Religion is the term generally used to describe man's relation to the supernatural powers and the various organized systems of belief and worship in which these relations have been expressed. Religion really pertains to subjective reality i.e. to say it is used for people who believe in it. Religion exists for believers. For the non-believers, it may be unreal or a kind of superstition or a type of orthodoxy. There are two opinions about the definition of religion. Religion is concerned with beliefs and rituals. Belief is an impression about things, whether good or bad, right or wrong and which has certain impact on the mind. This leads us to have certain tendencies. Further, a belief could be a custom, a faith and confidence in a group of people.  

People believe in super-natural power of some kind. They deal with the problems of life by practical measures and there is always a margin of uncertainty, and often anxiety, when supernatural powers are restored to in public or private worship or rite, and the accompanying emotions of fear and reverence can often be observed. Beliefs in the existence of spiritual beings are usually described as religious while those referring to powers that do not presuppose the necessary existence to such beings are known as magical. Beliefs like values have an influence on behaviour and attitudes. Before science could unravel many things, people used to believe in a number of phenomena, which had not been empirically tested or logically validated. The belief that small pox was due to goddess Shitla's wrath
has not been dispelled in the tribal folk despite the discovery of smallpox virus and its eradication from the world. Similarly, there are many beliefs with regard to the causation of various prevalent diseases found not only in tribal but also in rural and urban areas. Such beliefs have led to the formation of certain customs amongst the people, which become means to seek relief from diseases. Treatment by specific medicines cannot be resorted to among the tribal masses because of wrong beliefs prevailing. The particular worldview of a community and its faith in deities who control the universe, greatly influence their thinking about life and death, health and sickness, etc. When faced with illness and suffering, our forefathers relied more on the experience of their cultures and very often sought solace from powers outside them, as we turn today to science, they turned to their religious faith.

The behaviour of an individual as well as the member of a group is shaped by his belief system. The belief system is internalized in the process of socialization. The core of the belief system consists of attitudes and values. By values, we mean preferences of choices, on a scale of things that people desire and require. Thus, the belief system may be defined as an organized body of ideas, attitudes and connections center on values or things regarded as important or precious by a group. Belief system provides a large frame of reference or background, which tends to control the more specific thoughts or actions of individuals and grounds. A belief system is a social product, which arises out of the matrix of symbolic interaction.

It is difficult to note about the nomadic religion of Sugalis and their customs and belief-systems due to lack of historical records and sufficient published evidence. However, certain observations about the Sugali tribe of those who made and had a contact with them, viz., British ethnographers, historians, are quite helpful in reconstructing the magico-religious system of the Sugali tribe during their nomadic-mercantile days. Their present religious ideas and riturals are
compared with those in the past in order to trace the process of constant adjustment to changing mode of life. An attempt is made in this chapter to discuss the process of adoption of Hindu religion and beliefs and customs as well as agricultural rituals by the newly peasantising but erstwhile animistic Sugali tribe. For this, an examination of their earlier as well as present religious life and beliefs become necessary.

BELIEF SYSTEM

EVIL EYE: The belief in the evil eye is very common in the Sugali society. It is a Hindu belief that the eye gives forth the most powerful of all emanations from the body. In the Sugali society, the evil eye is believed to be rooted in jealousy. Hence the apparently admiring glance of a woman who has no children, or possibly no sons, at the son of mother woman will, it is feared, carry the blight of jealousy. A similar equation may be behind admiration for a cow. The person who is suffering from some physical defect such as blindness, deafness, lameness or one who is a much back or an albino is greatly feared, as it is regarded as certain that such a person will be jealous of those blessed with health and soundness of body, and so will be ready to cast evil glances toward them. The Sugali belief is that the crises of life are particularly precarious from the standpoint of susceptibility to the evil eye. So at times of child birth, puberty and marriage one must be more than usually careful to take precautions against evil influences. Probably the element of spite is mingled with envy, since deformities themselves are commonly credited to the evil eye, and then there is the added belief that "misery likes company". The Sugali believes that the evil eye is commonly cast by women, rarely by men, but occasionally even by deities. The word used for the evil eye is drishti which means sight. They believe that the eye is an instrument for transmitting powerful emanations involves many collateral beliefs.
Polluted people are under certain prohibitions about looking at the heavenly bodies.

Moode Sakri Bai aged about 63-years of Sugalimitta thanda in Chittoor district says that a pregnant Sugali woman must not look at an eclipse. In certain unfavourable circumstances a father is not allowed to look at his new-born child until a propitious time, and then he must first see only its reflection in a pot of oil. The chief mourner after performing a funeral rite must not look back. As a corpse leaves the house one must not look. In certain rites of casting out demons with mimetic magic, after throwing away the paraphernalia one must not look back. Much care must be taken as to the objects that a woman sees during pregnancy, as it will affect the growth of her child. Even idols are susceptible to the evil generated by the looks of an unclean person and such persons are prohibited from entering temples. In fact, in some rites of worship the devotee covers his eyes with his right hand, and in a few even the priest is blind folded. Even today the Sugali society is encountering the effects of the evil eye. It is customary to wave and throw in eight directions balls of variously coloured rice, to free the bridal couple from the effect of the evil eye. Marriage is of course one of the critical periods of greatest susceptibility. To remove the effects of the evil eye at times people will burn an old broom, chillis and salt together before the person who is affected. At other times coconut shells, salt, chillies and some grains are burned before the affected individual. In some instances camphor is burned. In such cases, special precautions are taken that small children should not see these things, because they have been magically charmed and are potential sources of danger. Amulets are frequently worn to attract the first glance of a person and thus avert the possibility of evil. Bright and shining amulets are considered most efficacious. In fields the common method of diverting the evil eye is to erect a pole with a pot on it on which spots of lime are daubed. Rags are used sometimes instead of the pot.
Besides wearing the amulets and charms, they sometimes rely upon the celebration of religious rites. They have in connection with these beliefs and practices another illustration of the intimate association of the religious and magical. Though the operations of the evil eye are interpreted from the magical point of view, one of the means considered to be most effective for control is the religious. Religious rites themselves are commonly supposed to contribute to the merits of those who celebrate them, and to put him in possession of a power that will enable him to counteract such malevolent influences as that of the evil eye. They believe that it is well always to have the gods on one's side in struggles against evil. Hence they perform the rites to please the gods.

The elders of the Bakkannagaripalli thanda in Kadapa district said that a poor Sugali woman, Nunsavath Kesli Bai, wife of Nunsavath Bhagene Naik was hit by a crow and died while she was working in their farmland. Her husband secretly performed the mock funeral rites of his wife because she was accidentally hit by a crow. The purpose was to exercise the bad omen and save her from seven and half years of ill luck. The Sugalis believe that contact with the crows is most inauspicious. Bhagene Naik consulted community elders and made arrangements for the mock ceremony. Accordingly, he told to his close relatives in neighboring Nelavaram thanda in Vempalli mandal that his wife had died of the electric shock in the morning. While all the relatives arrived at his home, Bhagene Naik and his family members completed mock funeral rites. At the end of it they sacrificed hens to the patron deities Maremma and Sithala Bhavani to exercise any bad spirits left over in the thanda. Bhagene Naik hosted a dinner to his relatives to complete the rites. Not all appreciate the act of Bhagene Naik in the thanda. A section of villagers found fault with him for believing in superstitions and causing inconvenience to everyone. But some of the thanda supported him for this kind of act. But Bhagene Naik said, he did perform it for
the well-being of his wife. It is evident from the above incident that the belief in Omen is very common in the Sugali society. The belief in the evil eye is also very common in their society.

OMENS: If a fox enters into the Sugali settlement, they believe that something bad is going to happen to the thanda. To prevent this, they sacrifice a goat. The entering of a crow into the house is treated as a bad Omen. If an owl makes sound over the house, then the Sugalis believe that a person in the house is going to die. If oxen urinate when a person is going out on some urgent work it is considered as a bad Omen. If a dog erects its ears then it is a bad Omen. A Mongoose passing by during their journey the Sugali feels it is a good omen. A sight of the sexual intercourse of the crows or snakes makes Sugalis take a bath and lit the lamp in the house. They believe that the planting of a drumstick tree by a boy will reduce the life of the boy.

Similarly, Bukya Somla Naik who is 85-year old from Sugalimitta thanda of Chittoor district stated that Sugalis strongly believe some omens during the journey. Passing of a cat, widow, man with empty bamboo basket, and man with new pot is a bad omen and due to these bad omens sometimes Sugalis postpone their journey whatever important the journey is. Passing of a man with washed cloths is also a bad omen while passing of a man with unwashed cloths is a good omen.

HUMAN SACRIFICE: The Sugali by nature and occupation are nomadic in character, every time they shifted settlement from one place to another place, they had not only to appease the deities of the settlement they were deserting but also to seek their blessings for their prosperity and well-being in the next settlement. This induced them to the practice of human sacrifice⁶. For the purposes they used to kidnap a child of other communities and buried it alive, upto its neck, in the pathway leading out of the settlement. Having made all arrangements for leaving, the wheels of the first bullock-cart were urn
over the head of the child, crushing and scattering its blood. All other caravans followed close behind. It was forbidden that any of them looked back. They believed that in proportion to the thoroughness of their trampling the child to death, the chances of a successful journey would be ensured. While the sacrificial victim was still alive they made a sort of lamp of dough, made of flour, which they lit and placed on his head, men and women of the settlement joining hands, forming a circle danced round the victim, singing, dancing and making a great noise until he expired. They also had a strong belief in the cause of the deceases by the spells of their magicians. They used to sacrifice a goat or a chicken in case of a shift of residence from one part of the jungle to another they hoped to escape death by leaving one camping ground for another.

OTHER BELIEFS: Another belief required them not to drink water which was not drawn from springs or wells. As water from rivers and tanks was forbidden, they were sometimes compelled to dig a hole by the side of a tank or river and made a tiny spring of the water that filtered through. The reason for this practice is not known but may be guessed to be the result of the Sugali fear of spirits residing in large water sources like a river or a tank.

Col. Moore during his travel passed by a tree on which there were several hundreds of bells hanging. This was due to a superstitious belief among Sugalis, whoever passes by that tree, they have to hang a bell or bells upon it, taking off from the necks of their sick cattle, believing that they were leaving behind them to sickness of their cattle too. This practice may be considered an instance of contagious magic. It was believed that those who touched these bells could be exposed to the wrath of the deity to whom the offerings were made, the deity would inflict the same disease on the bullock of the bell-carrier.
During the nomadic days and even some time after settling down, Sugali strongly believed in witch-craft\textsuperscript{11}. The business of magic and witch-craft was in the hands of “Bhagats”, who correspond to the European black and white magic practitioners. The Bhagat was a powerful averter of evil spirits. He was a total abstainer from meat and liquor and feasted once in a week on the day sacred to the family deity.

The Sugalis traced the witch or the witch or the sorcerer and tied him up in the jungle and killed for any misfortune or trouble, like a child falling sick or a wife becoming inconstant. Quite in keeping with their nomadic ways of life, a substantial or a permanent dwelling was considered a taboo. They had also a custom of moving out after death, and nobody would enter the hut through the door through which the spirit was supposed to have entered the house and killed the deceased\textsuperscript{12}. A peacock screaming on one’s right and a jackal howling on the left when one set out on a journey were considered ill omens\textsuperscript{13}. These beliefs, customs and practices are instances of both contagious and sympathetic magic. There were attempts of the Sugali to overcome or to feel a sense of supremacy over the forces of nature. Such beliefs and magical activities under lazing them could relieve the tensions caused by the anxieties and feelings of inadequacy, thereby making the Sugali once more be in harmony with the life to which he was destined.

