Festivals observed by Patnuls throughout the year form into a cycle. Festivals are based on beliefs connected with certain deities and of special importance. The fact is that festivals are the occasions to gather caste people in the community. Some festivals are celebrated with the aim of obtaining protection and prosperity for the entire community. In fact, these festivals are largely communal in nature, reflecting the collective preservation and the individual behaviour. This Chapter is mainly devoted to the description of such festivals observed by the Patnul Salis.

The cycle of festivals may be classified as follows:

**First Quarter:** January to March

1. Sankranti
2. Renukaparameśwari Festival
3. Maha Sivaratri
Second Quarter: April to June
1. Ugadi
2. Sriramanaavami
3. Gangajathara

Third Quarter: July to September
1. Vinayaka Chaviti
2. Varalakshmi Vratham
3. Anantha Padmanabha Vratham

Fourth Quarter: October to December
1. Dasara
2. Deepavali
3. Nagula Chaviti

Sankranthi
This festival is celebrated every year in the month of January. It is also known as Makara Sankrantı. It marks the entrance of Sun into the sign of Capricorn (Makam). It is the beginning of the six months period known as Uttarayana, the return of Sun towards North from South. This period is considered very auspicious. This inaugurates the gradual lengthening of the day time. This festival is
celebrated by all sections of Hindus in South India. This festival has a special significance for farmers as the crops will be harvested a few days before, and every family in the village will be having enough money, paddy and other essential commodities to celebrate. This festival is celebrated for a period of three days, from 13th to 15th of January every year. The days coincide with the second day of Pongal festival.

Well in advance of the ensuing festival, all houses are thoroughly cleaned, white washed and decorated. The doors and door frames are decorated with turmeric, saffron and lime powders. The walls are painted with colours. Women get up very early in the morning, from the beginning of Pushya masa (the month in which the festival lies) sweep the courtyard and sprinkle it with water in which cow dung is dissolved. Then they decorate the courtyard with big and attractive designs (muggulu) with multicoloured powders. Then they place one or more small mounds of cow dung in the centre of the designs and decorate them with flowers. This ritual is done everyday up to Pongal. The first day of this festival, that is 13th January is known as Bhogi Panduga. For this festival, all the young married girls come to their
parents' house along with their husbands. On Bhogi Panduga day, all the members in each and every house get up very early in the morning, and light a fire in the courtyard, with firewood and other old articles collected specially for this purpose. Then all the members of the family take oil bath and wear new clothes. Special menu is prepared and is first offered to the family deities in the usual manner. Later it is served to all the members of the family.

The second day is known as Sankranti and also called as Pedda Panduga. This festival is mainly associated with the worship of ancestor spirits. The Patnul community believes that their prosperity and well being are secured by propitiating the spirits of departed ancestors through worship. A spot is selected in one of the corners in the central hall of the house. It is cleaned and decorated in a fitting manner for the worship. After completion of cooking, all the preparations are placed in the puja room. Then a kalasam is placed on a wooden plank on which rice is heaped. Then the menu is offered to the spirits of the ancestors by breaking a coconut and with the incense of camphor. The head of the family takes his bath and with the help of a Brahmin purohit worships the spirits of the
departed ancestors and offers pinda to them. According to mythology, the souls of the departed reappear in the form of crows. So the pinda is offered to the crows. If the crows pick the pinda it is believed that the souls of the departed ancestors are pleased with the worship by the living survivors. If not, they promise some vows to the souls. Later the family take their food. The purohit is given some rice, vegetables and other provisions. In addition to these, he is presented with new clothes and some money in the name of the departed ancestors.

The third day is known as Kanuma Panduga. All the members take complete rest on this day. They do not undertake any type of work or job on this day. The non-vegetarians enjoy themselves with a good feast comprising of mutton and chicken dishes. In the evening they spend the time drinking liquors and with other entertainments.

The fourth day is known as Pasuvula Panduga (festival of Cattle). Those who own cattle, celebrate this festival. Early in the morning they wash the cattle and decorate them with colours and flowers. The head of the family performs
the Pasupuja and offers prasadam. On that day the cattle enjoy a complete holiday. They are not made to work at all.

