Religion is a set of beliefs sustaining explicit behaviour, practices and implicit meanings in relation to the supernatural phenomena (Malbar and Sarana 1985:313). Beliefs, rituals and ceremonies that constitute the religious sub-structure of society play a major role in organizing the day-to-day activities of the people. They are also expressive of their attitude towards the unknown and supernatural world and its relevance to their needs, aspirations and achievements. Both men and women generally participate in religious activities at different levels. However, women are excluded on certain occasions and included on other occasions. The closer integration of religion with other activities in an Indian village is an undisputed fact. However, the villages situated on the fringe of urban centres may present a somewhat different situation owing to the modernizing forces to which the ruralites are exposed. In this chapter an attempt is made to understand the religious order of Siddapur, a fringe village, and explore the emerging situation in relation to the changing status of women. The religious beliefs and rituals and the role of women in religious activities are analysed with a view to
understanding the changes that have occurred in the status of women in Siddapur.

Image of Woman in Religion

The religious order of Siddapur is explained in terms of rites of passage (sanskaras), and the festivals and fairs that are spread over a calendar year, including also those that occur once in two or more years. The rites of passage consist of those rituals and practices that are performed at the time of birth, puberty, marriage and death. Before examining and analysing the religious activities in Siddapur, it is essential to understand the nature of religion in the context of an Indian village. An Indian village is constituted of several caste groups. These castes differ from each other in several respects in relation to the performance of religious activities. The practices of a caste group constitute the religious order of that caste.

Hinduism is the main religion of Siddapur though there are other religions co-existing with it. It is very difficult to give a precise definition of Hinduism, since the beliefs and practices of the Hindus vary widely from region to region, and within a given region from caste to caste. "It is a favourite dictum that Hinduism is not a religion but a whole way of life
Hinduism is believed in a stratified social system as a divinely ordained feature of the cosmos and its teachers have given religious sanction to its four varnas and innumerable castes" (Encyclopaedia Britannica 1969, Vol.11:507). Caste is the fundamental institution which gives and imposes the ritual rights and duties to each individual. Without caste there is no Hindu (Max Weber 1958:29).

The sacred texts adore women as an embodiment of 'Shakti', 'Mother', and as a symbol of purity, religiosity, spirituality and sacrifice. Despite these adorations, women in India continue to be exploited, humiliated and treated unequally. They never enjoyed an honorable position in their day-to-day living. Manu and the later law-givers always treated women as weak and expected them to be subservient to men. Thus, one could notice a sharp difference between ideals and reality, and theory and practice. As days passed by, their dependence on male counterparts made them subordinate. This subordination was perpetuated and was handed down from generation to generation, thus making inequality and inferiority as a built-in value in the personality of Indian women. Further, the free and full development of her personality was thwarted by marriage ideals, joint family values, illiteracy, seclusion and double standards of men.
The position of women in religious sub-structure is not uniform. "In earlier times, when religious practices were less formally organised, it was easier for individual women to hold positions of religious authority. With the gradual development of higher religions, a more definite institutionalisation of religious roles occurred. Sacred authority, like secular authority, rested with men and the exercise of religious functions - be it sacrifice, teaching, preaching, blessing or initiation - became a male prerogative" (King 1975:113). "In an earlier and more undifferentiated age of development, certain areas of religious activities were open to women which later became closed" (Ibid:113). The public life was the sphere of men. Women's sphere was private life of home and family, preparation of food and clothes, and the bearing and rearing of children. If one considers for a moment the time and energy required for women's activities and the life span of women in earlier days, it is not surprising that there was neither energy reserve nor spare time for women to achieve anything else than attending to their domestic duties. It is only during the later half of 19th and the beginning of the 20th century that women could have some time and energy to think of new arenas of activities.
The rural women are no doubt illiterate, ignorant and hence are not equipped to read and understand 'high religion'; they learnt about the norms and values of high religion through listening to religious discourses mostly on epic poems, myths (puranas) and stories about legendary heroes and religious leaders. For centuries the transmission of values of Hinduism has occurred through the word of mouth. The fundamentals of Hindu philosophy have reached every house through oral tradition. The elders were given importance in all religious activities. The old women who have crossed the age of fifty are generally consulted regarding the performance of rituals at home.

The religious activities of Siddapur are manifested in the peoples' observance of rites of passage, festivals and fairs. Rites of passage are performed for an individual at family level, whenever the occasion demands. The fairs and festivals are recurrent. Hence to borrow the term from Misco Titivo (1968:285) festivals can be named as 'calendrical rituals.' Because of their very nature, the calendrical rituals can be scheduled and announced in advance (see Table No.12). This helps the people to make advance arrangements for the festivals and their celebration. Specially, it helps women to clean the house and wash the clothes, make preparation of raw materials for
TABLE - 12
The Calendar of Fairs and Festivals in Siddapur

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.NO.</th>
<th>HINDU MONTHS</th>
<th>ENGLISH MONTHS</th>
<th>FESTIVALS</th>
<th>FAIRS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chaitra</td>
<td>March - April</td>
<td>Ugadi</td>
<td>Davanada-hunnive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Vaishakha</td>
<td>April - May</td>
<td>Akkatadagi</td>
<td>Agi-hunnive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Jaiisha</td>
<td>May - June</td>
<td>Badami</td>
<td>Kara-hunnive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ashadha</td>
<td>June - July</td>
<td>Mannettina</td>
<td>Kadilger-hunnive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Shravana</td>
<td>July - August</td>
<td>Nagar</td>
<td>Noil-hunnive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bhadrapada</td>
<td>August-September</td>
<td>Chouti</td>
<td>Jokana-hunnive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Aswaja</td>
<td>September-October</td>
<td>Dasara</td>
<td>Sheegi-hunnive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Kartika</td>
<td>October-November</td>
<td>Deepavali</td>
<td>Gouri-hunnive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Margaishirha</td>
<td>November-December</td>
<td>Chatti</td>
<td>Hostils-hunnive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Pushya</td>
<td>December-January</td>
<td>Yellama-vasi (Saraga hodyuvadu)</td>
<td>Banada-hunnive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Magha</td>
<td>January-February</td>
<td>Avaratri</td>
<td>Teniber-hunnive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Phalgunraj</td>
<td>February-March</td>
<td>Shiveratri</td>
<td>Holi-hunnive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
food as it is their sole responsibility. Apart from rites of passage festivals and fairs, feasts, offering prayers, visiting temples, observing fasts, visiting holy places also forms a part of religious order of Siddapur people.

People of Siddapur whether rich or poor, old or young, are very religious-minded though they do not have any organized form of worship. Women are more religious minded compared with men. For, religion nurtures and gives strength to individuals. They consider happiness and sorrow as part of life and are able to bear trials and tribulations with fortitude. [M.N.Srinivas (1952:v) has stated that "the religion of the people presents itself not as a body of doctrine but as what we may call 'religious' behaviour as a part of social life." He also states that the rules of caste behaviour are rules of religion.]

The people of Siddapur observe all the rituals as they constitute the proper way of life. Proper observance of celebrations, they believe, ensures prosperity and well-being of the family and the community. These are also the opportunities of attaining spiritual progress and they bring peace and happiness in life. Belief in supernatural powers is very strong among them; especially,
among the women who are the staunch believers in it. They believe that only by performing rituals properly the deities can be propitiated and persuaded to bestow the benefits of health and wealth on the family. That is why in carrying out these rituals women feel that they are doing something important for the well being of the family. They narrate very proudly the manner in which they make the preparations.