The nomadic Sugali look upon Guru Nanak as the propagandist of their religion, but have nothing in common with a Sikh and they worship Hindu Gods\textsuperscript{14}. It is very doubtful whether the class now recollects any of the tenets of the religion professed by the Sikhs. In fact they choose their Gurus from the Nandair Shrine, who dress like a Sikh, conform to their customs and profess the Sikh religion.
RELIGION AND BELIEF

With the sedentarization, the Sugalis of the settlements under study area though they are either pastoralists or agriculturists, different circumstances such as the degree of exposure to the outside world, occupational mobility, level of educational, and relative standard of living have created a situation which made pastoral as well as the peasant Sugalis to have both unity and diversity with regard to the various aspects of their religious organization. On their march from tribalism to peasantry have acquired several additions to their traditional religion under the influence of different agencies of social change such as Hinduism, economic development, and diffusion. However, some of their past beliefs and practices such as ancestor-worship, worship of Sevalal Bhaya, Mittu Bhukya and mother goddess, belief in spiritual world dependences on Bhagats (Shamans) magico-religious practices. Celebration of the Holi and Diwali festivals etc., continue to persist even today, but they have been modified in accordance with the changing mode of life and the environment in which they are living. There are certain rituals which are similar to caste Hindus.

RITES OF PASSAGE

In every society as people get older they move through different statuses. Sometimes these statuses are strongly institutionalized in systems of age grades and age sets. Initiation into an age set, and the transition from one grade to another, are usually accompanied by extensive ritual. A Sugali marries to get children. Sons are considered to be a sign of prosperity of the household. Childlessness is attributed to one’s bad luck. A man without children is pitied and a woman, howsoever good, is despised if she fails to bear children within four or five years.
Like other communities a barren woman is looked upon as a curse in the Sugali family also by the settlement. Women with children enjoy better status than a barren woman. So special interest is shown on the pregnant woman till the delivery. The Sugalis have a ritual regard for objects and events which are of great practical importance to them. The relatives of the pregnant woman arrange a feast on an auspicious day and present gifts and sweets to her. The community in the settlement wishes a safe delivery and the well being of both the mother and the child. Usually the 'conception feast' is arranged in fifth or seventh month of pregnancy. It is a fact that male child has great importance in the Hindu society. As it is said 'childless person has no salvation'. The Hindu engages in performing rituals prior to the birth and pregnancy. These rituals start with pregnancy and end with the death of a person. At various stages of life they are being practiced.

**BIRTH:** Naturally in Sugali community the first confinement of a woman invariably takes place in her husband's house only. In the past, even for the subsequent confinements a woman never used to her parents' house. Many Sugalis at present send their wives to their parents' house for subsequent deliveries. But on no account the first delivery takes place at the house of her parents as a question of prestige for her husband as well as for her. During subsequent pregnancies, however, the parents of the girl themselves evince some interest to take their daughter for delivery to their house. If their son-in-law agrees to their request, the father or the brother of the girl takes her to their house or village during the 7th month.

Confinement takes place no in the living house but in cattle shed or in a hut separately built by the side of the living house for the purpose. When the labour pains start the women is shifted to the hut meant for her and she is made to lie down on a cot or on the ground on mattresses. A midwife called 'Lomsonil' from their tribe attends to the delivery. If she thinks that the delivery is going to be a protracted
one, she uses some of the age old methods, to give relief'. She warms the hips and waists of the woman with hot stones held in a piece of cloth, while another woman simultaneously rubs her chest. They believe that by adopting this process they generate some heat in the body of the confined woman which would make the delivery easy and comfortable. Immediately, after delivery, the umbilical cord of the child is cut with a sickle by the midwife and is buried along with the placenta in front of the house and the child as well as mother is given a hot water bath on the same spot. Every day in the morning the boy is bathed at the same place.

It is found that birth pollution is observed for three days by households concerned among the Sugalis in study area where the field investigations have been done. According to Bukya Bali Bai a 60-year old woman of Adavibapanapalli thanda in Anantapur district, even though a woman is allowed to enter the main house three days after the delivery, she is prohibited to touch the cooking utensils for about 15 days. In some Sugalis house, where there are some helping hands, partial pollution is observed for about one and half month to two months. For about one month after delivery the woman is forbidden to eat much of chilies, and spices as well as non vegetarian dishes, and but she is encouraged to eat more and more of garlic and pepper with the food as some medicinal values are attributed these items.

**CHILD REARING:** As per the elders of Sugali community under the study area sanctity is attached to the breast milk to feed their babies. They say that when milk is available with the mother, it is sin to use the milk of cow or a buffalo. According to them a child will be strong and would grow up very quickly only if it is breast fed. Breast feeding continues in most all the families until the child comes to be of one year or till the child is accustomed to take sufficient solid or liquid food like rice, rice gruel etc., whichever is earlier. For weaning the child, they apply two different kinds of pastes, one prepared out of neem leaves and the other out of cactus leaves which taste very bitter.
The life of Sugali children till the attaining the age of 12 or so is more or less free without much responsibility. If at all they are entrusted with any work, it is to look after their small brothers and sisters when their parents are away in the agricultural field. When a Sugali boy attains the age of 12 or 13, he is entrusted with some economic responsibility in the house by the elders. He has to look after the cattle, take them to the forest for grazing and carry food to his father in the afternoon who is working in the field. At this age poor parents invariably employ their adult child in a ryots house as a full time worker doing some miscellaneous job. By the time he comes to the age of 18 or 19, he is fully trained in agricultural operations and his employment potentiality increases many folds.

The bringing up of girls is quite different from that of boys in this community. Girls enjoy little liberty in the house. In every activity preference is given to the boys over the girls. Even during formative years, girls are trained by their mother, how to behave and conduct themselves properly in front of elders and strangers. They have to look after their small brothers and sister, when their parents are away, help their mother in the kitchen. She also learns the agricultural operations like weeding, harvesting etc., in the field along with her mother.

Sugali prefer male children than female children. They feel that sons contribute to the well being of the family and they remain in the house and look after their parents when they become old; whereas one day or the other they have to send their daughters away from their house after marriage and they never really contribute their mite for the well being of the family.

NAMING CEREMONY: The child is named on the third day performing Jheliro Nokta ceremony. The child is brought in a basket or winnowing fan filled with jowar or paddy to split and the name given usually by the midwife who attended the delivery in consultation with father and
grandparents of the child. Traditionally the most popular names are Ramla Naik, Devala Naik, Thaavre Naik, Takria Naik, Meete Naik, Champla Naik, Ganya Naik etc., for male and Banki Bai, Tokari Bai, Lali Bai, Sakri Bai, Thaavri Bai etc., for female. The names like Ramayya, Lakshamayya, Subbaiah among males and Mangamma, Somamma, Lakshmakka, among the females are also popular. Bukya Ramaswamy Naik who is 67-year old man of Adavibapanapalli thanda in Anantapur district stated that according to day on which child is taken birth, names are given to child as stated below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Male Names</th>
<th>Female Names</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>Aadhivaaramu</td>
<td>Aadhya Naik and Adhili Bai</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Somavaaramu</td>
<td>Somla Naik and Somli Bai</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Mangalavaaramu</td>
<td>Mangili Naik and Mangili Bai</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Budhavaaramu</td>
<td>Baddhe Naik and Baddhya Bai</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Guruvaaramu</td>
<td>Vasse Naik, Vasala Naik, Vasili Bai</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Sukravaaramu</td>
<td>Sakri Naik and Sakri Bai</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>Sanivaaramu</td>
<td>Thaavre Naik and Thaavri Bai</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Bukya Lakshma Naik, 55-year old man from Bakkannagaripalli thanda of Kadapa district, due to sanskritisation and modernization during the past 30-40 years the youth of the Sugalis are not infavour to have traditional names, now-a-days they are very crazy to have the names such as Gopal, Krishna, Anandh, Naveen, Ravi, Charan, Aravind etc., for male and Divya, Keerthi, Shyamala, Lavanya etc., for female. Now-a-days consulting Brahman is also very common among the Sugalis while giving the names to their children and generally naming ceremony is conducted at the age of 3 or 4 years.

**TONSURE CEREMONY:** The Sugalis during their nomadic days, were not in the habit of performing this ceremony as they were always on the march from one place to another place to carry mercantile trade. According to Bukya Gamini Bai, 70-year old woman of Vanarasapalli thanda in Kadapa district, this is a newly acquired trait from the
neighbouring Hindu castes and it was also very simple among the Sugalis. During the past 15-20 years tonsure ceremony became compulsory among the Sugalis. Now-a-days the Sugalis worship Lord Venkateswara of Tirupathi and it is mostly performed in the name of god 'Lord Balaji'. After consulting the Brahmin, on one precise day the boy or girl made to sit in front of the house on a small wooden plank and the maternal uncle cuts a few hairs and the rest is removed by the barber. Gamini Bai also stated that a few Sugalis who are financially well also invite all Sugalis of the settlement and relatives of other settlements and serve the sweet and non-vegetarian food with liquor among who are attended on the occasion of the tonsure ceremony.

**PUBERTY**: The Sugali perform puberty rites when a girl comes of her age, she is segregated in a corner of the house and is considered unclean for five days and not allowed to move or touch anything in the house. She is given an earthen plate and a tumbler for eating food and drinking water respectively. On the evening of the fifth day or early in the morning of the 6th day she is given bath with the water mixed with ‘Jajikaya’, ‘Kunkudukaya’ and cow’s urine and the pollution is removed. Sugalis would not announce publicly when girl comes her age and very few people in the thanda come to know of this. They would neither serve food and liquor to anybody nor they would perform any ceremony. Bukya Bali Bai who is 60-year old woman of Adavibapanapalli thanda in Anantapur district stated that during past 15-20 years the sudden change has been occurred in the practice of puberty and no one follow the practice regarding puberty in traditional manner in this settlement. At present Sugalis when girl comes her age, publicly announce in the thanda. Sugalis also perform the ceremony known as *Kalipero Aero Nokta* and invite the Sugalis of the settlement and other relatives on this occasion. Sweets and non-vegetarian food with liquor are also arranged to distribute among who are attended on the occasion. Some of the Sugalis who are financially
well also arrange the orchestra, dance programme and other cultural activities.

**DEATH:** The Sugalis have almost the same sort of death rites as are practiced near by the Hindu agricultural castes. They believe that ‘Yama’, the God of Death, comes to take away the life of a person. All the members of the household and the close relatives begin to weep. If a man dies, his wife beats her chest with her fists and cries very loudly. She and her sons bow down at the feet of the corpse with their folded hands in order to salute it. The dead body is wrapped in a white cloth. Some men prepare bier by tying seven bamboo chips across two bamboos placed parallel to each other. When the bier is ready, some broom straws are put on the bier and the body is laid on it. It is believed that broom straws possess the power to ward off evil spirits from the body placed on them. A small coin of 5 annas is tied to the left leg of the corpse. Flower garlands are put on the corpse. The widow is asked to move seven times round the dead body of her husband in the anti-clock wise direction that is from left to the right. When she was married to him, she has taken seven nuptial circumbulations with him round the sacred fire from right to the left. They were symbolic of their mutual promise to remain united forever. But now when the husband is departing for the next world, it is customarily obligatory for the widow to free his soul from her attachment by nullifying the seven rounds. This is a very tense moment in her emotional life, as the whole reel of the memories of her married life with the departed one runs in her mind. Her feet falter to take these rounds, so she is forcibly dragged or lifted up and taken round the corpse seven times by the younger brothers or other relatives of her husband. She is then asked to break the ‘Chuderbalya’, a symbol of her married life. Thus she enters the stage of widowhood. The custom of retaining the seven rounds may be explained in terms of other popular practice of remarrying the widow in their society.
Four men lift up the pier and the funeral procession starts. Women and children are not allowed to join the funeral procession. The elder son of the departed one, carries an earthen pot having a burning cow dung in it. In the middle of the journey to the cremation ground, the bier is put down for some minutes on the ground. This is in accordance with the traditional Hindu belief that the soul must feel the need of halting for a brief rest during its journey to the other world. They believe that if a crow, a jackal, a rabbit or a snake passes on from right to left on their way to the burial ground, then the dead person will take rebirth. On the way, a close agnate of the deceased throws rice or ragi over the bier.