Renuka Parameswari or Renukamma Festival

This festival generally falls in the last week of January or first week of February. This festival is celebrated for a period of three days. Renukamma is the kuladevata or the Goddess of the Patnul community. This is a special festival celebrated by Patnuls only. This festival has special significance for Patnuls. According to mythology, Renuka is the mother of Parusarama and wife of Jamadagni. Once Jamadagni in a fit of anger ordered Parusarama to kill his mother. Parusarama obeyed his father's order and killed his mother with his axe. Jamadagni was very much pleased with his son's obedience and granted him a boon. Then Parusarama requested his father to bring back his mother alive. Accordingly Jamadagni brought to life Renuka. Renukamma thus obeyed her husband's order even to the extent of sacrificing her life. She became a goddess by this action and people worship her. Renukamma's idol is made of copper and coated with gold. Renukamma's temple is situated on the western side of the Patnul Street. They
collect donations from all the caste members for celebrating this festival.

First day of the Festival

They erect a Pandiri in front of the temple and the poles of the pendal are decorated with coloured papers. The temple is cleaned, white washed and decorated with coloured electric lights. Patnul Sangham invites a Brahmin purohit or pujari to perform the Renukamma festival. Pujari first makes a miniature model of Renukamma idol with turmeric powder. This is called "Vigraha Pratishta". They place the puja materials, like green plantains, flowers and other offerings before the deity. All the people of the community gather there and conduct bhajana. In bhajans, they sing songs in praise of Renukamma. After the completion of bhajans, the pujari offers neivedyam to the deity. Later prasadam is distributed to all the members assembled there.

Second day of the Festival

On this day, the idol of Renukamma is decorated with flowers, garlands and jewels. Then it is placed in a pallaki and all the members of the community along with the pujari go round in a procession to the beating of drums.
The procession halts at each and every house and the pujari accepts offerings from each household and offers them to the deity with chanting of mantras. The procession covers the whole area and returns to the temple. Then the idol is once again placed in the temple. Once again bhajans are conducted. Pujari offers chakkera pongali (rice cooked with ghee and sugar or jaggery), pulihora (lemon rice) and sundal (cooked bengal gram) to the deity as naivedyam. Then prasadam is distributed to all the members assembled there.

Third day of the Festival

On the last and final day of the festival, in the afternoon the idol of Renukamma made with turmeric powder is placed in a pallaki. Then it is taken round the community streets in a procession. Harati (incense of camphor) is given at every house. After covering the entire community streets, the procession is taken to Manchineellagunta (Water tank). The pallaki is placed in a cleaned place. The pujari offers pongali to the deity. Afterwards all the members of the community immerse the turmeric idol of Renukamma in water. This signifies the conclusion of the festival.
Maha Sivarathri

Maha Sivarathri festival falls on the 14th day of the waning moon in the month of Maghasam (February and March). This festival is said to be specially liked and enjoyed by Lord Siva himself. On that day, three essential things are scrupulously observed. First, fasting throughout the day and night, second, worshipping the deity, third holding a vigil or keeping awake throughout the day and night.

After taking the purificatory bath early in the morning on the day of the festival, the worshiper recites the sankalpa (pledge to celebrate the worship). They offer flowers, fruits, etc., to the deity. The Siva Linga is first bathed in water, next in milk, then in curd, then in ghee and finally it is bathed in honey. Members of both the sexes participate in this ceremony. Brahmins are given presents. The devotees fast the whole day and go the Siva temple and worship the Lord in the usual manner. They observe jagaram throughout the night (going without sleep during the night). They spend the night with entertainments like purana kalakshepa, harikatha, etc., which are considered to be the liking of Lord Siva. The next morning
after taking bath they perform puja. Later they take food along with any invitees present. They present the pujari with money as dakshina for the services rendered during the holy day.