By observing the performance of the rituals of the people under study, we may understand the degree of their religiosity. Festivals provide opportunities to people to participate in religious activities and also serve as occasions for intensive ceremonialism in honour of Gods, saints and spirits. The festivals that are celebrated in the village are of different kinds and of different order of importance. While some are purely religious some others are mixed with secular elements. People think that work-a-day life is dull and sordid and the festivals bring a welcome change in it, especially for women who do not have any change from the monotonous hard work of the whole day, inside the house as well as outside of it. They are also an occasion for exchanging presents with other families and friends. Sometimes they recall the happy memories of past occasions. Similarly participation in religious activities is socially and morally acceptable
reason for sequestered women to leave their houses to interact with other women or for a hard working family to enjoy other's company. Thus religious rituals are also the occasions for recreation, fun and emotional relief. In fact, failure to perform the prescribed rituals could bring divine retribution. For those who had not found complete satisfaction in their family life, religion provides an acceptable outlet in the form of lengthy prayers, worship, pilgrimage and even spirit possession.

Each caste and religious group has its own way of celebrating festivals. Even in a single caste economic factor makes all the difference in the details of the observance of the rituals. The economically well-off strata would be performing rituals more elaborately compared with the poorer sections as the observance of ritual has an economic dimension.

**Traditional Roles of Woman and Urban Influence**

An analysis of the position of woman in the realm of ritual, belief and practices requires an examination of the concept of pollution and purity and different roles played by men and women in ritual performances. Many believe in female susceptibility to pollution to be central to the structure of whole society. It appears that as in
other aspects there is a binary opposition between male and female spheres of activities.

On all the occasions of religious performances people of Siddapur feel it essential to clean the house by smearing the floor with cow dung. Even on the days dedicated to their respective Gods namely Monday for Lingayats and Sunday for Kurubas, this cleaning of the house is considered compulsory. Similarly, taking bath by all the members of family on such days is compulsory. For, people believe that without this they cannot get merit (punya) of the celebration of the festival or ritual, fast or feast.

The practice of religion in Siddapur starts right from childhood days, for a person is subjected to the conditions in which he observes his elders propitiating the gods and goddesses. The process of internalization of religious practices begins even before a child could talk. Whenever the parents and other relatives or neighbours take a child to temples or the place of worship after bath or go to see a religious rituals or worship (puja) at other's place, they make him to join hands or bow down in prayer. Children observe their parents and elders performing religious activities and try to imitate
They assist their elders on the occasions of fairs and festivals and thereby learn their importance, their belief patterns, values and taboos that govern such observances. However, children are not made to pray as a matter of duty.

Siddapur is a village without Brahmin residents. Hence Lingayats are dominant. Even in the religious rites and rituals Lingayat faith is dominant. It is known as Veerashaivism. Other castes like Kuruba, Kabbaliga follow the Lingayat way of life. Same is the case with Badigas who are supposed to follow Brahmanical way of life. According to Lingayat faith all persons including women are equal by birth and there is no discrimination on the basis of sex. "... The main features of the Lingayat faith are what are collectively known as 'Ashtavaranas' religious observances. Ashtavaranas or the eight emblems comprise the aids to faith and protection against sin and evil. They are (1) Devotion to a Guru, (2) Worship of Linge, (3) Reverence to the Jangam, (4) Use of Vibhuti, (5) Wearing of Rudraksha, (6) Use of Padodaka, (7) Partaking of Prasada and (8) Mantra or the uttering of Panchakshari." (Sathyan 1966:71). "The wearing of Linge on the person is the distinctive external mark of Veerashaiva faith" (Ibid:71). The Lingayats also have to observe five
acharas (five rules or institutes) in their daily life, viz., Lioqachara, Shivachara, Sadachara, Bhaktachara and Ganachara (Ibid:78). But a majority of people in Sidaspur including men are not well-versed in the philosophy of Veerashaivism, except one or two individuals. Even the Jangams who officiate at the rituals on different occasions, do not have complete knowledge of their faith. On enquiry they say that since the days of their forefathers, they are observing and hence will continue to follow the same. Even the women blindly carry out whatever they have learnt from their childhood days.

In almost all the families women perform worship ( pooja). This is not because they are given equal status in religious matters and ritual performances but because their men are lazy and always prefer to spend most of their time outside the house and do not show interest in performing pooja. Therefore, women as Majumdar (1923:232) states, "are very conservative" and believe that if gods are not properly worshipped one has to face problems. Hence, in their routine work, women have included even the worship of family god. But they cannot perform pooja at temples or become priests or perform priestly duties. It is man's prerogative. This can be understood from the following case:
In one of the temples of Lingayats the priest (Pujari) died without any male issue. One of his daughters who was a child-widow, started performing pooja at the temple after her father's death. Her mother supported it by saying that she was as pure as a child because she had not experienced conjugal life. She was like an ascetic (sanyasi), eligible for performing pooja at the temple in the absence of a male member. For a few years, till her mother adopted a son, she continued the temple worship. But the villagers were of the opinion that women should not perform pooja at temples and because of violating this the pujari family had to suffer from financial crisis for a long time. As a result, now she does not perform the pooja. Her adopted brother has taken up the responsibilities of the home as well as of the temple.

Similarly, even among Kurubas, women are not entitled to perform pooja. They should not enter the sanctum sanctorum (garbhagudi) of the temple of Malingaraya, their caste deity. In earlier days, the wife of Kuruba pujari narrated, women were not entering the place of
worship in their house (devaramane) even to light the wick lamp. However, how she lights the lamp when the pujari is not at home, but she does not perform pooja at the house although they do not have any male issue.

Among Lingayats women cook food but they cannot carry food (offerings (naivadya or agal) to temples on religious or ritual occasions. It is the men who should carry food offerings to temples. On important festive occasions Lingayats offer food offering (agal) to Kuruba temples but they themselves do not carry it to temples. Kuruba pujaris are asked to take food offerings from Lingayat houses. Among Kurubas, women may carry food offerings to temple but cannot enter the sanctum sanctorum of the temple. Among other castes, they do not offer food to temples but they perform pooja only at their house. This indicates the inferior position of women and their relative position in various castes. High castes have many restrictions, one of them being that women cannot go to temple to offer food for the deity while other castes do allow it. The lower castes cannot offer food to the temples of higher castes. Hence, in the name of those deities they offer it at their respective homes.

Collecting alms is the calling of Jangams. Usually
it is the men and the boys, but never the women, who move around the village to collect jowar flour as alms. But in their casual conversation the villagers say that both men and women are equal and can undertake any activity. Jangams do not make any discrimination on the basis of sex. But a closer observation of their customs and traditions, rites and rituals reveals that though the exponents of Veerashaivism profess equality between men and women, in the observance of rites and rituals, the idea of purity and pollution, superiority and inferiority of the occupations, the ideas of equality are not put into practice. Discrimination and difference between males and females do exist in practice. For instance, among Veerashaivas, only Jangam males are allowed to have the initiation ceremony (avvachara). Only after undergoing this ritual, one will be eligible to officiate as priests. Women are not allowed to undergo initiation and village people would not like women acting as pujaris or officiating at rituals, in spite of their accepting equality of the sexes at the level of ideas.