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

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

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

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

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

The mourning ceremony on the third day is called as ‘Dhado Kereroe’ or ‘Kandhya Kereroe.’ Death on Saturday or Sunday is not paid any homage on the third day. They believe that death on these days denotes that the deceased person is cruel and he may become a
ghost. If a person dies on any of these days, then the 'Dhado Kereroe' ceremony is performed on that day itself. Sunday is regarded as 'Kaldo dado' or 'day of sorrow.' They believe that death on Monday may leads to an entry into the heaven. A funeral feast called as 'Kandhya' is performed in a place nearby the tank or pond. They prepare the chapathis which are cut into pieces. Jaggery of equal equity is added to it and this is called as 'Kandhya' or 'pindya.' The cremated place of the dead is groomed with the twigs of Jilledu and then ghee and milk are spread around the place. The 'Kandhya' is served to all the people. The elders of the thanda speak a few words about the virtues and deeds of the dead person. In the evening a goat or sheep is sacrificed. Here the sacrifice is symbolic gift-giving. In giving a gift a man gives, in a sense, part of himself. In sacrifice this identification is often made explicit. This is why the sacrifice of animals, is so often prescribed. A goat or a chicken shares the quality of life with the human who sacrifices it, and so may appropriately stand for him. But always the gift giving is a symbolic act, a rite and in the last resort it is the rite and not the object sacrificed, that matters most. However, the animal sacrifice is often a moral cleansing, a washing away of evil, a means of disposing of what Radcliffe-Brown called ritual impurity. If the deceased person has become a ghost, then it may be ritually transferred to a chosen goat or sheep by performing puja and that is sacrificed.

During their death ceremonies the Sugalis offer the cooked meat of the animal along with liquor. In case any person is unable to attend it, then that person comes on some other day and lit a beedi or hukka, which is given to the son of the deceased. This custom is called as 'hukka piyero'. Mourning continues for 12 days. During this period, the bereaved persons do not dance or sing. They should not shave their beard also. Men put on white turban on their heads to express their grief. The rituals on the 12th or 13th day are known as 'Therobaro'. On the 12th day, the relatives of the deceased serve
cooked rice with ghee, only to their family members. The funeral feast is given to all the people in the thanda, on the 13th day. They strongly believe the concept of 'Rebirth'. Cooked rice is kept in an earthen ware and it is covered with an earthen plate, its edges are neatly pasted with cow-dung. On the next day, they could find the footprints of an animal, or man. If the foot prints are of an animal, then they believe that the dead person has taken rebirth in the form of an animal. The Sugalis put ashes on a plate and a tumbler is filled with water. Next day if any footprints are found on the ashes, then they believe that the dead person has reborn. If the water in the tumbler is lessened, then they believe that the dead has become a ghost.

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

However, the other forms of ritual have important social consequences in the Sugali community. They provide a means of ordering and coordinating everyday practical activities. Collective participation in the rituals by the members of the settlement is mandatory. Again, the duties implied in particular kinds of social obligation maybe more willingly performed as their importance is emphasized and driven home by ritual. For example during death rites, in Sugali society performance of a special rite men enter into a relationship of mutual help and support. Since people's behaviour is largely determined by what they think to be important, the performance of ritual have important social consequences. The theory of rituals main social function is to express certain important social sentiments or values, such as the need for mutual support and solidarity between the members of a community. Unless enough people held and acted on these values the society could not survive, and through the performance of ritual, they are kept constantly in the minds of the performers, and so the maintenance of the social system is secured.15

It was observed in the Sugali settlements of Rayalaseema region under study area follow both the customs of burial and cremation. The system is more dependent on one's economic status rather than caste binding. Burial is an easy process and not that costly as cremation. Unmarried persons who die of small-fax, cholera etc., and persons who die by committing suicide are buried. The Sugalis of both
rural and semi-urban thandas under study gave up the custom of cremation 15-20 years ago and started burying the dead due to the non-availability of lots of firewood and kerosene within a short period and increasing monetary value of firewood. After the death of a person, no messenger is also sent to inform the relatives of distant places and message is only informed through mobile phone.

**IMPORTANCE OF CONSUMING LIQUOR**

Drinking is a universal characteristic of the tribal world with a few exceptions, the analysis of the phenomenon suffers from inadequate conceptualization. In most of the treatments of the subject by both analysts and tribal development administrators that intake of alcohol among tribals is conceived either as a problem behaviour needing remedial action or as a behaviour functional to reducing anxiety and fostering integration. The lack of a cultural focus results in mixing up the two forms of drinking which are conceptually distinct phenomena. Normal drinking is cultural and pathological drinking is culturally disruptive and deviant. The drinking behaviour of the Sugalis may be conceptualized as Normal. The meanings, functions and contexts of normal drinking are culturally defined. The tribal culture regulates the modes, kinds, and quanta of drinking. They drink always for momentary pleasure or tension relief. Their drinking behaviour appears to serve social, ceremonial, economic, nutritional, medicinal, magical, religious, psychological and integrative functions. It is a corporate behaviour and not individual.

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

**SACRED COMPLEX OF DRINKING:** A survey on the Sugali drinking behaviour denotes the existence of a complex culture theme underneath normal drinking behaviour. Using Durkheinian sacred-profane dichotomy, this theme is designated as the “Sacred Complex” of drinking for want of a better label. The sacred theme is seen as a pervasive concern of Sugalis with strong motivational energy. Drinking is regarded by them as a sacred act which pleases the gods. It is believed that the gods are not merely pleased by the drinking act but they themselves are believed to participate in drinking through chosen human media. They believe that liquor and its brewing formulae are divine gifts. The process as well as the places of brewing is treated with sanctity and special rules of ritual purity have to be scrupulously followed at the time of brewing and drinking. For instance, the brewer has to take a purificatory bath; use vessels made ritually pure and brew it in a ritually prepared spot. Further persons hot from sexual intercourse and menstruating women are prohibited from drinking and places of drinking. It is said the Sugalis rationalize their drinking
behaviour by investing with sacredness. The habit and tradition of drinking are very old but offers an unconvincing explanation for its prevalence. A tribal thus cannot be without drinks and in order to have a clear conscience he has purposely lent to his habit a religious and social garb. He thus gets moral fortification by such a camouflage and maintains his respectability in the eyes of the world. The untenability of this view becomes obvious when it is realized that sacred attitudes are the cause and not the effect of drinking practices. They use liquor as a symbol, source and method of expressing their inner feelings of awe, fear, respect, regard, love and homage to omnipresent and omnipotent powers external to them. They use sarai in solemnizing important pacts, agreements and contracts.

FESTIVALS

In the Hindu society, suffering taken in the stride and they have their own moments of pleasure, during the festivals that they perform. It may be noted that when compared to the caste Hindus the number of festivals celebrated by them are few and far between. Festivals are celebrations performed either within a family or as a whole in a community, to propitiate either a single deity or a number of deities. The general belief is that there are both good and bad deities, causing some evil or the other, either to an individual or to the community. The deities, according to their nature, are worshipped by the members of the community to protect them and ward them from all the evils. In fact, this is true of all civilized and uncivilized societies which believe in supernatural powers that cause both good and bad, unless you appease them and pray for protection. The evil deities could gain all the strength and create more evils. Festivals are performed on the fixed day of an year annually, when through other rituals gods are pleased.
But the tribes under study are not burdened with so many festivals. Not that they do not worship such of those Gods, but only that the festivals connected with them are just casual and do not receive that much of prominence. Only three or four of these festivals are considered to be the holiest.

Generally, Hindu festivals commence with *Ugadi*, the New Year's Day and a good number of them follow, some being agricultural in nature, like the *Sankranti*, others commercial like the *Deepavali* on which day the merchants close old accounts and commence fresh accounts. This is a pauranik-epic-based festival connected with the five brothers of Mahabharata sojourning in cognito. Holi is a day of gay and mirth when God Siva burns Kama, the Love God. Caste Hindus also celebrate the birthdays of incarnations like God Rama and Krishna or Sivaratri associated with Siva. Festivals connected with Vinayaka or Ganesh, the elephant headed chief of Ganas and so on are also popular.

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

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

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

The Sugali festivals cannot be defined as a particular kind of behaviour, as can song or story telling; rather it is a set of traditional behaviours. The festival itself is often the context for the other genres of folklore. It is only occasion of the year in which they wear their
traditional dress. It will almost certainly include a feast with traditional recipes and drink. Their festivals are strongly related to mythical events. They surrender themselves to different gods. They have created different kinds of presiding deities for different diseases. They also worship the nature gods and many festivals are arranged for the worship of these gods. Different families observe these festivals in their own characteristic traditions and conventions. Almost all important festivals of the Hindus are observed by them. They believe that salvation ultimately depends upon the grace of the Almighty. Therefore, they worship these gods and sing devotional songs with fervour. The Sugalis observe the Hindu festivals but they observe them with their own distinct tradition and heritage. These festivals show that they are religious minded and also follow traditional culture.

FESTIVALS IN HINDU PATTERN

SANKRANTHI: Sankranthi, which falls in the month of Maghamu (January), is festival of much significance for the caste Hindus. Like Hindus, it is celebrated by the Sugali for three days. On the first day, they eat special roties made out of flour of jowar and followed by the eating of boiled pumpkin and sweet dishes on the second day. On the third of the festival, non-vegetarian food is consumed by the Sugali of both the thandas. In addition, at Lakshmaiahkunta thanda in Kurnool district it was observed that upon the commencement of Uttarayana – Sun’s return journey to the cape of Cancer people keep branches of the Mudar (Calotropis procera) and Jujube (Zizyphus Jujuba) at the borders of agricultural fields, in the threshing fields, and on the surface of the houses to ward of the Sani, the God of evil influences.

SIVARATHRI: Sivarathri, another important festival, falls in the month of Palgunam (February-March) every year. Though it is one of the major festivals for the Hindus, the Sugali under study do not celebrate
so intensively as the former. Very few Sugali under study take bath and some go on pilgrimage to some pilgrimage centers. They also do not eat any special food except boiled red gram or horse gram or green gram during the celebration of this festival.

**UGADI:** The Sugalis celebrate the Ugadi festival with pomp and gaiety. On the eve of Ugadi, they perform "AtamerVori" i.e., the people in the thanda, collectively sacrifice the goats and distribute the meat to all the families in the thanda. They cook the meat and celebrate the feast along with liquor (dharu). It is customary for them to prepare a sweet dish known as 'Pisipasi Lapsi'. They pour this liquid like sweet dish along with ghee into the fire by uttering their ancestors names. Later on, they play their folk games, women start singing songs and dancing.

**SRIRAMANAVAMI:** The festival of *Sriramanavami* is intensively celebrated by the Sugalis of Rayalaseema region, especially under study both rural and semi-urban thandas with much pomp in the month of *Vysakam* (April – May). They participate in the Bhajan (chanting the story of Lord Rama) programme along with the caste Hindus in the neighbouring hamlets. On this occasion sports events like Kabadi and lifting a huge round-shaped boulder are also conducted among the people of surrounding hamlets in which the Sugali of the study area settlements are actively participate.

