatables are distributed to all.

10) ANNIVERSARY:

The anniversary day of the death is celebrated every year regularly. The foundations are similar to ceremonies of the twelth day.

FESTIVALS AND RECREATION AMONG THE SIDIS:

According to Oscar Lewis (Cfr.1958:198) "Any analysis of Indian festivals, whether they are historical or functional, should be based upon descriptions of the ceremonial cycle". The festivals celebrated by the Sidis throughout a year result in a cycle. It is observed that festivals are based on beliefs which are connected with certain deities or with special activities or with special occasions. Few groups have intimate connections with other Hindus. Festivals serve as occasions to bring together people of the same caste. People
of the same sect come together during the festivals of their gods. Further, people belonging to the same clan or family lineage come together at the time of the festivals and worship the clan deities. The feasts, taboos and worship of a common deity bring about emotional and spiritual solidarity. Food is exchanged among relatives, friends, neighbours and castemen on festivals like Deepavali and Nagapanchami. During these festivals, the Sidis also get special food from people belonging to the other castes or same caste. This exchange of food brings about a closer relationship among different people, families and castes. The unity among the Sidis can also be seen in the kind of food they prepare on festival days. It is customary to prepare a particular dish for a particular festival. The various ritual practices and customs observed during the festivals express the blood-bond or kinship among the people. During festivals like Nagapanchami, the married daughters of the house are brought back to their natal home to participate in the festival. This fosters unity
among siblings, parents and the generations in a family. Festivals also establish relationships between God and man on the one hand, and man and man on the other on the festival day. The deity in whose honour the festival is observed is specially worshipped. Thus, these festivals are both religious and social in character. The Sidis of all the three religions celebrate festivals which are pertaining to their own religion by their local counterparts.

The special occasions which the Sidis observe are mainly marriage rituals. At such functions the relatives and friends assemble and sing songs and dance as a mark of rejoicing. Usually one day of the week is allotted for the celebration with a lot of dancing, singing and beating of the drums. This usually goes on throughout the night. The Sidis express their joy and merriment by group-dancing and singing with rhythmic movements of the body which is a typical tribal activity. The dances and songs are of three kinds: Sigmu, Phoogdi and Damam.
Sigmu dances and songs are the common dances in Goa on the occasion of Holi festival celebrated by the Sidis. The Phoogdhi dances and songs are also observed by the Sidis who have settlements in Goa near the headmen of the Kunbis or Marathas (Cfr. Gazetteer of India: part-I:263). All these dances and songs are very popular. According to Mr. Cyprian Lobo, both the Sigmu and the Phoодi dances and songs are another indication that they have a common previous history in Goa.

The Damam dances and songs are like those of the Damam dances of Gujarat and Kafres of Diu.

1) SIGMU DANCES AND SONGS:

These are usually performed by the Catholic Sidis. Though it was a practice to perform these dances during the Hindu festival of Holi, nowadays it is performed by them at the beginning of the Lenten seasons i.e. in the late February or early March, a week or so before Wednesday which starts
Lenten season of penance. The male Sidis visit villages and perform these dances and collect money.

People form a circle and the dancers are led by an important person. The drummer stands in the centre of the circle and beats the drum in rhythm for the dance. The drum used here is called "Gummat".

The Gummat is a pot-like vessel which is covered on one side with tuatara skin while the other side is open. The drummer is dressed comically and holds a drum-stick. The dance commences with the beating of the drum. The step and the movements of the dance are controlled by the leader. The dance is a quick-step or slow according to the beat of the drum. This kind of dancing is gradually dying out.

2) PHOOGDI DANCES AND SONGS:

These are the dances performed by Sidi
women only as part of a festival celebration. A group of women hold a pot made of mud or aluminium. The dance has a women leader who controls the dance movements. The leader sings a verse of a song first and the rest of the women follow.

DAMAM DANCES AND SONGS:

These are the most popular dances which are performed on festivals and week-ends. The Sidis gather after supper and dance and sing through out the night.

Damam is a Drum which is long and cylindrical. The two ends are covered by deer skin and this is beaten while squatting on the ground. The drummer sits in the centre of a group of people and begins to sing in a slow tempo accompanied by others. After a While, a few men and women come forward and dance i.e. with dance-steps according to the rhythm of the song. This goes on through out the night. The dances of the Sidis are slowly dying out as they now have different means of
entertainment, like the cinema-dances and other modern dances.

HIRIYARA PUJA (ANCESTOR WORSHIP):

The ancestors are the dead members of a family. A coconut is placed on a pedestal as a symbol of the ancestors. They are worshipped once a year usually during the Navaratri festival in November or during the Holi festival in April. On a fixed day all the family and relatives assemble in the ancestral house. The old coconut is replaced by a new unhusked coconut.

The old coconut is first worshipped and then removed from the pedestal. The pedestal is then cleaned and sprinkled with cow dung water and decorated by rangoli (colour designs). The new unhusked coconut is washed and placed on the pedestal and worshipped. Turmeric is smeared on the coconut. Usually wick-lamps are lighted as decoration. A set of new clothes is placed
below the pedestal. The new cocoanut is covered with flowers after the worship and the old cocoanut is broken and its pieces are distributed to all. Some of the prepared food is offered to the worshipped cocoanut. This food is eaten by the head of the family. Then a meal is served to all those who are present at the ritual.

In this way the religious practices of Sidis are influenced by the local Hindu, Muslim and Christian social environment of their region. They have been also influenced by the Sidis of the neighbouring states of Goa, Diu, Maharastra and Gujarat.