The influence of Brahmanical way of life is considerable among the people of Siddapur, though at present there is no Brahmin family in the village. The notions of purity and pollution, superiority and inferiority are followed by
the higher caste people, namely Jangams, especially their women, though Vaerashaivism does not believe them in theory. The women of higher castes do not accept food and water from lower castes. They do not even allow others to touch the food in their house. Women think that by observing rules regarding commensal restrictions and not touching low caste people, their position is elevated.

Among Kurubas, too, the Pujaris have to be initiated like Jangams among Lingayats. Here also women do not have the right to undergo initiation (pattakke hakuvedu), by which a man can attain the position of an adult.

Rites of Passage

Another dimension of the study of the position of women in a fringe village is to examine the place of women in the performance of rituals connected with the most important crises of life. Birth, initiation/puberty, marriage and death are treated as crises in an individual's as well as family's existence. Van Gennep's work on 'Rites of Passage' is significant as it argues that much of the religious activity of a community is directly associated with the rituals performed on these occasions. The prescribed roles of women in the performance of rites of passage explain the nature of status
enjoyed by the women in the community. The issues related to the decision making on such occasions are of great anthropological interest.

All the castes in Siddapur observe the rites of passage in accordance with the prescribed traditions. The commonly observed rituals on the occasion of crises of life are the following:

**Child Birth:** The people of Siddapur consider begetting children as one of the important goals of marriage. Woman's position in the family depends on her capacity to bear children. Among the children male ones are preferred. In a way, the villagers attach more significance to the birth of male children. A woman who bears a male child enjoys higher position in the family. A woman who has not given birth to a male child may not be treated well. In one case, as already stated, to get a male child a man married his wife's younger sister. The first delivery at her natal home elevates a woman's position in the eyes of her husband and other members of the family and relatives. If the parents are not alive, her nearest natal kin undertake the responsibility of bearing the expenses and the chores on the occasion.
An expectant mother is an object of care and sympathy. She is attended by a woman of her caste who has the knowledge of mid-wifery, as this village does not have a professional midwife. The one who knows the job is highly respected by all the people. Her services are requisitioned and consultations are had by all those who require her help. Since the first delivery is considered as a crisis, the household elders take all possible precautions. On such occasions, as the field data show, it is the elderly women who take decisions and the men have to provide all the necessary facilities for the smooth delivery.

Economic conditions have a direct bearing on the families in respect of their performing rituals and ceremonies. Sometimes the poor economy incapacitates a person to observe the customary rituals. There are instances wherein it was noticed that the father of an expectant woman was reluctant to take her to his house for the first delivery due to his adverse economic conditions. But his wife was quite insistent on getting her daughter to their house for the delivery as the custom dictates in this region. The husband and wife mutually deliberated. The husband tried his best to convince his wife about the financial difficulties and persuaded her not to bring their daughter home for the delivery. The wife was highly
critical of the attitude of her husband and she took the
stand that such a step would bring down their family's
image and they will have a very bad name among the kinsmen
and it may also have some adverse influence on their
daughter in her in-law's house. She told her husband
not to worry about expenses as she would meet the expenses
out of her own savings. She felt that the occasion was
a critical one and demanded sacrifice and hardship.
Finally they decided to bring their daughter home for
delivery. Thus, men have to yield on certain occasions
and have to go along with the decisions of their womenfolk
in the family.

It is customary among the Siddapur villagers that,
on such occasions, the men undertake the journey to the
in-law's house to bring the daughter. In case a women
is required to do so due to unavoidable circumstances,
the people do understand it and express their sympathy
for her helplessness. Sometimes kinsmen come for her
help. Thus, on certain critical occasions like child
birth, it is always the men, not the women, who are
supposed to undertake the journey. Thus, women's move-
ments are restricted on such occasions, though she may
take the leading role in decision making.
The birth of a child is heralded with the performance of several rituals. Women take greater responsibility in performing the rituals. When the umbilical cord of the child is cut, it is put in a small earthen pot (gulla) and buried along with other articles that were put in her sari's hem (udi) and were brought along with her to her natal home. If the child is a male one the cord is buried inside the courtyard of the house. In case of a female child, it is buried outside the house. The differential treatment is a symbolic expression of male superiority. This indicates that females are supposed to go out of the house and become the members of other family into which they are married. The male ones are supposed to be attached to the family and the lineage. Right from the beginning, the belief is that it is the son and not the daughter who is expected to continue the family line.

It is very important to understand that all the biological functions of women are considered as the sources of pollution while that of men's are not. After the birth of a child the mother and the child are considered as unclean for some days among all the castes. The period may range between five to ten days, from one caste to another. Among Lingayats the pollution would last till the tying of the Lings to the new born child by a Jangam.
while among others, for five days. Among the twice-born, i.e. among Badigas in Siddapur, the duration of uncleanness lasts for ten days. After a ritual bath, whitewashing and smearing of the house with cow dung, the woman and the house would become clean.

Now-a-days we notice the change in overcoming this crisis of life. As the people of Siddapur have the advantage of living on the fringe of the urban city, and due to economic prosperity during recent times, now-a-days for the first delivery of an expectant mother, they take the help of doctors in the city. The persons who have taken up jobs and the rich farmers take their women to hospitals for delivery. In such cases the traditional observances regarding child-birth are not observed strictly and yet they perform these according to convenience. Here also it is the women who take the leading role in taking women to hospital or performing the required rituals etc. Men only assist them in the way they are asked to.

Cradle and Tonsure: Though the same rituals are performed at cradle and tonsure ceremonies for males and females, the manner of their observance differs considerably. The rituals on such occasions are more elaborate
in the case of a male child and less elaborate for a female child. This is due to gender inequality in the society. The discrimination and differential treatment begun at birth continues and later on these are mirrored in the behaviour in several ways. The fixing of days to perform a particular ceremony for a male child and a female child differs. In case of male child the naming ceremony should be performed on an even day after the birth of the child, that is, for example 12th, 16th or 20th day after the birth of the child. For female child an odd day is preferred, that is, 11th, 13th, 19th or 21st day. From this one can infer that there is no intrinsic merit in certain days but their observance on different days is significant from the point of view of maintaining a distinction between boys and girls. The tonsure (javala) ceremony of a male child is celebrated in odd months or years of the child's age. For instance, in 5th month or within a year usually during 11th month; otherwise during third or fifth year. For female children it is conducted during even months or years, that is, in 4th or 6th month or during second or fourth year. There is no definite day or month or year for conducting these rituals. But care should be taken to follow the even and odd days and months to perform them in respect of male and female children.
All the ceremonies from birth are observed on a grand and elaborate scale for male children and for female children they are observed in simple ways among all the castes. Especially if the first born is the male child, people of the village try to spend as much as they can and invite relatives and friends for the cradle ceremony. Even for tonsure, if the first child is male, it is performed at temples with the help of a mathapati. Otherwise they conduct it at home with or without the help of mathapati in a simple way. Thus, one can notice the sense of discrimination between male and female children right from the beginning of life till the end in regard to performance of various rituals at different times.

**Puberty Rites/Initiation Ceremony:** In case of female children, attainment of puberty calls forth the observance of several rituals which again form part of the religious practices of the people. Puberty is considered important for girls because this event brings about a significant change in their position, that is, from childhood to youth. Further the event separates the girls from the boys. Pollution is associated with puberty of the girl. The girl who attains puberty will not only become unclean herself but the house also is supposed to be affected by this. Therefore, the house has to be cleaned ritually
after the specified period. Onset of puberty is treated as a sign of physical maturity of the girl. A ceremony is held to announce the event to their kinsmen and friends in the village as well as in other villages. The ceremony would go on for five days to twenty-one days. The girl is also treated as unclean during menstruating period subsequently and is subjected to special taboos in regard to her movement and work inside the house.