**DASSARA:** Dassara is celebrated during the month of October/November. During the festival, the Sugalis observe the worship of their own family gods and goddesses like Sevabhaya, Mariamma, Durgamma, Mitubhukya and Hanubhukya. Though their gods are offered prayers, in community, they also offer worship to their ancestors and presiding deity goddess Durga in the community worship. On the day of Dassara, like all other caste Hindus the Sugali also invite all relatives to the festival. The people of the thanda collectively offer the prayers to Durga and then sacrifice the goat or
sheep. They perform the puja of Goddess Durga only on Tuesday. The reason behind this is that the Goddess has taken her birth only on Tuesday. On this day, they place a knife called 'katari' over a gunny bag in front of the house. They treat the 'katar' as Goddess Durga and offer a blood sacrifice. It is customary for the Sugalis to sacrifice a goat or sheep in front of their ancestral home. All the brothers and their family members perform this ritual unitedly.

**FESTIVALS IN TRADITIONAL PATTERN**

**TEEJ:** The Teej is a festival spread over nine days, akin to the Navaratri festival which is also spread over nine days the tenth being the concluding day. But this is a long drawn out festival and quite expensive also, reasons why the popularity of the festival is waning. Nowadays in many thandas this festival is not performed and, if at all performed, only in the transitory form. This festival is generally performed in the month of Sravana when the monsoon rains have quenched the perched earth. This is a festival of fertility, since, the rains bring fertility to the soil. This festival of joy, to some extent is mostly performed by young virgins. The outstanding features of the festival are the ceremonial dances performed after the dawning of colourful dresses. Normally, married men and women al also the widows do not participate in this festival. Barren women are completely forbidden even to approach the place of festival. It is generally believed that on this festival day Bhavani or Parvathi unites with her consort Siva, after a long period of austerity. It is that deity prayed for on that day. Besides, Maremma and Shavabhaya, two other folk deities are propitiated. Of these tow, Goddess Maremma is supposed to protect women and children, preserve the fertility of land and of the female. The other God Shavabhaya is the one that protects the cattle. The two represent Goddess Bhavani and God Siva. There are regional variations in the details of the performance of these
festivals. As already stated above, since it is a festival spread over a long period of 9 days which the people cannot afford to waste, the people do not desire to make use of the full hours of the days merely through fun and frolic.

Generally of festival, the Naik sends for all his people through Dappu (Tom-Tom) and the programme is chalked out, distributing responsibility to the people involved in it. Small wild date twig baskets are prepared for each one of the married girls participating in it by the metharies (basket makers) on the requisition of the Naik, who collects the expenses, through almost equal subscriptions, to purchase necessary provisions and items for worship. On the first day the girls are decorated with ornaments liked the necklaces and gingling bells. They go to nearby villages to collect the baskets, but they find that those baskets are collected already and kept in house of Naik. The unmarried girls raise platforms, of 8 to 10 inches height, on four posts live a manchn for sitting overnight. The boys sow five to six grains of the Bengal gram in each of the baskets which is filled with manure. The girls now water the baskets singing songs in a group praying for the healthy growth of the children and the crops. Besides the four individual baskets, they also dedicate five baskets to Shavabhaya, keep a small basket called Shamdiklosoyan meant for keeping Ganagore, a fanciful clay figure decorated with flowers etc., by women-folk. Two cocoanuts are offered and incense burnt in front of the five baskets for Shavabhaya. Then the assembled people along with knives invoke the God with folded hands and them with dances. A sacred lamp is burnt, kept in the house of the Naik, whose responsibility it is to see that the light in the lamp is not extinguished all through the days of festival. A Teej platform of 20 to 30 feet is built on which a fire is lit and preserved all through the festival days. The unmarried girls sleep on the ground before the Teej baskets as if they are guarding them.
Actually these girls are directly involved in this festival. They are supposed to sleep in such a place all through nine days. On the seventh day the Damoli ceremony is performed when pancakes are burnt is the sacred fire to be offered to the Teej baskets with the raising smoke reaching the baskets. It is believed that if the smoke does not reach the baskets kept on the high platform that indicates the bad omen. To avoid this they go on intensifying the fire below so that more and more smoke goes up and touches both the ends. Sweet pancakes are prepared for the occasion and distributed, each household bring five such pancakes with jaggery. All these are kept on the spot purified with cow dung. The leader of the maidens takes five cakes from the pile which is supposed to represent the share of Shavabhaya and these they throw into the sacred fire. The eighth day is another day of merriment, and prolific fun and laughter. Two clay figures representing male and female are made while others sing songs, rather obscene in nature. It is God Ganagore that is represented in the songs sung in lullaby. On the last day there would be mass performance of the rituals, when sweet rice and ghee are offered to God Shavabhaya with oblations. Generally the Naik of the thanda represents the people and on behalf of the Thanda of the people he propitiates that God. If the same generated fire is not sufficient, further smoke is sent up so that it touches the platform of the baskets. The Naik officiating as the priest (pujari) offers sweet food to the God Shavabhaya, takes a small morsel himself and distributes the remaining among the assembled. After the first day's offer they also sacrifice an animal, a he-goat, bought by the community collectively. This Naik hands over to the members of the thanda, after himself tasting a bone, for equal distribution. The entire festival comes to an end with bidding goodbye to these baskets wherein are sprouted small leaves of the sapling. This is a period of gloom to the maidens who had raise the sapling, but have now to part with them leaving it in the waters of a river or a tank. Throughout these days the maidens are to observe certain taboos and/or to sleep in front of those Teej
baskets. They have the major work of keeping the entire space clean by smearing it with cow dung and decorating it with flowers.

**TULJA BHAVANI:** It is one of the important festival celebrated by the Sugali with pomp and joy. This festival is celebrated in the month of Karttika on any Tuesday or Thursday. It is connected with Goddess Tulja Bhavani, the presiding deity of Sholapur. This is a festival of offering by individual families who go to Sholapur on a pilgrimage. Tuljabhavani is supposed to be the eldest of the seven malevolent sister deities, the seven being Tulja, Dholagar, Dhingi-Bhavani, Amba, Meranta, Masoori and Sheethala. This is a ceremony performed by all those praying for the protection of cows from the deceases and it applies to men also. In this festival too many animals are sacrificed. There is free flow of blood.

**SHEETHALA:** Sheetala is another important festival performed by Sugali in the month of Ashadha or Sravana. She is considered to be the Goddess of small-pox. She is the youngest of the seven sisters (saptamatrukas), and names of the six of her seniors are stated by some as Basanthi, Mausami, Agwan, Lankava, Mahammari and Pooladli. This is associated with sakti-pooja (worship of Sakti, the goddess of valour) and provides ample opportunity for mass observance of rites. Opposite these deities, about 30 feet above, is placed the main deity called Luknidia. In front of this is a pot symbolizing a tank and thorny hedge three feet high and hundred feet long. The women from each house of the thanda bring boiled jowar and turmeric paste, sweet food and ghee and onions – all of them being cooked in the new vessel. At a given stroke of time they kill a fowl. Thereafter the Naik through one of his men asks the assembled to bring community animals. Seven stones are erected to represent the seven deities. All the items to be offered are placed on the ground. Each man holds his fowl in his hand ready to sacrifice. The Naik sprinkles the water on the body of the animal until it quivers since non quivering is supposed to be a bad omen. Soon the animal is
sacrificed, thereafter the Naik orders the mass sacrifices. Drums and vessels are sounded in a high pitch to frighten the cattle in the temporary cattle-pen raised to the east of the deity. The confused cattle run over the intestines of the sacrificed animal. Then the men sprinkle the boiled jowar-grain mixed with the blood of the sacrificed animal over the cattle. After the rites are over, the Naik cuts the left thing bone into seven pieces and takes some portion of the goat's flesh and cooks it in a new pot adding only salt and turmeric. The remaining flesh is to be distributed among the families equally and cooked separately. The meat cooked by the Naik is placed on a green-leaf plate and offered to the deity. Thereafter, the Naik eats one piece of the oblation and distributes the other pieces of meat to the gathered men. Sweet food brought from the houses is also distributed. Before the sun sets they eat the food in groups in the surrounding fields, but drinking of liquor is strictly prohibited. The idols connected with this festival of the seven sisters, are of medium size, fixed one after the other in a row under a tree called Jinjher jadi (Arychettu) or Chigiriya jadi (Narlinga Chettu). The Naik invariably acts as the priest and fasts on the day of the festival.

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

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

On the morning of Diwali, the young women dress in colourful traditional garments and assemble at one place with bamboo baskets and go to fields and gardens for collecting flowers. Collecting newly bloomed buds of the new corn and different wild flowers, they return home before the sunrise. They offer these flowers with veneration to Saint Sevabhaya and Mariyamma. They clean the cow-shed with cow dung and decorate the shed with flowers. Making little lumps of dung, collected from the sheds of each house, they offer flowers to them. They worship of cow dung is symbolic of the worship of sacred cow, which has a prominent place among their cattle, and deserves foremost worship. They worship cattle with love and devotion. They consider them as their wealth. The cow dung worship of the Sugalis is known as 'Gobardhan Puja.' On the same day the Sugalis also offer prayers to the ancestors. On this day, they prepare two types of kheer known as 'Pisipasi' and 'Patal Lapsi'. They lit the domestic chores and pour the ghee and 'patal lapsi', a liquid like sweet into the fire. Then they utter the names of their ancestors and worship them with great veneration. Finally, they give feast to all the people belonging to the same sub clan in the thanda.

HOLI: It is one of the festivals celebrated with gay in all over North India. It occurs on the full moon day of Phalguna. This is an associated with the reaping of crops which falls in the harvest season. Among the Hindus, on the previous day to Holi, firewood is stocked, generally in the meeting places of four roads with a purpose to burning the God of Love. The idol of Kama is prepared in wood. There are differences in details of the performance of the festival by others when compared with the one celebrated by the Sugalis.

Three to four days earlier to the day of the Holi festival, the Sugalis go to the nearby villages singing devotional songs connected
with the act of festival and collect money and corns. They invite the New Year through their songs. They purchase goat or sheep for sacrifice on the day of the festival. Houses are cleaned with cow-dung and urine. Both men and women indulge the drinking. Women dress themselves colourfully and dance. Men also sing and dance rhythmically with a stick in hand resembling Kolatam. They sprinkle themselves with coloured water which they throw on others also. This coloured water is called Vasantham. They also prepare powders of different hues. They take more than two days to prepare such powders. It is held to be inauspicious to eat meat on this day without offering it to the deity. Performance of Holi festival is considered among themselves as compulsory. It is said that a certain Bukya Ramla Naik who is 70-year old man of Diguvallapalli thanda in Chittoor district developed serious stomach ache when he ate meat that day without performing the festival. It was only after he took boiled shodum (jowar) in a place where Holi was being celebrated was he relieved of pain. It was observed that now-a-days, comparatively the rich pastoral as well as the peasant Sugalis have stopped approaching their respective surrounding villagers for fund collection as they consider it beneath their dignity.

Like all the other caste Hindus, the Sugalis celebrate the Ganesh Chaturthi and also Nagula Chaviti. They are the staunch devotees of Lord Venkateswara whom they call as ‘Balaji’. The Vasant Panchami is the festival of great happiness and this is not so popular among the Sugalis of Rayalaseema region. However, they usually fix up their engagements on the day of ‘Teej’.

In the olden days, the Sugalis, before setting out on a journey, they used to procure a little child and bury it in the ground up to the shoulders, and then drive their loaded bullocks over the unfortunate victim. In proportion to the bullocks thoroughly tramping the child to death, their belief in a successful journey increased.
It is possible that this custom of driving the cattle over the head of a buried child or pig may be connected with the worship of an agricultural goddess, since in ancient Greece, the pig was sacred to agricultural deities, e.g., Aphrodite, Adonis, and Demeter, but it may also be a survival of some former custom of infanticide or human sacrifice such as prevailed among the Sugalis.