Ugadi

This festival is also known as Telugu New Year’s day. It is celebrated as Telugu New Year’s day. It falls on the first day of the month of Chaitra as per Telugu Calendar. It in fact, inaugurates the advent of Telugu New Year. The day before the festival, the entire house is cleaned, floor washed and decorative, designs are drawn on the floor, with coloured powders or flour. On Ugadi day people get up early in the morning, women sweep the courtyard or front yard clean, sprinkle water mixed with cow dung and decorative designs are drawn. All the members of the family take ritual bath. The house is decorated with festoons made of mango leaves. Before breaking fast, they take a special preparation known as Ugadi Pachadi. This is prepared with new tamarind, margosa flour (vepa puvvu), pieces of mangoes, new white jaggery and plantain fruit. This preparation consists of different tastes like sweet, sour, etc. It symbolises different aspects of life, like sorrow, happiness,
etc. It philosophically indicates that life is a mixture of
ever so many things and one should realise this and bear
with them with fortitude. On Ugadi day, sons-in-law are
invited. They are presented with new clothes. On the
evening Panchanga Sravanam is observed. All the people of
the locality assemble in the temple of Renukamma and new
Panchangam (Telugu Almanac) is read by a Brahmin purohit.
The Panchangam states the presiding deity of the ensuing
year and the situation with regard to rain, crops, cattle,
trade, etc., during the coming year. These calculations are
meticulously calculated as per the planetary positions
during the year. Then merits and de-merits of these
planetary positions are announced. The effect of these on
prosperity, wealth, well-being of the whole community during
the ensuing year. After Panchanga Sravanam, the idol of
Renukamma is taken in a procession through the locality,
bhajans are conducted and afterwards prasadam is distributed
to all those assembled, sometimes if circumstances permit
cultural programmes are also arranged.

Sriramanavami

The Patnul community firmly believes in the power of
Lord Sri Rama. They frequently visit the temple of Sri
Rama. The presiding deities are Lord Sri Rama, his consort Sita and his brother Lakshmana. Sri Rama and Lakshmana are the two great heroes of the Epic Ramayana which took place in Tretayuga as per Hindu mythology.

This important festival of Sriramanavami falls on the ninth day of the month of chaitra. The Patnuls along with others, celebrate this religious festival for a period of eleven days. On all these days, they make offerings to the deities for fulfillment of their vows. On the day of the festival a huge pendal is erected in front of the temple and is decorated with strings of mango leaves. The temple is washed and painted with colours. On the day of the festival the pujari, after taking purificatory bath, cleans the sanctum sanctorum of the temple. He then removes the old apparels of the deities and washes them with sanctified water, specially brought for this purpose. Then he dresses the deities with new clothes.

On the morning of the first day of the festival the pujari worships the deities and offers jaggery pongal to the deities. Later the prasadam is distributed to all the people assembled there. On the evening of the same day, the
pujari along with some others go to the house of the ubhayadata (that is the person who sponsors the ceremony on that particular day). He was handed over the puja material and prasadams like sundal (boiled bengal gram), chekkara pongali and gajjayam for worship and offering to the deities. All the members of the family of the ubhayadata and others in the locality gather under the pendal and sing various devotional songs in praise of Lord Sri Rama. Some engage themselves in bhajans. After the above religious entertainments are conducted for some length of time, the pujari performs the puja to the deities and offers naivedyam. Then it is distributed to all the members assembled there. Similarly, the same routine is continued for six days more, with different sponsors on different days on the eighth day. Seeta Rama Kalyanam is celebrated in the night. The Patnul association collects donations from all the families in their community. With the amount so collected they prepare prasadams to the deities collectively. Some individual families redeem their vows separately. The pujari conducts the marriage ceremony to the accompaniment of beating drums, music on piped instruments. The pujari at the auspicious moment ties the sacred pusti around the neck of the idol of sita on behalf of Sri Rama. All those
assembled there, sing bhajans, and devotional songs about Sri Rama and other Gods.

After the completion of worship and other religious bhajans, etc., the pujiar offers naivadyam to the deities first, and later distributes the prasadams to all those assembled there. The association presents betel leaves, areca nuts, and a little amount of money as dakshina to all the Brahmins attending the ceremony. On the ninth day at about 9 p.m. Sri Rama Pattabhisheka Mahotsavam is celebrated (coronation). The pujiar after giving the purificatory bath to the deities takes the deities from the temple and place them in a pallaki. Then the pallaki (palanquin) with deities is carried in a procession throughout the locality. The procession stops at each and every house to facilitate the family members to offer their offerings to the deities. In this way the pujiar collects offerings from all the houses and after covering the entire locality the procession finally returns to the temple.