The menstruating women themselves think that they are unclean and hence, observe some taboos. They avoid entering into a temple or a place of worship, cooking ritual food, lighting the lamp in front of the deity, touching the seasoned food articles such as pickles, papads, vermicelli, etc. for fear that they may have to face the wrath of supernatural powers. Among the Lingayats these taboos are not adhered to since it is believed that wearing 'Linga' on the body would keep them always clean and free from pollution. However, the traditions are so strong that in actual practice a woman usually refrains herself from participating in such activities because of the feelings that she is unclean during menstruation.

The onset of puberty makes the parents conscious of their duties towards their daughters. The father has to
seek a match for the girl and make arrangements for marriage. The mother has to see that the girl is well versed in domestic chores, manners, etiquettes and behaves modestly. Again and again parents stress that the prestige of their family is in the hands of the daughters. Hence, the daughters are expected to learn everything properly and the free movements which characterised childhood days are curtailed.

For boys there are no such specific rituals which could mark as a stage of abrupt transition. Though initiation ceremony called upanayana is there among some castes who are known as dwijas which initiate a boy into the profession of the caste. This village does not have a sizeable population who follow this practice except a few families of Badigas. Since their caste members are not many in the village, for conducting initiation ceremony they go to other convenient places. Hence, during my field work I could not come across any boy undergoing upanayana ceremony which transforms the position of a boy from childhood to adulthood. But the appearance of mustaches on the face of a boy indicates his physical maturity. There are no specific rituals except making him to take up the profession of the family unless he is undergoing a course of formal education. No instruction is given to
a boy about his physiological changes as is done in case of girls as they are more vulnerable. Even the mention of sex openly is considered as immoral and indecent. The physiological changes in males do not bring about pollution. It is due to this, perhaps, they the females are treated as inferior to men.

Jangams among Lingayat and Pujaris among Kurubas have a specific ritual which sharply brings out the distinction between childhood and adulthood irrespective of age. Because after the performance of avvachara among Jangams and pattakke hakuvadu among Kurubas, a boy is treated as an adult who can take up the duties of adult life. Among Jangams the traditional calling of going round the village for collecting alms, accepting offerings, officiating at religious rituals can be undertaken only after undergoing the initiation, while among Kurubas no specific duty is assigned to an initiated person. Among those castes which have to observe initiation ceremony, it is compulsory to undergo the same before the next rite of passage, namely the marriage. Once an individual is initiated he is treated as an adult, and this is evident while performing the death rituals. For example, if an initiated person dies, all rituals are performed without taking into consideration the physical age of the person.
Marriage: Marriage is one of the important events in the life of an individual. It is considered necessary for the due fulfillment of the purpose of life of men and women, without which they cannot achieve salvation.

Marriage is a sacrament and only through this one gets entry into the social life as a full member in the society. All the rights, privileges and duties are bestowed on a person through marriage. The marriage rituals of all the castes in Siddapur are similar with minor variations, since all castes imitate the dominant caste, viz., Lingayat.

After marriage a woman is generally considered to have no existence apart from her husband, especially so far as the religious practices are concerned. The conscientious performance of household duties constitutes her proper ritual and sacred duty. Without this she cannot attain salvation (moksha). Right from her childhood days these ideas are taught to the girl though in a cruder form.

Marriage is an important life-cycle ritual for women among all the castes in Siddapur. No woman can remain unmarried without facing social sympathies or criticism.
At the ideal level, the marriage rituals point out the oneness of husband and wife. The term for wife, aadharaoi, indicates the equal position and participation of the woman with her husband. But the actual rituals indicate the unequal or the subordinate position of woman. For example, during marriage rituals the woman has to sit at the left side of the husband, the 'left' being inferior to 'right'. In conducting the rituals it is the husband who leads the wife. Presents are given to the bridegroom by bride's father in marriage but many times they (the bride's family) do not receive anything in return. During and after marriage it is the groom who comes first, sits and offers prayers and the bride has only to follow him.

Though woman has a subordinate role to man, she is respected as mother. She is regarded as 'aralahaxmi' by the society and its religious canons. She has been inspired to sacrifice all other considerations and even personal interests in order to maintain this ideal image. This has left a permanent impression on the character of the Indian women, who unlike their western counterparts, regard their role as mother to be a revered and elevated one. For most of the women, marriage and the role of wife is only a stepping stone to fulfill their most important role as mothers, irrespective of their caste, class and status affiliations.
In conducting various rituals at the time of marriage and on other occasions, women know the procedure and take initiative, yet men consider them as incapable and interfering. This shows men's attitude towards women and their assumed lesser ability.

A woman's life is determined by the demands of her children. Being a mother is the most challenging, exacting and time-consuming task. In the agricultural folk milieu, a woman is the bearer of children, preserver of home and custodian of children. She is regarded as Mother (tai), personification of mother earth. Such ideas are deeply rooted in the minds of Siddapur people. The urban encumbrances and modern responsibilities have not been able to eradicate this basic idea about women. The affection towards children to provide more facilities, and the sensitivity of women regarding the prestige and position of family among the relatives and the village people can be understood from the following cases:

1. Mrs. S's husband is working in a far-off place in order to earn livelihood for his family members. She is also earning to supplement the family income. She has four sons and a daughter. The marriage of the eldest son and daughter are
fixed. The parents have to show a great concern for arranging the marriage. Since the husband is away on duty she has been shouldering the major responsibilities of the household. Regarding the arrangements for the marriage, she has a desire to perform both marriages at her residence. She could have thought of arranging the marriage at a temple which could have saved some money as most people in the village are doing so now-a-days. But she arranged the two marriages at her residence to maintain the prestige and position of her family among the kinsmen, though this cost her all her savings. Her husband did not dissuade her as he was very confident of her abilities. This instance brings home the point that the real position of women will be high, if they substantially supplement the family budget and manage the household in their husbands' absence.

2. Mrs. R. inherited a house consisting of seven rooms and 8 acres of land from her natal home as she is the only daughter to her parents. Now her daughter is of marriageable age. Her
cousins are interested in marrying her daughter if she gives some portion of her inherited property as dowry. Her husband indicated his approval to the demands of her cousins. But she resisted saying that under the condition of giving the house as dowry, the marriage is unacceptable to her. She, however, maintained that she may give a part of that house, as streedhan to her daughter, in future if she desires. Finally, the marriage of her daughter was arranged according to her wish. Her husband could not force upon her his views, and had ultimately to come round and accept her decision. To maintain her position a woman may not yield, if she possesses some property or wealth in her name.

Death: The disposal of the dead is conducted in two ways, namely, burying and cremating. Brahmins and Badigas cremate while others bury the dead. In the earlier days, the Badigas used to cremate but now they are following the Lingayat pattern of burying. In case of unusual death, among all the castes except Muslims they cremate the dead. For example, if the wet mother dies, or a person is affected by some dreadful diseases
like leprosy, T.B., etc. Among Lingayats, the death ritual begins when a person is suspected to die. When a person is on death bed a rite called 
\textit{vibhutiveelya} is performed by a Jangam. It is not a common practice, only the very devout persons perform it. On this occasion, they invite a Jangam for \textit{padapooja}. His feet are washed to obtain \textit{padodaka}. The dying person is placed in a place which is cleaned earlier and spread with sacred ash (\textit{vibhuti}). On the body \textit{rudrakshi} is placed and \textit{vibhuti} is applied. "Panchakshari" hymn is slowly chanted in his/her ear. In his/her name alms are given to the poor. If a person dies after \textit{vibhutiveelya} he is considered as lucky.