**WORSHIPPING OF HINDU GODS:** The Sugalis are believed to have originally descended from the Rajputs, and have a myth to the effect that they became nomadic after Chittoor was conquered by the Mughals. They are now Vaishnavaites and profess Hinduism. Their chief deity is Krishna, and incarnation of Vishnu. They also call Krishna as Balaji, the divine child and cowherd, and this conception of their high god as a cowherd is significant in view of their past tradition as cattle people. Therefore, the Sugalis, since settling down in South India, show great reverence for lord Venkateswara. It was observed that during the past 15-20 years there has been a sudden change in the spiritual terrain, and Hindu gods such as Lord Venkateswara, Hanuman, Rama, Krishna, Siva, Saraswathi and Lakshmi etc. are replacing all the traditional goddesses. Wherever researcher went, he found photographs of Hindu gods hanging on the walls of houses of Sugalis in Rayalaseema region. Worshipping Hindu gods is more prevalent in the thandas nearer the roads or villages. Lord Krishna and Balaji are the family deities of a large number of Sugali families who visit their temples in Udipi, Mathura, Thirupathi and other places. In every week on Saturday, they abstain from eating meat and drinking liquors. They also worship Shiva in various forms and visit Shiva temples all over the country and abstain from eating meat and drinking liquors on every Monday. In spite of the influence of the Hindu religion, they continue to worship their ancestors, Bhagats, Saints and traditional goddesses.

**ANCESTRAL WORSHIP:** Ancestor-worship forms an important feature among the Sugalis. It is evident the ancestors are the most dreaded
persons in the tribal pantheon. To appease them to gain their favour and good will, they do not fail to offer their due worship and sacrifices on different important occasions of their life and culture. To the Sugali tribe the spirits of the dead do not simply sit in some Elysium but constantly watch with interest the doings of their descendants, render them advice, and even revisit their people through some human or in other form.

Ramavath Narayana Naik a 75-year old man of Cheruvu thanda in Kurnool district says that the dead ancestors are the real benefactors of the families or the group to which they belonged and that they are easily approachable by their living kinsmen. Hence, at all important occasions of their life, their dead ancestors are remembered by them, whether it is birth, marriage, death, offerings and sacrifices are made to them. Sugalis believe that their ancestors who were with them till yesterday may be able to help them. And for this, they remember their ancestors from birth to death. They perform this special activity of offering the memorial services to the dead on the day of the Diwali festival. On this day, the communication between the worshipper and their ancestors is generally established through elaborate prayers. The worshipper keeps the objects, menu for special offering such as sacred food which includes cooked rice with other sweet, meats, betel leaves and nuts, and ghee is used on this occasion. And new clothes are also offered to their ancestors. Worshiping of the ancestors is very common not only among Sugalis but also among Hindu communities in Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh.

**WORSHIPPING COMMUNITY DEITIES:** During the festive occasions, they worship the community gods and goddesses, by offering sweet dishes. But on the final day of each of these, they also sacrifice goats or sheep and offer cooked meat, in which the Panchayat plays an important role in collecting money for purchase of animals and distributing meat. Sugalis are a Hinduised tribe as they had constant contact with
all other Hindu castes. Sugalis universally worship goddess shakti in all her forms like (1) Durga, (2) Kaali, (3) Kankaali, (4) Thulaja Bhavaani, (5) Bhyravi etc. Just like their ancestors, they keep sliver pieces of insignia of these goddesses also whom they normally set up and offer sacrifices of goats and sheep during the Dasarah. The musical party of men will be singing and the ladies will be dancing and singing in praise of them during the whole night in front of these goddesses. It is only next morning, aarathi is performed by men singing in a chorus and then they are removed and kept in a box and put into their original place in the house. In Maharastra, in a place called Pohar, and in South India, Goddess ‘Maryaama’ or ‘Maarikaamba’ of Sirsi (Sirsi Town is in North Kanara district of Karnataka State) is worshipped along with her Banjara Bhagath (priest) ‘Sevala bhaaya’ about whom mention will be made later. There will be a Mutt or Temple of ‘Maryaama’ and ‘Sevala bhaaya’ in each Sugali thanda in South India. They are offered sacrifice of goats or sheep and sweet cooked food once a year particularly during the Teej festival or some other occasion.

People in the plains, on the other hand, perform this festival in memory of the burning of Kama, the God of Love, by God Siva through his third eye. The festival is celebrated with Jojira dance while the Sugalis indulge themselves in Kolatams. On the day of the festival, after supper all the villagers go in a procession to the place where they intend burning Kama, who is represented with a wooden idol. Freshly harvested gain is collected and boiled in a new pot. Fire wood which is also collected through begging or even stealing is arranged as a pyre over which Kama is placed and burnt. By this time it is midnight and the people assemble around the pyre. A senior person distributes the cooked food (guggillu). The boiled grain is sprinkled on the heads of the people and also on the roofs of the houses. By the beating of the palms against the mouths peculiar sounds are emanated indicating sorrow. Thereafter they play Kolatam. Women dance in a peculiar
fashion called Bathkamma. Such fun and frolic goes on all through the night. In the dawn each member of the family collects a handful of sacred ashes which is kept in a pot hung on to a sling.

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

**LEGENDARY HEROES**

Sugalis also have a great reverence for their patron saints, who are seen as intermediaries between God and man; the Sugalis do everything to gain their favour. Every settlement has a shrine for Sevala bhaaya, Similarly Meetu Bhukiya and Hathiram Bava, the legendary heroes of Sugali for whom the Sugalis have great reverence. A hunting expedition begins with an offering of fruit or coconut to Mitu Bhukya in the belief that the offering ensures the success of their hunting expedition.

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

“Ranjan kā Pāni, chappar kā Ghās
Din kā Tin Khūni Māf
Our Jahan Āsaf khan kā Ghoda
Vhan Jhangi-Bhangi kā Bai”¹⁹

The meaning of the inscription seems to be: 'If you can find no water elsewhere, you may even take it from the Ranjans (pots) of my followers, grass you may take from the roof of their huts and if you commit three murders a day, I will even pardon this provided that where I find my cavalry, there I must find always Bhangi and Jhangi Naik’s bullocks.'

**SEVA BHAYA:** There was a thanda consisting of one hundred and one huts, at a place called Cherlopalli in Gooty mandal of Anantapur district. There is a legendary story which is popular among the Sugalis and other Hindu castes living in around Cherlopalli village in Anantapur. There was a Chief tradesman of the thanda whose name was Ramaji Rathod and his main profession was to supply food grains. His 3751 cattle were looked after by Sakya and Patya. He had three brothers Bheema, Khewa and Hema. Bheema Naik got married to Dharwani Bai. They were pious couple. Though they were honest and religious minded they did not bear children. They worshipped the gods and goddesses and were desirous to have the most devoted and loyal servants in the human world. They felt that a son should be born to Bheema Naik so that he also should become their servant. So they descended on the earth. They blessed the couple with a child. They told Bheema Naik that the first son will be under his care till twelve years and afterwards he would be given back to them. His name should be Sevalal. Bheema agreed and by the blessing of the goddesses, a son was born and he was called Sevalal. Afterwards he had three more sons Hapa, Baddu and Bhana.
Sevalal was herding the cattle with Sakya and Patya. He used to go to the forest with the food prepared by his mother. One day he did not carry food. Sevabhaya prepared food out of the mud on the banks of a river. He converted stone into a drum and leaves into flowers. He sang songs to the goddess Jagadamba. Bheema Naik, after hearing about his son’s miracle, became sorrowful because his son would not be with him after twelve years. When Sevalal attained 12 years of age, Bheema was not willing to offer his son for the service of the goddess. The goddess appeared before him and reminded him of his promise. He argued that he did not know anything and requested the goddess to make Sevalal agree. Devi said with anger that she would do the same and disappeared. One day Goddess Jagadamba appeared in Sevalal’s dream and asked him to be her servant and Sevalal refused to do so. He replied that service of the parents was more important than the service of the Goddess. So she grew angry and started torturing him.

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

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

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

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

**MEETU BHUKIYA:** Meetu Bhukiya is believed to have been born and lived in Thimmaninagar near Gooty in Anantapur district. He was also a devotional person. There was a story narrated that there were thousand Sugali house in Thimmaninagar. Dama Naik was the Naik of the Thanda. Three other important Naiks were Bheema Jharapala, Lachama Naik and Bheema Naik. The Sugalis of Thimmaninagar had looted Kumpalagad. This is a place called Koppal in Raichur district of Karnataka State. There was a Muslim ruler of Koppal for. The Koppal Badashaw sent four of his sepoys to Thimmaninagar to get the leaders of the Thanda. The sepoys told Dama Naik that the Badashaw has
sent for them as they have looted ‘Kumpalagad’ (Koppal) Dama Naik and his followers with one thousand robust men went to the Badashaw who told Dama Naik that the and his men have looted Koppal. Dama Naik said that is false. Then the Badashaw said that he would heat an iron ball red hot and place it on the palms of the Sugalis. If it burns their hands, they are the thieves and if it did not burn their hands, they are not the thieves. Dama Naik said that he may do so and keep everything ready.

It appears that they all came back, met Meetu Bhukiya and told him that it is true that they looted Koppal and that if he saved them they would worship him. Meetu Bhukiya assured them that nothing would happen to them and that he would see that their hands will not burn by the red hot iron ball of the Badashaw. Then Dama Naik and some followers went back to Koppal, and asked the Badashaw to put the red hot iron ball on their palms. A red hot iron ball was about to be taken with the help of tongs and to be placed on their palms and to the surprise of Dama Naik and his followers, their palms were full of red ants. So when the red hot iron ball was placed on their palms, it was passed on quickly from hand to hand and the last man threw it towards the heap of wood in the neighbourhood which caught fire and went on a blaze. Because of the red ants in their palms, they could pass away the red hot iron ball quickly before it could burn their palms. Then it appears that Dama Naik told the Badashaw that he would order his men to take away his head. The Badaswaw begged pardon of Dama Naik and they returned safely. They all joined together, worshipped Meetu Bhukiya for this miracle.

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

HEALTH CARE

Human health is understood in relation to the physical-environmental and geographical variations such as mountainous, plains, plateaus and deserts as well as by cultural differences-customs, practices, food taboos etc.

Tribal health is closely related to culture, environment and the social structure as can be observed from the cultural and medical system in their classification of diseases linked with their 'social relationship' and the 'magico-religious world'. It is largely influenced by interplay of the complex of social, economic and political factors and their health behaviour by their culture. Thus understanding the culture of tribal groups is important in understanding the concept of tribal health.20

Health seeking behaviour among the tribal groups in Rayalaseema region including Sugalis is determined by their socio-cultural and magico-religious beliefs, customs and practices. The beliefs, customs and practices determine the health seeking behaviour of tribals and health status are indicated by social and economic conditions, nutrition and living conditions, dietary habits, housing, education, child rearing practices, socio-religious beliefs, taboos and superstitions, etc.21

Indigenous medical systems and practices of ethnic races are collectively known as 'Ethnomedicine'. It is also known as folk-Medicine, popular medicine and popular health culture etc.22 The study of indigenous beliefs, practices and treatment of disease in different cultures is of great significance in understanding the human
behaviour within the chief and cognate domains of health and disease, and the role of culture in the maintenance of health and treatment of the disease.\textsuperscript{23}

The Sugali tribal community naturally lives in isolation from the so called mainstream of society and as well as from among themselves with their own traditions and practices related beliefs, means of livelihoods and health practices. The concept of health and illness coupled is with their habitation which is often in terrainous and ecologically variable niche and lack of awareness, ignorance, and personal hygienic practices that often make the Sugalis have disease patterns and health concerns that are specifically of them.