The idols are then reinstalled on their base in the temple and the pujiar once again worships the deities and offerings are made in the usual manner and prasadam
distributed to all the devotees. The pallaki bearers are paid some remuneration for their services. On the tenth day in the afternoon, some virgin girls go to the Manchineellagunta and fetch water and hand over it to the pujari. With this water the pujari prepares vasantam (water mixed with the powders of turmeric and calcium). After the usual worship, the pujari sprinkles a little amount of vasantam on the idols. All the families in the locality also prepare vasantam and sprinkle it on each other in a festive mood. Finally on the eleventh day a special ritual ceremony known as vadarchana or bakalabath is observed. This festival is celebrated on behalf of God Anjaneya. The usual worships are offered to the deity by the pujari and a special dish, vada is offered on this day. So, this festival is called vadarchana. This is the concluding item of the Sriramanavami festival. This cycle is repeated every year.

Gangajathara

Most of the villages in Andhra Pradesh have their own special deities apart from universal Gods like Sri Rama, Siva, etc. These deities are invariably or at least for the major part are feminine. These Ammavarlu (Feminine deities)
are supposed to be (Shudra) devatalu (low type of Gods, who seek sacrifices of animals like goat, sheep, fowl, etc). Generally, these are worshipped by non-vegetarians. Among these deities Gangamma is famous, particularly in Rayalaseema region. From about ten days before the festival, children, in some cases grown-ups also, go in disguises and collect money from friends and public. There is no distinction of caste and creed. This festival commences on Wednesday. On that day, the children disguise themselves as bairagis, on the next day, that is, on Thursday, in banda disguise and on Friday toti disguise, on Saturday they wear several disguises, like lady, drunkard, Srikrishna and so on. On Monday next Sunnapukundalu will be taken to the temple of Gangamma and are placed in one of the corners of the temple. Sunnapukunda (pot made of mud) contains several holes and a light is kindled inside pot by means of a wick made of rice flour, ghee is used as fuel. On Tuesday, the final day, people with vows perform sapram. Not only people of the town, but also from the surrounding villages take part in the festival. Almost all the families worship Gangamma. Friends and relatives are invited for the festival and a feast is given to all of them, sometimes liquor is also served.
**Vinayaka Chaturdi**

This festival is celebrated almost throughout the country. It is observed in honour of Lord Vinayaka or Vighneswara, son of Goddess Parvati and Lord Siva. He is the God of Vighna (obstacles). Wherever and whenever any ceremony is performed, Lord Vijayaka is worshipped first, before the main ceremony is celebrated. It is the belief, that unless you pacify and appease this God before commencing anything, he is likely to cause lot of trouble by placing innumerable obstacles in the way. The festival falls on Bhadrapada Suddachaviti, generally in the months of August or September. In some parts of Andhra Pradesh, this festival is celebrated for a period of nine days. It is called Ganapati Navarathrulu.

On that day, people get up very early in the morning. Women sweep and clean the courtyard and sprinkle water mixed with cowdung and then draw decorative designs with rice flour. Children and sometimes grown up people also go to gardens to collect mango leaves, and different varieties of green leaves (patri) for the worship. They make thoranams with mango leaves and decorate the house with these. All the people buy the image of Vinayaka made of clay. All the
members of the family take oil bath and sometimes wear new
clothes. Under the guidance of Brahmin purohit each and
every family worships the deity, Lord Vighneswara in its
household. Several varieties of vegetarian dishes are
prepared, and particularly undrallu, of which the deity is
particularly fond of are offered as naivedyam to the deity.
On that day, nobody is permitted to see the moon, without
worshipping the Lord. According to Hindu mythology, if by
chance any one happens to see the moon without worshipping
the Lord, he will be blamed throughout the year for no fault
of his. On the festival day evening also the Lord is
worshipped. Like that it is done for three days. On the
third day, the idol along with all the material, with which
he is worshipped is taken out and immersed in a stream or a
well. In recent times, this worship of three days is
reduced to one day only and the immersion takes place on the
second day.