\textit{Married persons whether male or female are buried in sitting posture while the unmarried are buried in lying position. The corpse faces the north in a meticulously dug grave. The corpse is carried in a palankeen (\textit{vimana}), a special wooden structure made to carry the dead in sitting position. The unmarried are carried on \textit{chatta} (litter in which the corpse is carried) made of bamboo.}

The corpse is washed and dressed in clean clothes, sacred ash is smeared, \textit{rudrakshi} is tied around the neck. The corpse is then placed in sitting posture against a wall in the house. Then \textit{pooja} is performed with sandal (\textit{gandha}),
akshata and flowers and by waving the aarati. Singing of devotional songs (bhaajana) is arranged in front of the corpse.

The carpenter with the help of knowledgeable persons prepares the vimana and the Holeyas dig the grave. When vimana and grave are ready the corpse is carried in a procession attended by both men and women. The Korer and the Holeyas play on their musical instruments like nadaswara and halige in the procession. The corpse is placed on the ground twice before it is taken to the burial ground and then it is lowered into grave. All persons attending the burial ceremony throw patri and a handful of soil on the dead body uttering the name of God. The grave is then filled with vibhuti or salt and soil, and later a samadhi (cenotaph) is constructed.

If the deceased is a male and has a surviving wife, her natal relatives have to get a new sari for her. Wearing that sari she follows the corpse to the burial ground. After burying the corpse her bangles and tali are removed in the burial ground. While returning home she covers her face with the hem of her sari. It is believed that her sons and other married women (muttside-yaru) should not see her face while returning from the
grave-yard.

If the head of the family is deceased his turban is put on the head of the eldest son or other person who takes the responsibility of the house. It indicates the transfer of responsibility from the deceased to the next person. He succeeds the head who is dead. However, such rite is not performed in case the dead is a female.

After burying, others return to their respective houses seeing the light that is kept in the place where the deceased breathed his last. The family members return home and take bath. Then take rice and curds without salt, salt being the symbol of obligation (rina) and very essential for taste. On the second day the house is cleaned and whitewashed. On the third day dina (day) is observed. A Jangam is invited for pooja and his padoaka (water after washing his feet) is sprinkled to remove death pollution and he is given gift money (dakshina) on the occasion. All friends and relatives who have attended the burial are invited and fed. When cooking is over, some of all the cooked food is taken to the grave and put on it. If crows eat the food they believe that the dead will have rebirth in human specie, otherwise, will be born in other form of life. However, the other caste people do not have this practice.
Among Kurubas, the elaboration of *pooja* is not performed. After death the corpse is washed and dressed in clean clothes. It is carried in coarse wool blanket and buried in the Lingayat pattern but while putting the corpse in the grave, a few wheat bread (*chaasat*), rice and a lamb are put along with it. This indicates their belief in rebirth, but do not perform 'a day' as Lingayats do. Thus in the performance of death ritual no discrimination is made for males or females.

**Fairs and Festivals**

Fairs and festivals form a significant part of the totality of religious practices of the people of Siddapur. Each religion and caste has its own way of observing them. While for some castes certain festivals are more important they are not of much interest to others. However, there are certain festivals which are of regional and national character. All the festivals of the village can be categorised into three types, namely, local, regional and national. The regional and national level festivals are observed of course with local variations. Again, a number of festivals are connected with agriculture. At each stage in the cycle of agricultural production, the festivals are celebrated by the people. Men and women participate in them but their participation is conditioned by traditional beliefs. On certain occasions, women are excluded.
from observance of certain rituals. There are several restrictions on women which need to be adhered to strictly in the interest of getting their objectives fulfilled through rituals. The total freedom in the observance of the ritual is still enjoyed by the men. However, their longstanding contact with the nearby urban population has not brought about any substantial change in the manner of observing the rituals. If at all, shortcuts available are adopted in the observance of rituals. This in turn is mostly due to poverty and, therefore, this should not be interpreted as change at attitudinal level alone. Simplification of rituals need not always be interpreted as the evidence for declining interest in the traditions. Simplification of rituals and observance of festivals is attributed to poor economic conditions, lack of leisure, saving of work hours and economising the cost of their performance. Their urban contact seems to have contributed very little to the simplification process.

The fairs are of common interest to all the residents of the village irrespective of caste, religion and sect. They are the occasions when the entire population of the village comes together and acts as one group forgetting their statuses and positions. They are very important
to the people as each time a fair is celebrated, the structural relationships prevailing between the castes are renewed.

The Hindu calendar and the festival cycle are based on lunar calendar. Siddapur people recognise twelve newmoon days (amaavasya) and twelve fullmoon days (hunnive) in a year. Each of these day is associated with the specific succeeding or preceding festivity and is named after that festivity. The list of newmoon and fullmoon days is given in Table No.12.

The people of the village observe newmoon days every month regularly at family level but all the fullmoon days are not observed; only a few are celebrated. The observance of these days does not involve any special celebration. On the day or on the previous day, women clean the house by smearing cow dung and make preparation for special dishes. On that day in the morning women take bath and then cook special food. After offering the cooked food to deities at home, the family members take food; men take food first and then women. Men do not have any special role in the observance of these amaavasya or hunnive. On some occasions which they consider as more important, special activities are undertaken by men, since they are
very important from agriculturists' point of view and they are also treated as important festivals. The festivals celebrated by the people are as follows:

While narrating about the festivals of Siddapur, the beginning is made with **Ugadi**. It begins on the **amavasya** day which falls on the last day of **Phalguna masa** (February-March). **Amavasya** is celebrated as usual. Next day is **Ugadi Padva** (New Year's Day). It falls on the first day of **Chaitrarna** (March-April). Early in the morning all the members of the family take head bath keeping leaves of neem under their feet and drink a mixture known as **bhenva** prepared out of neem flowers mixed with tamarind, jaggery, powder of roasted Bangal gram, pieces of grapes, raw mango, banana, etc. It is exchanged with friends and relatives as a token of good wishes. The mixture of neem flowers with jaggery represents the idea that life is an admixture of both happiness and sorrow. On this day sweet cakes are prepared and the agricultural activities for next year are started, since this day is considered as a very auspicious day for any new work.

In the early morning on **Ugadi** day, before sunrise, all the agricultural implements are placed in the courtyard. They are cleaned and worshipped by the elderly men. Before
other members in the family could get up, without talking to anyone, a man takes the plough to the field and the first agricultural activity of the year is inaugurated by ploughing. Women are not allowed to perform pooja of agricultural implements or touch them on that day, however, they are allowed to work in the field on other days.

After Ugadi, Karahunnive which falls in the month of Jaistha (May-June) is celebrated by all. This festival is especially important for agriculturists. During this festival the agricultural prospects for the coming year are discerned. This is an occasion for the village youths to exhibit their strength and courage in the form of competition. It is also an occasion for entertainment. A day before Karahunnive, the bulls and bullocks are washed and fed with jowar dish (kitchadi). Next day, the cattle are decorated with colours and paints. A black thread is tied to bullocks, to protect them from evil eye and evil spirits and are served with sweet cakes (holice). All this is done by men.