The health care among Sugalis consists of natural folk medicine and magico-religious folk medicine. Natural medicine, which is sometimes called rational folk medicine and herbs are shared with primitive cultures and in some cases some of its effective cures have made their way into scientific medicine. The second branch of folk medicine is the magico-religious variety, sometimes called "occult" folk medicine, which attempts to use chances, holy words and holy actions to cure disease. Folk medicinal ideas of the Sugalis are met most frequently in the mountainous areas that had little communication with the outside world and it is more popular among women than men. Their folk medicinal knowledge has grown organically out of the whole of folk belief and custom, thought, life, speech and geography. It varies from place to place, and comprises those beliefs and practices relating to health and ailments. Folk medicine dates back to the caveman who started consuming raw vegetables and fruits when he had to satisfy his hunger and also imitate the action of animals, which consumed plants for any health disorder.

The Sugalis of Rayalaseema region have with them what is perhaps the largest unbroken health tradition. They had diverse health practices that may have become a part of their culture and
evolved through many years of experience in the inhabited ecosystem. The indigenous health tradition comprises home remedies; health related customs, seasonal regimen, rituals, ceremonies, food and regimen. It not only utilizes the spices and condiments from the kitchen but also a wide range of plants and its products available in the locality. The traditional medicinal derivatives of these medicinal plants have also been sanctified with magico-religious incantations so, as to fortify natural medicine with supernatural power. It is a vital component of the concept of Nature Man Spirit Complex.24

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

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

MAGICO-RELIGIOUS FOLK MEDICINE: The magico-religious healing, on the folk – cultural or traditional level, using words, charms, armlets, and physical manipulations in the attempt to heal the ills of man and
beast. It is based on the worldview of the unity of all things, earth, man, animal and nature. The principles of religious healing, rooted in antiquity, are channeled into the Sugali society, where healings in the name of the deity of the settlement is permitted. Through its system of blessings, benedictions, and its wide use of sacramental in the Sugali society and encouraged the principles that they consider basic to folk medicine of the magico-religious sort: the ideas of the availability of supernatural powers for healing, and the mediation of that power through material objects as well as human healers. The diseases like small pox and chicken-pox are believed to be sacred which are associated with Seetalamata who is regarded as the Goddess of diseases, and hence the diseases are to be cured of by worshipping the Goddess ritually. Children who are suffering from small-pox are treated with a cold medicine. Ragi, jowar and other millets are soaked in water of an earthenware. They name them according to the symptoms and rarely according to the etiology, which they do not know. They strongly believe that the negligence of the Goddess Seetala causes this sickness. The earthen pot is attributed 'purity' and is regarded as sacred deity Seetalamata. A menstruated woman should not even touch the pot. Sometimes the Sugalis tie the armlets which are provided with written charms involving holy words.

The livestock are the living capital of the Sugalis, who sometimes, it is rumoured, paid more attention to the health of their stock than to that of their families. Elaborate rituals involving stalk and stable as well as farm house and farmyard, during the festive occasions like Diwali, protected the animals on the farm.

The Sugali folk healers cater to a wide range of conditions covering promotive, preventive and curative aspects of health. They handle simple ailments like the cold as well as emergencies like snake bites, traditional ophthalmology, gynaecology, pediatrics and many individual organ related conditions and specific diseases. The Sugali Natu Vaidyas can take care of bone setting, delivery, and vet care also.
They have a holistic understanding about diseases, backed with specialized diagnostic techniques and disease management. Some of them have vast knowledge about the wide and narrow spectrum use of a resource used for specific conditions.

**DAIS (MIDWIVES):** Midwives are usually the experienced women, who have given birth to several children, participate in many deliveries and gained experience as birth attendants. In recent decades there has been an increasing interest in the West to attempt to bring back childbirth into the household. It is interesting to note that Sugali dais are the largest group of practitioners who take care of ante-natal and post-natal care and also attend to deliveries. Who, having understood the lack of additional human power for attending to deliveries in rural areas of India, have trained these dais for conducting aseptic deliveries. All through the pregnancy the mother is attended on advised and guided by the dais. Pregnancy is confirmed early by the dai by the unmistakable symptoms that appear soon after conception. These dais also detect pregnancy by observing the pulse of the mother. The pregnant mother is administered herbal preparations made from locally available herbs. For example for swelling in the legs, water boiled with Dania, dry ginger and palm sugar is administered.

All the health problems of women during pregnancy, such as constipation, urinary ailments and false labor pains and sometimes even premature abortion are managed efficiently by the dais. In the case of premature death of the foetus inside the womb, the Sugali dais are able to clearly understand the signs and symptoms and conduct a safe delivery. To remove a dead child from the womb, the paste of the leaves of veduru (Bambuse arundinacea) is given to the woman.

Since the dais belongs to the same village or a nearby thanda, she is often familiar with the social and family background of the mother. This enables her to provide tremendous psychological support to the mother.
Women having difficult labor pain are given a special powder made of crushed dry ginger curry leaves, pepper, amino, clove, boiled in jaggery and after it is cooled, a little mixture is given to woman to drink. By administering simple preparations such as the juice of drumstick leaves with salt or a decoction of jeera and daniya, they are able to detect whether labor has set in after that her pains stop if the delivery is not really imminent or else she has a quick delivery.

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

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

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

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

The Sugali folk traditions are rich and diverse in spite of the dynamic situation created by the programmes of directed change intended for bringing the benefits of modern medical and health practices within their reach, still persists with the age-old and time-tested herb based native medical practices.

Because the modern medicine is costly and its efficiency not time-tested to the native tribal. The naturally grown medicinal plants are still available in the tribal areas. The tribal medicine is a product of native genius. The knowledge of the bio-diversity has a vital bearing on ethos of the Sugalis. Herbal medicine is cost effective. Herbal medicine preparation requires no sophisticated process or formulae. Even patient's family can prepare the medicinal extracts from the herbs either on their own or on the prescription of native medical specialists. Herbal medicine has magico-religious sanction also.
At the household level, Tulasi, neem, curry leaves, hibiscus, castor plant and local liquor (Sarai) made of the bark of acacia arabica are frequently used to cure the ailments. Local liquor called sarai (Daru) is a dietary supplement in hard work, play and dance. It is prescribed medicine for bodily ills. From dawn to dusk liquor dominates their thinking and interacting. Nature is very much a part of the tribal consciousness and liquor made of rice, millets, maize, flowers, fruits and trees, etc., is the nature’s gift to Sugalis.

**Folk Medicines used for the treatment of various diseases by the Sugalis in Rayalaseema region.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vernacular/Local Name</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
<th>Disease/Method of use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allamu</td>
<td><em>Zingiber officinal Roscoe</em></td>
<td>It is used as carminative and is used as remedy for opacity of cornea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amudamu</td>
<td><em>Ricinus Communis</em></td>
<td>It is a very variable annual herb or perennial tree extensively grown in Anantapur district. The Sugalis grow this plant in their kitchen gardens and also in fields. Its flowers are male below, female above, both without petals. Its oil is used in cases of Rheumatoid arthritis, stones in kidneys etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attapatti/Peddanidrak anti</td>
<td><em>Mincosa pudica</em></td>
<td>The plant is used to stop uterine bleeding. Its paste is also used to cure filariosis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avālu</td>
<td><em>Brassica nigra</em></td>
<td>The Sugalis use its paste in snake bite. Its paste is applied to the throat and neck to cure of tonsillitis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonthajamu du</td>
<td><em>Cereus pterogonus</em></td>
<td>The fresh young shoots of the plant used as a cardiac stimulant and also used in cases of dropsy and various cardiac affections in the form of liquid extract of tincture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chinta</td>
<td><em>Tamarindus Indica</em></td>
<td>The ashes of the burnt leaves are used as an alkaline medicine in acidity of the urine and gonorrhoea. The pulp and leaves are applied externally in the form of poultice to inflammatory swellings. A poultice of the flowers is used in conjunctivitis. Its juice is also given internally for bleeding piles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhanimma</td>
<td><em>Punica grantum</em></td>
<td>It is frequently used by Sugalis to stop bleeding in women. Fruit is given for pregnant women with a little rock salt, from the 2nd month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant</td>
<td>Scientific Name</td>
<td>Uses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhatura</td>
<td><em>Dhatura alba</em></td>
<td>Fruit rind is given to the patient suffering from loose motions. Leaf is heated and applied with bandage on affected area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gachakaya</td>
<td><em>Caesalpinia Crista</em></td>
<td>Seed is used as anti periodic, anti pyretic in asthma and snake bites. Tender leaves and barks are considered as emmenagogue, febrifuge and anthelmintic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ganneru</td>
<td><em>Nerium Oleander</em></td>
<td>All parts of the plant are poisonous. The Sugali women who are disgusted with the economic and health problems take the fruits of this plant to commit suicide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gasalu</td>
<td><em>Papaner Somniferum</em></td>
<td>These are the opium poppy seeds used as a narcotic, sedative, anodyne, anti-spasmodic hypnotic and sudorific. Seeds are mixed with sugar candy and cardamoms and are given in diarrhoea and dysentery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gayapaku</td>
<td><em>Sida Veronicifolia</em></td>
<td>The poultice leaves are applied to cuts and bruises and also in diarrhoea for pregnant women. Leaf juice is used to cure rinderpest in cattle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genusugadda</td>
<td><em>Ipomoea batatas</em></td>
<td>The root is considered as laxative. The root is given to allay thirst in fever and paste of leaves is used as an application to scorpion bites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gongura</td>
<td><em>Hibiscus Cannabinus</em></td>
<td>The juice of the flowers with sugar and black pepper is used for acidity. Leaves are boiled in water and crushed with turmeric powder and salt and applied on boils for early opening and healing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurugaku</td>
<td><em>Celosia argentea</em></td>
<td>The leaves are useful in blood diseases and mouth sores.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guruguaku</td>
<td><em>Celosia argental</em></td>
<td>Paste is kept on eyelid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guruvinda</td>
<td><em>Papilionaceae</em></td>
<td>The bruised seed have been used criminally for poisoning cattle and for homicidal purposes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Hingu      | *Ferula Asafoetida* | The Sugalis during their mercantile days have been associated with the Vysya community, also a trading community. They used to sell their agricultural products to the Vysyas, who acted as the intermediaries. The food habits of the Vysyas have a profound influence on the Sugalis. Vysyas have been using Asafoetida in cooking food. The Sugalis use the asafoetida as a
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plant</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
<th>Uses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jajikaaya</td>
<td><em>Myristica Fragrans</em></td>
<td>Dried seed powder with milk is taken to cure loose motions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jammu</td>
<td><em>Cratalaria juncea</em></td>
<td>This plant is cultivated for fodder. It's flowers are fried with dal and is used to purify blood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jilledu</td>
<td><em>Calotropis giganta</em></td>
<td>This is the totemic plant of the Sugali community and it is used on all occasions in Rites de passage. The latex is a strong irritant to the skin and mucous membrane. A tincture of the leaves is used in the treatment of intermittent fever.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kakarakaya</td>
<td><em>Momordica Charantia</em></td>
<td>The cooked bitter gourd is given for a sugar patient for at least three months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kandulu</td>
<td><em>Cajanus cajan</em></td>
<td>Leaf juice with honey is useful in treatment of jaundice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanuga</td>
<td><em>Pongamia Pinnata</em></td>
<td>1) The root bark of the kanuga boiled in gingili oil is stored in earthen pot and given to patients suffering from chronic body pains and arthritis. This oil is given both internally and applied on the affected parts also. 2) The juice of the leaves is considered as a remedy for leprosy, gonorrhoea, diarrhoea and cough. The stem bark is given internally in bleeding piles and for beri-beri.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karivepaku</td>
<td><em>Murraya Kowenigii</em></td>
<td>The bark or root is applied externally to the bites of venomous animals. An infusion of the roasted leaves is used to stop vomiting. The juice of the leaves is given to the pregnant woman who suffers from labour pains.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kondapindi</td>
<td><em>Aganosma dichotama</em></td>
<td>Kondapindi aku's leaf paste with milk is given for the stones in the urinary tract and bladder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kumari</td>
<td><em>Aloes Vera</em></td>
<td>Fleshy portion of leaves, juice or solidified juice which is of two types: 1) Hepatic aloes - it is made by heating on low heat Glassy aloes - it is available, after treating at high temperature. 2) It is used it in painful swelling and in enlargement of spleen. The pulp is applied, with turmeric as hot fomentation. In chronic ulcers, the dry powder is applied. In conjunctivitis, drops of its juice are put into eyes, and the pulp is applied over the eyes. The pulp is also</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
applied, in headache with burning sensation. Aloes is the main drug in the treatment of jaundice, cirrhosis of liver and other liver complaints.