Varalakshmi Vratam

The festival is celebrated on a Friday in the month of
Sravanam as per Telugu calendar, which falls generally in
the month of August. This festival has got a legendary
background which goes as: once a Brahmin girl named
padmavathi, in the region of Kosala, was a very good and pious girl. She was dutiful to her husband, kind and generous towards sick and poor and courteous to guests. Goddess Varalakshmi was very much pleased with the behaviour of Padmavati and appeared in a vision to her and told her to perform a certain vratam called "Varalakshmi Vratam" on Friday which comes before the full moon day in the month of Sravanam. By performing this vratam one would achieve prosperity, wealth and children. After this advice, the Goddess disappeared. Padmavathi woke up and found nothing before her. Next day early in the morning, she told about her vision to her husband and mother-in-law and sought their permission for performing this puja. They readily consented to the girl’s request.

On the day of the puja, early in the morning Padmavathi along with her mother-in-law went to the nearest river to take bath, on the previous day itself, they cleaned the entire house and decorated the floor with various designs. The spot where the puja was to be performed was specially cleaned with water specially brought from the river, specially for this purpose. Then it was decorated with turmeric and saffron powders in traditional manner. After
the purificatory bath in the river, Padmavathi and her mother-in-law returned home. Then Padmavathi placed the kalasam (a round shaped tumbler consisting of water, wherein some mango twigs are placed) on the sacred spot. Under the kalasam rice was sprinkled. A small mantapam was erected for the purpose. Under the guidance of a priest, the lady worshipped the deity in devout manner, with flowers and offered naivedyam to the Goddess Varalakshmi. After the completion of the puja, prasadam was distributed to the members present there. Before offering prasadam, she offered incense of camphor singing the praise of the Goddess.

After the puja, the lady who performed the puja, wore Nomudaram (made of nice coloured threads) on her right wrist. Ladies with living husbands, were invited and betel leaves and areca nuts were distributed along with some money as dakshina to them. By performing this vratam regularly, they believe that their family will attain prosperity, wealth and also the blessings of the Goddess Varalakshmi. All Hindus, particularly in South India with the exception of untouchable castes, perform this vratam every year.
Dasara

This festival is also known as "Ayudha Puja". It falls in the Telugu month of Ashvayujam, corresponding to October. Formerly this festival was celebrated for a period of nine days, but in recent times it is observed on one day only, on Sudda Dasami. This festival is observed in all parts of the country. Even now, in some parts of the country, particularly in North India, this festival is observed for nine days, known as Durga Puja. According to Hindu mythology, some significance is attached to this festival. Goddess Mahishasura Mardini, one of the incarnations of Goddess Parvati, fought with a demon for nine days and ultimately killed him and freed the world from his tyranny and atrocities. The celebration of this festival symbolises the victory of good over evil. Another legend concerning Pandavas in Bharatam, says that, on Vijaya Dasami day, Pandavas performed puja to their weapons, and then only embarked on an invasion, wherein they won a resounding victory. That is the reason why this festival is also known as Ayudha Puja. Now a days, students worship their text books as a part of the ritual.
Daughters and sons-in-law are invited for this festival. They are presented with new clothes. If this happens to be the first festival after the wedding, sons-in-law are given more valuable gifts. As is the case with all festivals, houses are cleaned and freshly painted or white washed as warranted. Newly married in-laws are invited and received with special attention. The usual pujas and feasts follow according to tradition. "Ayudha Puja" is performed on Vijaya Dasami. Every family worships its tools of trade, students their text books and so on.

Deepavali

This festival is observed by all the Hindus. It is celebrated every year on Ashvayuja Bahula Amavasya (new moon day) of Telugu Calendar, corresponding to October or November. This festival is celebrated with pomp and gaiety in North India compared to South India. Marwadis and other North Indian business community, celebrate "Lakshmi Puja" on this day. Their accounting year commences from this day.

According to Hindu mythology, legend says that a demon king called "Narakasura" ruled the Aryavarta approximately, around six thousand B.C. It is said that, in this previous
birth, he was the son of a woman, who was later known as Satyabhama, wife of Lord Krishna. For some reason or other his mother cursed him. Consequently, in his next birth he was born as a demon and troubled the sages and other pious god fearing people. Unable to withstand his atrocities all the sages went to Lord Brahma and represented their hardships and prayed for salvation. Lord Brahma then approached Lord Vishnu and appraised him of the situation. Lord Vishnu assured him, that the demon would soon be killed by his own mother, who in this birth was born as the daughter of King Satrajita. Reassured and satisfied the sages returned to their hermitages.