In the evening the people gather near the entrance to the village (aasi), some to participate in the competitions and others to watch them. This occasion is called
as Karihariyuvady (to do away with inauspicious spirits). This name is probably derived from the requirement of tearing off the festoon of neem leaves held by Kabbaliga by running bullocks. This occasion shows the importance of cattle in the life of villagers. The young men take part in cart driving competition. Between 6.00 and 6.30 p.m. two men from Kabbaliga caste (service caste) stand across the agasi holding kari in their hand (kari is a string of jute with neem branches tied to it). The young men interested in taking part in the karihariyuvady competition gather there with their bulls. One who reaches first and cuts the string along with his bull wins. He will be taken in a procession around the village along with his bull. This encourages the youths for competitive spirit. Women and children gather around to witness the competition. Small boys imitate the youths by running around the village with cattle. Then a weight-lifting competition is held. Though the competitive spirit among men is the main attraction on this occasion, it does not give any scope for such activities for women.

During Ashada (June-July) Mannettina Amavasya is celebrated. This is an occasion to worship the soil and cattle which are important for farmers. On this day, the oxen and cattle are washed and worshipped by men. They
are served with cooked food consisting of gattigadabu and kichadi (jowar dishes). Here women cook and serve food to both cattle and the people. In case men are not available for performing oonja, women perform peeda of cattle which men were expected to do. Boys prepare idols of bullocks out of mud and worship them as elders do with living cattle.

Many religious observances are undertaken by both men and women during the month of Shravana (July-August). At the beginning of the month, the entire house is cleaned with cow dung and given a whitewash. All the clothes including the rags are washed. In this work men help the women in nearby city while in Siddapur it is entirely women's work. No doubt some men whitewash other's houses for wages but they do not assist their wives in cleaning their own houses. People of all castes consider this month as very sacred and try to observe many restrictions. Some elderly people observe a semi-fast for the entire month by taking food only once a day. Some fast only on Mondays. Usually it is the women who fast in this month for the welfare of the family. On all the Mondays during this month Lingayats and Kurubas conduct group singing of devotional songs (bhajans) in their respective temples. Women do not take part in bhajans, however they can sing on other occasions at female gatherings.
On the 4th and 5th day of Shravana, fall the Guggari and Panchami festivals respectively. These two festivals are very important for women. Usually newly-wed daughters are invited to their natal home on this occasion. Brothers go to invite and escort their sisters.

On the first day in the evening guggari and tambittu (boiled grain and a kind of sweet) are prepared as an offering to the snake god. With the help of dry coconut, water and milk are poured by women on the serpent image on the incense burning vessel (dhuparti) at home. On this occasion all women put on new bangles. All the married women who are invited for the festival receive the present of two blouse pieces and new clothes for their children.

On the second day, that is, on Panchami, after taking head bath, boiled sweet cakes (kanoli) and Italian millet (nawani ban) are cooked. All young and small girls dress up in new, festive clothes. Then they carry two plates in hand — one containing pooja articles for worship of the serpent god and the other containing offerings of cooked food — to the place where the serpent image carved in stone is installed, or to an ant-hill (butta). Only girls worship serpent (Naga) by pouring milk and making
an offering of serpents and frogs made of wheat flour. The villagers do not cook rice on this day because the cooked rice grains resemble serpents' teeth. Hence they feel it is not proper to cook and eat rice on the occasion. In the evening women gather in their locality to play the swings of rope (lokali) and also to sing. This is one of the occasions for women to come out from home and mix with other people. Men do not have any special role in this festival except to assist women in escorting their sisters and daughters from their in-laws' houses and giving them presents on the occasion.

On the third Shravana Monday, Siddappayya's fair is celebrated. Since it is a village level festival all people in the village get together and collect money for the celebration. On this occasion a procession of the Saint Siddappayya, is arranged from Devarasmane to the temple. It is mainly organised and participated by men. Women assist the men on request. The relatives and friends from nearby places are invited. Hence, women's role is to cook and serve the guests. A wrestling competition is arranged on this occasion in which wrestlers from the surrounding villages participate.

In the evening after completing the household chores
women of all castes gather near the Siddappayya temple to watch the wrestling competition as well as the fair. This is one of the occasions for women to come to the temple, spend sometime leisurely and meet their friends. However, women of the various castes gather in separate gatherings but men sit together to watch the wrestling competition. Men sit near the wrestling place while women sit far from it in separate groups to watch, suggesting thereby the social integration of men is better compared to that of women on the occasion.

On the last Shravana Monday or on the first Monday of Bhadrapada community feast (khand) is arranged by the village people for the well-being of the residents of village. On this occasion a communal dinner would be arranged separately by the two main castes in honour of their respective gods - Siddappayya and Malingaraya. In olden days khand (communal feast) was fixed on the last Shravan Monday. For this occasion people used to contribute according to their capacity either in kind or in cash. But now the leaders prefer to collect the contribution only in cash, so that it will be easy to manage. If the cash is not collected in good time, they celebrate khand on first Monday of Bhadrapada month. At present, for the leaders, the day is not of much importance but the collection
of money is more important. Hence in some years they postpone this function for about a week or so.

For the communal feast of khand, Lingayats and Kurubas cook separately near their respective temples. Lingayats and other higher caste people dine with Lingayats while Kurubas and other lower caste people dine with Kurubas. At home, on festival occasions, usually women take food after men, but on the occasion of khand, usually women and children take food first, since food is served very late in the evening. Also, on this occasion, since it is a communal feast, food is cooked on a large scale. Hence, men cook and serve. Women have to return home early to look after the home and children. Therefore they are served first and sent home before men take food on this occasion.

During the month of Ashwina, (September-October) Dasara festival is celebrated from the first day to the tenth day, by consecrating the fertility - jar (ghatasthapana). This festival is observed in the name of Ambabai - a regional goddess. The entire village celebrates this festival with very rigorous sense of purity, as they are very much afraid of the wrath of the goddess. With piety and all seriousness they follow the procedures. In the
entire region people have a belief that if there is any shortcoming in worshipping they have to face immediately the wrath of the goddess. Hence, they take all care in maintaining ritual cleanliness and observe taboos. All the clothes and utensils are washed and cleaned. The house is purified by smearing cow dung and whitewashing. Fresh grocery is bought for festival cooking. Fresh oil is crushed or purchased from market for lighting the wick lamps on the occasion. Nobody sleeps on cots and beds. They use only mats and bedspreads. Nobody is supposed to have sexual intercourse during this period.

On the first day, the platform (ja gala) is cleaned and gods are worshipped. In one corner of it a little mud is put and in the centre a small pot is placed with water and areca nut in it. On the top of the pot betel leaves are placed with a piece of coconut kernel. In the mud around the pot, five types of grains are spread to raise seedlings. Every day at the time of pooja, some water is sprinkled on the seeds of grains and aarati is waved for nine days. Bhat trecharyya (1971:42) interprets this ritual saying that this worship of pot "is to identify natural fertility with human fertility, so that the productivity of nature becomes increased by the imitation of female reproductivity." On the tenth day in the morning
after performing pooja all the things placed on the platform are taken to the nearby stream. The seedlings, flowers and other things except the pot are immersed in the stream. The pot is filled with water from the stream and is brought home. All these activities are performed by women.

On the same day in the evening about 6.00 O'clock men and boys along with village elders and the men with service-castes go to banni tree situated at the outskirts of the village. After worshipping the tree, pluck its leaves which are later exchanged among people as a token of reciprocating good wishes thereby restoring relations which had been strained otherwise.