3) The Aloes vera plant hanged inside the house to avoid mosquitoes and other insects. This is the best traditional mosquito repellant which is used by them from generations.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plant</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kumkum</td>
<td><em>Coccus salivus</em></td>
<td>The Dried Stigma and style of flower is used for head-ache. It is applied externally on forehead with white sandal and camphor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kunkudu</td>
<td><em>Sapindus emarginatus</em></td>
<td>used as a hair shampoo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lavanga</td>
<td><em>Syzygium aromaticum</em></td>
<td>It is a dried unopened flower bud used for toothache. Also acts as mouth freshner eaten after taking a sea food or non-veg food.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandara</td>
<td><em>Hibiscus Rosa Sinensis</em></td>
<td>It is used in greying of hair and falling hair and baldness. The paste of flowers, prepared in cow's urine is applied to the scalp. The buds of white variety, are fried in ghee and eaten with sugar in repeated abortions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandara</td>
<td><em>Hibiscus rosa-sinensis</em></td>
<td>The flowers are made into paste and applied to swellings and boils. Its fresh root juice is given for gonorrhoea and powdered root is used for menorrhagia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mango</td>
<td><em>Mangifera indica</em></td>
<td>The ash of burnt leaves is a household remedy for burns and scalds. Fumes from the burning leaves are inhaled for relief from hiccups and throat infection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maredu</td>
<td><em>Aegle marmelos</em></td>
<td>Believed that Maredu is a favourable plant for Lord Shiva. The small unripe fruit is given with ginger in decoction for piles. They usually warm the unripe fruits and then the pulp of the fruits is mixed with butter milk into a paste and is applied over the head, followed by head-bath to get the cooling effect to the eyes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meriyaalu</td>
<td><em>Piper</em></td>
<td>Used as an expectorant. It increases watering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Scientific Name</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nigrum</td>
<td></td>
<td>from the nose and later dries up phlegm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Munaga</td>
<td><em>Moringa Pterygosperma</em></td>
<td>The curry of munaga leaves and is regarded as the best medicine for piles. The fruit is used in diseases of liver, spleen, articular pains, tetanus and paralysis. Leaves are also taken for excess cold.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagajemudu</td>
<td><em>Opuntia dilleni</em></td>
<td>The baked fruit is said to be given in whooping cough and a syrup of the fruit is said to increase the secretion of bile and control of spasmodic cough.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nallatumma</td>
<td><em>Acacia Arabica</em></td>
<td>The young leaves and pods are used as an astringent in diarrhoea and a decoction of the bark is used as an astringent lotion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neer Brahmi</td>
<td><em>Bacopa Monneri</em></td>
<td>It is used as a brain tonic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nela Janumu</td>
<td><em>Polygala chinensis</em></td>
<td>The leaf paste is used for the suppression of mammary abscesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nela Palleru</td>
<td><em>Tribulus terrestris</em></td>
<td>The leaf paste is given for the treatment of stones in the bladder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nela Usiri</td>
<td><em>Physllanthus amours</em></td>
<td>Paste is given on an empty stomach to cure the jaundice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuvvulu</td>
<td><em>Sesamum Indicum</em></td>
<td>Juice is used as eye drops. Seeds are useful in piles and as a poultice applied to ulcers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasupu</td>
<td><em>Curcuma longa</em></td>
<td>This powder is smeared to the deities, sacred spots and other religious artifacts besides being used as an antibiotic in treating human ailments similarly neem leaf has both sacred and curative application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pudina</td>
<td><em>Mentha piperita</em></td>
<td>Pain balm is prepared from Peppermint (Menthol piperite). Usually, pudina causes anaesthesia. A mixture of Mint leaves, Pomegranate, salt, asofoetida and raisins is given for good appetite. It is also used as worm destroyer in the intestine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regu</td>
<td><em>Ziziphus nauritiana</em></td>
<td>Bark is powerfully astringent. The fruit is dried and powdered. This powder is used as an article of diet. The young leaves are pounded and applied to scorpion stings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samph</td>
<td><em>Foeniculum Vulgare</em></td>
<td>They chew the seeds daily. Generally used for Diarrhoea, loss of appetite, indigestion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seekaya</td>
<td><em>Acacia Sinuata</em></td>
<td>The Sugalis who are engaged in lime mortar kilns are given the juice of stem bark of</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Seekaya as an effective remedy to asthma. They usually get this bark from the forests of Srisailam in Kurnool district, where the trees are grown.

| Seetha Palamu | Annona Squamosa | The unripe fruit, seed, leaf and root are used for destroying insects and lice. The crushed leaves are applied to the nostrils in hysteria. Hydrocyanic acid is present in leaves. The juice of the leaves is used in skin diseases. |
| Suganda pala | Hemidesmus indicus | It is used for dog bite. Any part is grinded with water in wet/dry and taken orally. |
| Tella Ganjiraku | Trianthuva decendra | Its root is used in hepatitis and asthma. A decoction of the root bark is credited with appetite properties. The juice of the leaves is dropped into the nostrils to relieve partial headache. |
| Tella Uttareni | Pupalia lappacea | The fruit is applied locally for cuts and the paste of the leaves is applied as a dressing for boils. |
| Thangedu | Cassia auriculata | This plant is found throughout Andhra Pradesh. The Sugalis use the powder of the dry seed as an external remedy in certain cases of ophthalmia. |
| The cumin seeds | Cuminum Cyminum | The cumin seeds powder is given to cure off indigestion, loose motions, loss of appetite etc. After delivery, a Sugali women is given cumin seed powder for scanty or irregular menses. Externally, the Cumin seeds are used in itch. |
| Thene | Disambiguation | 1) Honey is preserved for at least three months and this older honey is considered particularly valuable, specially for reducing blood sugar in diabetes and for cough.  
2) Honey is given with hot water. This is the only case in which honey is given in hot drinks. Sugalis believe that honey promotes intellect and strength and has many healing properties. It is taken as first aid for bleeding. To quench the excessive thirst, they take honey with lemon water. |
<p>| Turaka Vepa | Melia azadirachta | The flowers and leaves are applied as poultice to relieve nervous head-aches. A poultice of the flowers is said to kill ice and cure eruptions of the scalp. Its fruit is worn as a necklace to avert contagious diseases. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Ustikaya</strong></th>
<th>Solanum forvum Swatz</th>
<th>The plant is used in the treatment of coughs and diabetes. Its fruits are edible and the fumes of burning seeds are inhaled for tooth-ache.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Uttareni</strong></td>
<td>Achyranthes aspera</td>
<td>The juice of leaves mixed with dried ginger powder and applied to eye injuries of cattle and also paste mixed with saffron extract is used as eye drops. The plant has the reputation of being a powerful talisman and is now popularly supposed to act as safeguard against scorpions and snakes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vaamu</strong></td>
<td>Trachyspermum ammi</td>
<td>It is used as a household remedy for indigestion. Taken with butter milk, it is a common remedy for relieving difficult expectoration due to dried up phlegm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Veduru</strong></td>
<td>Bambuse arundinacea</td>
<td>The paste of the leaves is given to the woman to remove a dead child from the womb.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Velaga Chettu</strong></td>
<td>Limonia acidissiua</td>
<td>The fruit is eaten to check diarrhoea and dysentery. The leaves are aromatic and they are mixed with hot water to take a bath.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vepa</strong></td>
<td>Azadirachta indica</td>
<td>This tree is regarded as sacred one. It is grown in front of the temple of their deities and before their houses. The seed oil is bitter to taste and is used in skin diseases such as ulcers, sores and ringworm. It is applied in cases of rheumatism and it also possesses insecticidal properties. The bark of the tree is a bitter tonic, astringent and anti periodic. It is also used as a tonic in malarial fever. Usually the Sugalis use the fresh tender twigs to clean teeth and to cure off gum diseases. The paste of leaves is mixed with turmeric powder and applied externally over the body of children suffering from small-pox and chicken-pox.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vulavalu</strong></td>
<td>Macrotyloma Uniflorum</td>
<td>The seeds are cooked and the water extracted from the cooked seeds is taken as a medicine for cold and cough. The seed paste is used for relief in debility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vummetta</strong></td>
<td>Datura innoxia</td>
<td>Seeds, leaves and roots are used in insanity, fever, diarrhoea, skin diseases and antiseptic. Leaves are warmed with castor oil and they are applied for piles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yerra ganjiraku</strong></td>
<td>Trianthema Portulacast rum</td>
<td>The leaves and tender stems are used as vegetable. Sometimes it produces toxic effects in the form of diarrhoea and paralysis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Sugalis treat a patient as an integral part of their community; the loss of life and the loss of work at crucial times during the year are losses to the community – a disturbance of normal rhythm of life and the community enterprise. The community itself is endangered and a folk medicinal practitioner must reunite the broken community. However, for the permanent recovery of the patient, “the ritual-mechanism was more or less infallible in dispersing the clouds of uncertainty and fear of the mystery of disease. With the end of ritual, the crisis which has overtaken the group is overcome and normal order is restored.”

However, the Sugalis in Rayalaseem region seem to be taking a turn towards modern system of medicine though they still have faith in the traditional medical system. The factors related to such a shift are effectiveness, availability and affordability of health care service provision, and good behaviour of the service providers under the modern medical system. It has been observed that Sugalis under study in parallel with the treatment by traditional system of medicine also adopt allopathic system of medicine for ailments and had more faith in private practitioner than the government doctor. Sugalis want immediate relief and so often prefer injection to medicine.

**FOOD PRACTICES**

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

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

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

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

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

**DRESS AND ORNAMENTS**

The Sugali men are fine, muscular, of medium height and by their very countenance appear to be Rajputs. The very fact that they do not settle down at a place for long and keep on moving along long fatiguing marches indicates that they naturally should be strong, energetic and capable of endurance. They are as a class robust and well built. “They are generally of good stature and fair complexion. They are “Dolichocephalous” with oval face, black and brown eyes, long flowing silky hair and straight nose. Both men and women are strong and stalwart and are capable of much endurance. Women are active and good looking though on account of hard life they soon lose their pretensions to beauty.”

Mullaly, F.S. states that “Banjara men are fine muscular fellows, capable enduring long and fatiguing marches. Their ordinary dress is the dhothi with short trousers and frequently gaudy turbans and caps in which they indulge on festive occasions. They also affect a considerable amount of jewellery. The women are as a rule comely and above the average height of the women of the country.”