Later Sri Krishna, as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, married Satyabhama, daughter of King Satrajita. To free the suffering mankind from the atrocities of the demon Narakasura, Lord Krishna, accompanied by his spouse Satyabhama, fought the demon Narakasura. Lord Krishna fell in a swoon, and while he was still unconscious, Satyabhama continued the fight with the demon and killed him. This event took place on Chaturdasi, the day before new moon day or Amavasya. With the death of Narakasura all the ladies imprisoned by him in his palace, were released and everybody
sighed with relief. Next day all the people celebrated the occasion of the death of the demon.

On Deepavali day, very early in the morning, people, particularly children fire crackers marking the death of Narakasura. In the evening all the houses are decorated with various kinds of lights. Traditional oil lamps are also lighted. Deepavali, the word itself means, a chain of lights. These lights are lighted to drive away the darkness in their lives caused by the Demon, on his death. Children fire various kinds of crackers, sprinkle of different colours are lit. This festival is celebrated every year. This festival is very much liked by children. On the next day, ladies (whose husbands are alive) worship Goddess Kedara Gowri. Almost all celebrate this festival. As usual the house is cleaned and decorated. Then the lady, who worships, takes an oil bath and wears sanctified clothes. She first instals a kalasam on a sacred spot. The kalasam is decorated with flowers and various kinds of ornaments. Then the kalasam is worshipped ritually. Vegetarian dishes are offered as naivedyam, to the Goddess, represented by the kalasam. After the worship, men as well as women, wear nomudarums on their right wrists.
Nagula Chavithi

This festival falls on Kartika Sutta Chaviti, as per Telugu months, corresponding to later part of October or early part of November. This festival comes four days after Deepavali. All Hindus celebrate this festival. This festival is more or less confined to ladies only. On this day the serpent God is worshipped by women. Most of the families, taking part in this festival, fast until the completion of the worship, which normally will be around midday.

Early in the morning, the house is cleaned, water mixed with cowdung is sprinkled and the floor is decorated. All the ladies of the family take oil bath and wear pure silk garments. They prepare dhal, green gram (vada papu), soaked bajra, etc. Along with these items, they take other essential materials like cowmilk, plantains, coconut, eggs, camphor, turmeric powder, kumkum, oil and cotton wicks, etc. With these materials, they go to a serpent hill (pamu putta). The worshipers wind around the mound a white thread nine times and applys turmeric powder and vermilion to the mound. Next the members of each family prepare pongali (mixture of cooked rice, jaggery and green gram dhal) and
offer it as naivedyam to the deity. Then they break the shells of eggs and pour the contents, together with milk into the mound. Afterwards, they offer coconut and plantains. Then they go round the mound three times. They take a little quantity of clay from the mound and apply the same to their ears. The popular belief is that, by doing so they do not suffer from any kind of ear trouble. Then the worshippers distribute prasadam to all the people present there. According to tradition the worshippers are forbidden from cohabitation during that night. On the next day, they take the purificatory bath and prepare special dishes. First these dishes are offered to Nagadevata and later served to all the members of the family. By observing these rituals they believe that Nagadevata protects them from snake bites, and from some kind of hygienic problems.

Anantha Padmanabha Vratam

Every year this festival is observed exclusively by the males among Patnals on one day before the full moon day in the Telugu month of Bhadrapada. It normally falls in August-September. According to mythology, Lord Padmanabha is one of the incarnations of Lord Vishnu. As usual the house is cleaned with cowdung water and decorative designs
are marked on the floor. The thresholds are also decorated with turmeric paste and marked with vermilion dots. All the members of the family take purificatory bath. Then they visit the Renukamma temple with puja materials. In the name of the deity, Anantha Padmanabhaswami, they instal a kalasam with a coconut. The kalasam is worshipped in the traditional manner. Fruits and flowers are offered to the deity. They prepare small kankanams with various types of coloured silk threads, benzoic powder is lighted and the fumes are applied to the kankanams. These kankanams are worn on their wrists. The whole Patnul community is celebrates this festival. What is more significant to be noted here is that this is the only festival observed by the males, although females assist them in the celebration.