On the same occasion men undertake certain activities in the fields. During dasara there are small sprouts of jowar in the fields. Hence the pooja of Bittapandavaru is performed by men in the fields. Five small stones are gathered, washed and instilled as Pandavaru. They are smeared with saffron and vermillion. Then all men dine in front of Pandavaru praying to help grow the crops well. For good crops and prosperity both men and women undertake the pooja in their respective fields of activities, namely, in the fields and at homes.
Sheeghunnive also falls in the month of Ashwi and is observed only by women. Five days before the full moon day, in the evening five small stone pieces are collected and put in a niche (mada) in the front walls of the house. They are called as Shigi and are worshipped by girls singing in chorus. Usually the themes of songs are about the divine couple Shiva and Parvati, thereby the children learn about their tradition and culture. There is no competition among the girls for singing as we observe among men on the Karshunnive occasion, as though the society does not encourage competitive spirit among women to the extent it does in case of men.

During the month of Kartika (October-November), Deepawali festival is celebrated for four days. On these days, routine domestic work and activities in the fields are not disturbed. On the first day water storing ritual (neerutumbuwa habba) is observed. On that day in the evening the water containers are cleaned and filled with water. Next day early in the morning every member of the family takes head bath but men take bath prior to women. Females, usually daughters and sisters, wave aarati to men after bath and then are fed with vermicilli (shyavige). Third day is amavasya which is celebrated as any other amavasyas. Fourth day is deepawali padya, a very important
day of the festival. On this day Goddess of prosperity (Laxmi) pooja is performed, usually by men.

On this day Kurubas perform a special pooja known as kattari-helu-vereyuvadu. (Pouring milk on scissors). On this occasion, they worship the scissors which are used for shearing wool from the sheep. They put the scissors on jasaali, worship with milk, ghee, saffron, vermilion, black and white wool. They also perform Laxmi pooja. The churning rod is decorated with a sari and ornaments. Once in two or three years, Kurubas sacrifice a sheep to Laxmi, to secure her blessings for their prosperity and well-being.

On the same day, agriculturists perform a pooja in the field which is known as pandavarige yabbusuvadu. On this occasion, in a small earthen pot (rikkina guli), a little quantity of all cooked food is put and buried by men in front of Pandavas in the field. The burying of the food is done in the hope that the granary should be full of grains. Hence, agriculturists worship Pandavas on that day praying them to guard the crops in the fields.

Gouri hunnive falls in Kartika (October-November) and is celebrated in the same manner as Sheechihunnive.
The next amavasya is celebrated only by Kurubas, in the month of Margashirsha (November-December). It is known as Chatti amavasya. On this occasion Vaggya, a mendicant of their caste is invited and offered food. With his help a picture of their god Mallayya is drawn on the front wall of the house. It is like a totem, i.e. symbolic.

Next amavasya is very important for agriculturists. It is known as Yallu amavasya. It falls during December-January. At this time jowar crop is ripe and ready for harvesting. Agriculturists perform scattering the food in the field (saraga hodeyuvudu) on this day. They are very happy on this occasion as they anticipate the reward for their work very soon. They invite friends to share in the feast. They cook gattigadabu, vegetables, rice and other eatables which they carry in a basket to the field. The earthen pot which was buried earlier on deepavali occasion is taken out and filled with ashes (prasada). In front of Pandavas at least five men have to eat food. Others may take wherever they like. While coming back from the field in the evening, the earthen pot is placed in a basket with a few chosen cobs of jowar. The basket is decorated artistically with jowar leaves, in order to make it look like a car. It is placed on the cart in such a way that others could easily look at it. It is known as bringing gold home.
(sone taruvadu). All this is done by men. Women go to the field to carry food but are not allowed to take part in arranging the above mentioned rituals. It is like a procession to exhibit the efforts and the result of agricultural activities of men. However the small farmers do not celebrate it on large scale.

In the month of Maaha (January-February) Tenebharahunnive is celebrated. Tenebhar meaning the weighty cobs. At this time all the crops in the field are ready for harvesting. On the day of Hunnive, a few cobs of all the crops in their fields are brought and are tied to the front door and the doors of the place of worship. At this time the people are very jubilant as the harvest season has arrived. The new corns are cooked and offered to the family deities on that day as a token of gratitude.

The next amavasya is Shivaratri which falls in the month of Phalgun (February-March). Since it involves fasting and praying to lord Shiva without any pomp and grandeur, only Lingayats observe this. Others observe it as any other amavasya.

In the same month the last fullmoonday known as Holi is celebrated. On this occasion, people from all
the castes forgetting their caste differences come together to take part in holi. In holi singing and dancing, beating of halige (a kind of flat drum) and sprinkling colour on each other takes place. Hence this occasion gives an opportunity for the release of tension of the mind as the people have freedom to use even abusive language and some relief from routine work.

Apart from these calendrical festivals, on the occasion of Ugadi and Dasara, agriculturists invite Matangi through whom they wish to offer new crops to the goddess, as they have harvest of rabi and kharif respectively at that time. Unless they serve the padalagi of Matangi, they do not consume the new crop. On this occasion the feelings of purity and pollution are forgotten for a while. Because Matangi comes from Madaru caste. She is made to sit in the front yard of the house for pooja. At the time of pooja she can touch the higher caste people to bless them with prosperity but at other times people do not like to be touched by Madaru. Thus, even among women on certain occasions the caste feelings are not practised for a while, though they are very particular about purity-pollution at other times.

All the above mentioned festivals are celebrated at
family level in Siddapur. Usually the rich families celebrate the festivals in accordance with the traditional pattern, because they have the leisure and money to follow the procedure laid down by tradition. People of the poor families do not have time and money to celebrate the festivals with pomp. Even on the festive days the poor have to go for work. In the evening, if they can afford they celebrate the festivals in a simple manner. However, festivals like Panchami, Dasara, Deepavali and Ugadi are celebrated by one and all. On such occasions, the poor also celebrate them even by borrowing money. Other festivals are not much different from ordinary days.

In case of life-cycle rituals, the poor people try to perform them according to their convenience at a convenient place. They even do not consult the pujari or mathapati for the auspicious moment. On any festive day, they try to complete some of the life-cycle rituals. In performing family level festivals and rituals, women take the initiative and in consultation with men, the time and the manner of celebration are fixed according to their convenience.

In case of village level celebrations like fairs, Khend, procession of deities on the various occasions which involve the participation of all the caste members of the village, women do not have any specific roles to play.
Even they are not consulted in the matter of organizing them. Men of different castes perform their caste duties to meet the obligations of the village level festivals. For example, Madaru clean the agadi. Talawar announces the messages in the village, Holey and Kuruba beat the halige and dolly respectively and Lingayats perform other activities like fund collection and preparing communal meal and taking out procession.

Apart from the above mentioned fairs and festivals, conducted for the well-being of the entire village, in earlier times, people used to perform Khand once in every three or four years, other than the Khand of Shravana. Since it was meant for the entire village, it was called as Oorakhand. But for the last eight years it has not been celebrated. At present people are more interested in the procedure, rights and privileges than in the spirit behind the khand. Due to urban contact, education, change in the occupations and political consciousness there are conflicts in the village, resulting in factions, that come in the way of celebrating the Oorakhand which has to be performed collectively. In 1983, though all the preliminary preparations were made, villagers would not eventually celebrate it.
Occasionally people go to temples to worship, apart from celebrating festivals, rites of passage, fasting, etc. Only a few old men and women visit temples regularly. The women between the age group of 40-50 visit the temples usually on Mondays among Lingayats and on Sundays among Kurubas. The younger people do not go to temples regularly. The people observe fast according to their caste rules, though the ritual procedures are not very strictly observed. In earlier times Lingayats on Mondays and Kurubas on Sundays used to fast in the name of their family gods, for the welfare of the family. But now people, especially women, fast for different reasons. For example, young girls fast to get a good match, children, etc. Sometimes they fast and also worship deities to get prosperity or cure from disease. Women of lower caste groups are not very particular about fasting as they often go hungry any way due to scarcity of food.