The traditional dress of a male Sugali consists of white or red turban (Pagiree) and a pair of white broches or knickerbockers, reaching a little below the knee, sometimes dhoti, covering the body up to the hips, with a string of red silk tussles hanging by the right side from the waist band. Dhoti and turbans are frequently worn during the festive occasions. Men also wear considerable amount of jewellery, such as silver bangle worn on the upper arm of the right-
Dress: The present day costume and personal adornments of the Sugali females have been variously described by different writers. The Sugali woman’s dress usually consisted of three garments. They are:

side and the waist thread decorated with laden beads and tassels. Dhoti with short trousers and red turban, pan supari pouch and hookah are used. 27

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

According to Nenavath Lakshmi Bai 76-year old woman belongs to Lakshmaiahkunta thanda in Kurnool district, one of the folk story prevalent among the Sugalis, says, that a traditional Sugali woman was preparing a dress for herself and had completed only half work, while a sudden news reached her about death of her husband on a battlefield perturbed the lady and drowned her in agony and abandoned the embroidery on the cloth, she had only half finished the dress and committed, ‘Sathi’ and jumped into the pyre of her husband. This became an approved symbol of Sugali women and her half completed cloth was regarded as the dress of Sugali women thereafter. Hence, it is said that the clothing of a Sugali women would not cover the complete body as a mark of the great sacrifice of the virtuous women who committed ‘Sathi’ and even now it has been continued as Sugali tradition. Another Banavath Ramani Bai who is 68-year old Sugali woman from Cheruvu thanda of Kurnool district says that about 30-35 years ago Sugali women used to start stitching traditional dress for female child right from the birth of their child

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

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

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

The sleeves of the Kaali or Choli are called as *Khadapa* or *Khavyyya.* The cloth which covers the either sides of the breasts is known as *Pata.* *Dhandhanya* is the cloth which covers the breasts. Backside of the blouse is called as *Peti.*
**PHATIA:** Phatia is the lower garment and it consists of five parts. They are as follows:

1. 'Lepo' – the cloth which covers the waist.
2. *Boro* – this cloth is attached to the lower side of the 'Lepo'.
3. *Sadi* – this is the lower part of the *Lainga* which covers the knees and legs.²⁹

**SADI:** This is the lower part of the *Lainga* which covers the knee and legs. Sadi is beautifully decorated with silk threads and the embroidery on the Sadi is termed as 'Pesoteko'. 'Lamar' is the cloth which is attached to the lower-part of the Sadi. The embroidery on this is known as 'Khilemodero'.

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

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

1. *Bhurya* – it is the nose ring made of gold and is in crescent shape.
2. *Kanya* – these are the ear hangings.
3. **Medalo** – it is the silver necklace which weighs \( \frac{3}{4} \) kgs to 1kg.

Women are fond of wearing the toe rings. They are called by different names viz., *Pulia, Vinchua, Chatiki* etc.\(^3\) They are very numerous, and include strings of beads of tens or twenty rows with a cowry as a pendant, called the *cheed*, threaded on horse-hair and a silver *hasali* (necklace), a sign of marriage equivalent to the *tali*. They also wear the anklets and silver rings to their legs. The Sugalis in the Rayalaseema region, wear the anklets and rings made of silver. But in the Telangana region, they wear the bronze and copper anklets. They are called by different names viz., *Jhanjharia, Kasse* and *Bodha*. The Sugali woman’s ornaments are so singularly chosen that we have, we are confident, seen who have had eight or ten pounds weight in metal or ivory round their arms and legs. Their bangles are called as *Balya*. These are of two types. They are: 1. *Chuderbalya*, 2. *Balya*. Married women wear the *Chuderbalya* which are made of ivory which extend from the shoulder to the elbow covering the two arms. The unmarried and widowed women wear the *Balya* from the elbow to the wrist. Women also wear ‘*Kasatia’*, a piece of embroidered silk, one inch wide, with cowries and bells, these being presents form the mother to her daughter.

While describing the dress of the Sugali women, Rev. G.N. Thomson writes that “the sari is thrown over the head as a hood, with a frontlet of coins dangling over the forehead. This frontlet is removed in the case of widows. The dearest possession of the women are large broad bracelets, made some of wood, and the large number of bone or ivory. Almost the whole arm is covered with these ornaments. In case of the husband’s death, the bracelets on the upper arm are removed. They are kept in place by a cotton bracelet, gorgeously made, the strings of which are ornamented with the inevitable cowries.” \(^3\)

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

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


Unlike Hindu women, the Sugali women don't like to comb their hair to the back side. They like to cover their cheeks with hair, so that they may not be attracted by men folk. In the medieval period, Sugali women wanted to protect themselves from Muslim intruders by covering their head and face with a *Ghungat* and plaits of hair. For the married women, the symbolically significant ornaments are ivory bangles on the upper arms in addition to those on the forearms, chains in the *pinnae* which connect the plaits, and pendants called 'ghugris,' attached to the plaits hanging from the temples. The hair which covers their cheeks is neatly plaited and at the end of these plaits, silver ornaments called 'Ghugri' and 'Topli' are attached. 'Topli' is a silver pendant from the upper part of the ear attached to a silver chain which hangs to the shoulder and it is worn by both married and unmarried women. The absence of heavy pendants or 'Ghugri' is a sign of widowhood.

Women also wear silver ornaments called 'Aadkant' which hangs over from the forehead and each of its ends are clipped to the hair on the ears. They cover the forehead with a silver button called 'Tikli'. *Bhurya, Anklets, Ghugri, Chuderbalya*, and Tikli are the signs of a married women. They are removed only on the death of their husband. Their bangles are of two types. They are as follows: 1. Chuderbalya, 2. Balya.
The married women wear the 'Chuderbalya', which are ivory bangles, extending to the elbow on either arm. The unmarried and widowed women wear the 'Balya' on the lower side of their elbows extending up to the wrists. 'Kasotia' or silk embroidery adorned with tassels and cowries is also worn covering their elbows.

Sugalis traditional dress pattern still continues to be worn in the remote thandas. But in spite of being attractive and colourful it is seen rarely in the case of Sugalis living in the towns. The unique feature of the traditional dress is that one can make the differences between married, unmarried and widower. Nenavath Sakru Naik who is 62-year old man of Lakshmaiahkunta thanda in Kurnool district states that the change in the dress pattern of Sugalis came about because they are no longer leading a nomadic life, where they wore the traditional dress which was comfortable, and also protected them from wild animals. But of late, as they are leading a settled life and started wearing other accepted dresses which are comfortable, and lighter. Thus, it has become somewhat difficult to identify Sugali woman, whereas as earlier it was easy to do so.

According to Bukya Subba Naik, the Naik of Vanarasapalli thanda of Kadapa district, in 1997 the Sugali elders of Vanarasapalli thanda panchayat passed a resolution about the traditional dress of their Sugali women. In which they resolved that their women-folk need not to wear the traditional dress because of this dress that they are looked down. For one thing, it made them feel it at home in the society at large. Another argument put forward by them was in the olden days the Kshatriya women-folk did not wear rich dress but wore only sarees. Although the mode of their dress now would single them out as hailing from Rajasthan, yet they should wear such dress as is found worn by those in the societies where they have settled, though temporarily, to be in tune with the other women. But this change is now adopted only by the younger generation, the older sticking on to the traditional dress and jewellery too which made them feel proud.
The interesting part of it is that this change was given an official seal by the elders. It was not the law of society as a whole, but a social law which was given an official and legal status.

According to Vankdoth Lali Bai, 65-years old woman from Gonipenta thanda of Anantapur district says that the young women of the thanda are refusing to wear traditional Sugali dress in the settlement but only old women who are in the age group of 70’s are wearing traditional dress. Both Women as well as men are following modern dress pattern due to influence of sanskritisation and modernization. She also says that to maintain traditional dress is a burden now a days and making the dress itself takes high cost and as well as it consumes lot of time. Further the maintenance of dress is also difficult. So the Sugali women of this settlement prefer modern dress which are available at lower cost with less weight and comfort to wear as well as easy to wear for all occasions.

**SUGALI DIALECT (GOR BOULI)**

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

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

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


**Female Dresses:** Kachali, Petya.

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

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

**Male Ornaments:** Marki, Kalda, Kanadoro

**ARTS AND PERFORMANCE**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Kolat dance is presented with rhythmic striking sounds of short wooden sticks. There are no strict rules. The characteristic of this dance is singing a prayer song along with rhythmic stepping without the help of the musical instruments. It is known as Kikli dance. The women stared very close enough to each other and clap each other’s hands and bend their bodies backward and forward and dance in a circle. Sometimes they dance without songs. The nursery rhymes are sung rhythmically during this dance.
THE DANCE OF MEN: This types of dances of men are few in number. The men dance and sing during the fairs and the festival of Holi. The dances of men may be classified as follows:

1. Lengi Dance
2. Lezim Dance

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**CONCEPTUAL IDEAS:** There are so many interpretations and beliefs regarding tattooing. The motivating idea behind tattooing varies from tribe and also does the interpretation of these ideas by the various anthropologists and philosophers. Here are a few quotations and certain popular regional interpretations of some noted authorities.
Sheik Gulab is of the opinion that these tribal work hard bare-bodied in all the seasons of the year. Tattoo develops a sort of resistance power in their bodies. Their injected body makes them able to bear all sort of climate hardships.

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

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

Tattoo marks are generally drawn on the forehead, checks, shoulder, thighs, legs, feet, palms, forearms, chin, two sides of the forehead, chest, loin, knee and on the backside of the upper part of the body. Instead of putting vermilion mark on the forehead, the Sugali women mark the forehead with tattoos during their wedding ceremony. Such designs may be the pictures of the tree, creeper, wedding head dress, the cradle of Ramea, snake, scorpion, fish, worm, etc.

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

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

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

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

For Maori of New Zealand, the patterns of tattooing that infalliable means of identification rendered it possible to preserve the memories of the individual ancestors through pictoral representation.

Adam says, "Where a tribe is divided into a number of totem clans, the members of each group may decorate their bodies with paintings or tattooings representing or symbolizing their totem.

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

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

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

According to Bannoth Dharmini Bai who is 73-years old woman from Diguvallapalli of Chittoor district thanda, the designs and patterns of these marks would be different in case of married and unmarried women. Married women have these marks on the back of the hands, on the left side of the nose, on two sides of the ends of the fore head and on the back. These designs would be different in each woman. A few men also use the marks to a limited extent. These tattoo marks has both religious as well as medical significance. Dharmini Bai also stated that Sugalis used to believe that after the death of any person, nothing goes along them to heaven, except this tattoo mark, where it is given as a gift to god. Whenever they had joint pains and headache they believe that these marks would help them to get relief from these pains forever. Even of late, many Sugali women in thandas are seen with these marks where they are easily recognized as Sugalis. Another respondent Bhukya Same Naik who is 49-year old man from Diguvallapalli thanda says that Sugalis believe that dishes, cooked by woman who has tattoo marking on her hands will be tested.

It is observed that when the Sugali economy and its associated social practices and values changed, the supporting religions and value systems also underwent some modifications. A close observation of different ceremonies of the Sugalis of rural settlements under study indicates that they have still preserved some of the past ceremonies and beliefs where as Sugalis of semi-urban settlements started to give up them. In this sense, while the Sugali peasantization and the consequent increased impact of Hinduism has been a contributing factor resulting in the transformation their earlier animistic religion, it is also true that by allowing the merger of certain rites of the Hindu
festival calendar, these very some animistic rites are being perpetuated when personal observances, the picks up the traditional and modified version depending upon his degree of acculturation, occupation, economic status, education and the social milieu in which he lives. The borrowing of myth, rituals and ceremonies by an erstwhile animistic groups seems to have been more rapid only in the last fifty years and is itself an indication of gradual breakdown of the region of Hindu caste hierarchy as a result of overall changes in the expanding economic system of the country. The emulation of high caste behaviour as a mechanism of sankritization was far more different in the past when the norms of caste-hierarchy were more rigid.

The Sugali tribe has become a part of the institutional structure of the wider society by participating in the national culture incorporating some aspects of the religious traditions of regional Hinduism which include observance of Hindu festivals, worshipping of Gods of Hindu pantheon, greater interaction with civilization centres such as Tirupathi, Sri Sailam, Yaganti etc., some conception abort rebirth, heaven, hell, sin, and virtue, access to ritual services from such castes of critical importance as the Brahmin and Barber etc., considerable overt concern about the chastity of the female folk, etc. Thus, it is obvious that the transformation of Sugalis is towards peasantization. In spite of the religious admixture of the Sugali with Hindus, they continue to worship their own pantheon of nature gods and goddesses and continue to reveal in their ancient customs and manners.

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