People of Siddapur have faith in spirit mediums in the village. They serve as intermediaries between god and people. For any trouble or problem people first consult them, and it is more common with females. Sometimes, without the knowledge of their husbands, they approach the pujari - the diviner to get their problems solved. If the remedy suggested by him is within their
reach, without informing their husbands, women manage on their own. Otherwise, they consult their men and persuade them to meet the diviner. Even in case of ill-health it is not the doctor who is consulted first but the diviner.

Ancestor worship is also prevalent among all the castes in the village. It is more elaborately practised among Lingayats than others. Kurubas are very fond of naming their children after their ancestors. Among Lingayats before celebrating the auspicious rituals like marriage or first pregnancy rite, they install an image of the recently dead ancestor irrespective of sex. The idol is brought in a procession by the male member of the house, usually by the head of the family and installed on the platform along with other idols. Then women worship the idol. Villagers have a belief that by worshipping ancestors they get their blessings for a happy and prosperous life. They also believe that if the ancestors are not pleased they may curse the descendants.

Though ancestor worship consists of worship of elders, in one Lingayat family the dead younger brother is worshipped. The case is as follows:
From a Lingayat family a man was appointed in Gulbarga University as a class-IV servant in the year 1974. After two years, due to ill-health, he died. His elder brother claimed and got his younger brother's job by approaching the authorities. He and his wife now think that their brother died very young without the worldly pleasures, and therefore, he might be having some desire towards life. So he is likely to trouble his brother who is enjoying his dead brother's job. As a result every year on Dasara amavasya they offer a pair of clothes in the dead brother's name to keep his soul happy and to be free from the likely trouble he may cause.

Pilgrimages are liked by all the caste people but are not in a position to undertake them. A majority of the people are poor and, hence, cannot afford to go on pilgrimages. However, for marriages or life-cycle rituals or for fairs they often go to temples in the village or in nearby city and other villages.

Summary

The religious substructure of Siddapur is understood
in terms of rites of passage, fairs and festivals that are spread over a calendric year. It is pertinent to note that in the Indian context the caste practices and rituals constitute the religious order of the people. Hinduism which embraces nearly 85% of the population of India is based on caste system. The status of women, sometimes, is considered as very high as she is adored as shakti, mother in Hindu religious scriptures. Despite this, women in India are exploited, humiliated and are not treated as equal to men. Women have been deprived of their share in the spiritual authority.

The practice of religion in Siddapur is seen in terms of observance of rituals by the people. The rituals are being performed in a family environment, but the festivals and fairs acquire a greater significance, since they involve intercaste and intra-caste relations in the village. In this fringe village, women appear to be more religious than men. Women firmly believe in the fact that proper observance of rituals would ensure the prosperity of the family. The festivals and fairs have also a social element despite their being religious in nature. They contribute towards recreation and emotional relief. It is noticed that the higher the economic level the greater is the inclination towards observing the rituals in a more elaborate fashion.
The children are initiated into the practice of religion at an early age by their parents. They bring out internalisation of values, norms and taboos that govern the practice of religion. The Lingayats of Siddapur do not appear to be well-versed in practising Veerashaivism, that is, adhering to the philosophical tenets of Veerashaivism, namely Astavaran and Panchachara. It is a religion wherein the people practise what their forefathers did. Whatever has been learnt during the childhood is retained and practised by both men and women. Oral traditions are still very effective in Siddapur in communicating the religious ideas to the people.

The women of Siddapur perform pooja of the family deity, not because women possess higher status, but because men do not wish to perform pooja. Men appear to be more disinterested. The daughter of a Lingayat pujari was performing pooja at a temple in the absence of males in the family. This was resented by the people saying, "How can a woman do this job?" The practice was later on given up by adopting a male child.

The women are not allowed to enter the sanctum sanctorum of the temples as they are likely to be in a state of pollution. They observe several taboos due to
the fear of being punished by supernatural powers. Among Kurubas they were not even permitted to light the lamp in the temple of Malingaraya in earlier times.

It seems that high caste women have many restrictions when compared to women of lower castes. Scheduled caste women can enter their temples and perform pooja. The Lingayats of this village do not concede the point of lower status of women in their community at the level of argument but the practice betrays this claim. The initiation ceremonies of Ayyachara and paddagke hakuvadu are meant only to the men of Jangam sub-caste, and pujaris among Kurubas, respectively.

The people of Siddapur observe rituals on the occasion of birth, puberty, marriage and death. These are also known as crises of life. While children are welcomed, the male child is preferred. This differential evaluation is reflected in socialization practices. In the matters related to daughters the mother exerts greater influence. There are several occasions when an earning woman dictates her decisions and it was also accepted by men. Siddapur offers a case where a number of women contribute their earning to their households.
A considerable change is noticed in Siddapur regarding the better treatment given to women at the time of delivery. The changing economic conditions have enabled them to avail of medical facilities of the city. The physical proximity of the city has facilitated their overcoming traditional beliefs and opt for modern methods of delivery.

The ceremonies performed in respect of male and female children differ to a great extent. The ceremonies for male children are more elaborate than those for female children. At the time of performing rituals the woman has to sit to the left side of her husband, left indicating 'inferior' position. This is followed even to this day.

The basic ideas relating to woman as 'mother', 'sacrificer', 'arbaralaxmi' etc. are deeply rooted in the minds of Siddapur people. Maintenance of family prestige at all costs is the prime responsibility of women.

In settling the marriage, making arrangements regarding marriage, manner of performing marriage, women of Siddapur play an important role. The decision of women
would be more binding on their men, because men consider
women more knowledgeable about these procedures, especially
when men are away from their homes, and women are earning
and managing household affairs.

It is true that most of the festivals concerned with
agriculture bring men and women together cutting across
the caste and class barriers. There are certain rituals
where women have no role to play. Simplification of ritual
performance is due to poverty and lack of leisure time.
The urban contacts, have a limited role in this matter.
The celebration of fairs and festivals renews the structural
bonds between the groups of people in the village. They
act as mechanisms of maintaining the social structure of
Siddapur. The women are not permitted to perform pooja
of agricultural implements or to touch them on the first
day of work. Shravana is a busy month and heavily loaded
with the rituals. During this month Shalana are arranged
in which women do not participate.

The important religious performance at the village
level in Siddapur is Khand which they celebrate every year.
On the same occasion Lingayats and Kurubas observe Khand
separately though the purpose is common. In the organiza-
tion of Khand women have no role to play. It is entirely
managed by men including the cooking and serving.

On the whole it appears that the urban contacts have helped the people of Siddapur to improve their economic conditions. The people with economic prosperity are more inclined towards the observance of rituals elaborately. The position that was assigned to women in the performance of rituals has remained more or less the same. It is noticed that the women have a greater say in arranging the rituals at the family level and have very little role to play in the celebration of fairs and festivals at village/community level.