CHAPTER V

RELIGIOUS ORGANISATION
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Religious may be defined as that part of culture composed of shared beliefs and practices which not only identify or define supernatural and the sacred and man's relationships there to, but which also relate them to the known world in such a way that the groups in provided with moral definitions as to what is good (in harmony with or approved by the supernatural) and what is bad (contrary to or out of harmony with the supernatural (Vermont, 1962:55-50). And magic is an art based on Psuedo - science, translating, manipulating non-causal association into casual connection. For instance, to sing an incantation over a wound or to stick a pin in a waxen figure in order to injure the person it represents, is magic. Thus in the words of Frazer (1961:53) magic is a spurious system of natural law as well as an abortive art. One of the major differences between religion and magic is that magic pretends to control whereas religion acts through communication attributing control to higher divine powers, because its modes of communication, such as worship, prayer and intercession do not imply control. Religion involves generally two-fold communication between human and non-human power and between man and man. J. Milton Yinger (1960:42) writes, Religion is concerned with salvation, with death, with the meaning of existence. Magic is concerned with immediate goals - control of the weather, assurance of a good crop, victory in battle, good health. The devotees of magic and religion differ in their attitude towards the non-empirical and the supernatural. The religionist prays and sacrifices, the magician manipulates and controls, ibid.
However, it is very difficult to draw a sharp dividing line between magic and religion in any particular culture including that of the Idigas.

Religion and magic play a very important role in the life of Idiga people. Both religion and magic are connected with every event or crisis of their life, for instance, wealth or poverty, prosperity or adversity, sickness and death, pregnancy and child birth, agricultural operations, protection of crops from wild animals and pests, construction of huts on hoes, fertility and barrenness of women etc. But it is very difficult to differentiate their roles, because they are very much fused with each other (C.F.Frazer, Op. cit. 226-29)

The Idiga people believe in same unknown and unseen powers controlling all the routine affairs of the community. They would like to satisfy and please as many powers as they can please. The Idigas are the Hinuds and 'polytheism' forms the most popular basis of worship and devotion. Their religion thus mainly rests upon reverence and fear. Owing to their reverence for the sacred world, they resort to various kinds of worship of benevolent gods, goddesses, divinities etc. Out of dread and fear of the profane world (malevolent and harmful), they take magical practices. They have great faith in spirits, ghosts and devils, omens and superstitions, the evil eye, witchcraft, sorcery, divination, etc. Their worship and beliefs in magic are most confirmed by the critical folk songs and tales.

The concept of 'dharma' is also important, as it covers all the phases of human life — cycle and fixes several details of intra and inter-group life (dube, 1965:92) 'Dharma' has often been translated by western writers as 'religion' but this translation hardly conveys the original meaning. It will perhaps be more appropriate to describe it as 'the way of life' or 'that which is right.

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Acceptance of the caste traditions and the general rules of pitty, observance of
tests and fasts, rigidly following norms governing the rights of passage and
undertaking pilgrimage to places of worship or for bathing in holy rivers, can
generally be said to constitute ‘dharma’ of the people. Special worship and
rituals may be performed to attain certain special ends. It is through
‘Dharma’ that one can look forward to shaping one’s destiny the concept of
‘papam’ (sin) and ‘punnam’ (merit) and or ritual pollution and fundamental to
the wider concept of dharma. Certain things must not be done by any member
of the community irrespective of caste because they are sinful. Murder,
extreme cruelty and violence, and incest can be placed under this category.

Origin of the caste

The Idigas claim to have been originally ‘Bailja’ (Banejagas), who
became a distinct caste from the profession adopted by them (Ilyer,
1930:354). They exalt their calling by attributing it to a mythical origin. While
going in a jungle with Lord Parameewara, it is stated, that goddess Parvati felt
thirsty, and they could not find water near by. Seeing a date tree, Parvati felt
that its juice would be sweet. Lord Parameewara seeing a Bailaj going that
way with his strings of bangles slung on his shoulders, commissioned him to
pierce the trunk of the tree with his trident, in the manner pointed out by
parvati.

The man placed his bangles on the tree and using the sacred thread,
which supported religious objects, the casket, locally called ‘Karodige’ as a
sting for his feet to climb the tree. On reaching the top of the tree he filled the
casket with the palm juice and offered it to the thirty goddesses. The gods
found its taste delicious and commanded the man to adopt this job as his
profession. They also held him to supply the sap to the gods in heaven. The
ensure that the drawer not be tempted to the use the ambrosial liquid for
himself, they took on oath from him never to drink liquor. This is how the Baliya
lost his former profession and got the new one. The liquor supplied led to
drunken brawls in haven and the man who was mainly responsible for this
situation was made to 'drag' the infuriated gods back to their place. He was
thence known as 'Iligia' one who draws on drags.

Idigas concept of the world:

The traditional world —view of the masses of this region is conditioned
by the year of natural forces, and people attribute almost all types of disaster
and calamity to one or other god or deity, devil or ghost, sorcerer or evil eye.
They believe in the kindness of gods and dieties also. The descriptions
regarding such beliefs or discussed in the succeeding sections.

The Iligas in general believe in the existence of other worlds such as
heaven (swargam), hell (narakam). Often they also use such terms as
valkuntam (a bode of Vishnu), kailasam (abode of siva), devlokam (abode of
God’s) pilthriokal (abode of ancestors), pretalokam (abode of spirits and
ghosts), papam (bad action), pumyam (good action). Punar janmam (rebirth)
and they theory of karma (action) etc. but very few persons know the inner or
deeper meaning of these and also think about all these, most of the people.
Try to make their lives happy, as far as possible avoiding the bad actions and
doings maximum number of good actions. So they observe as many fests
(Vratas) and worships in the name of gods and dieties. They believe that bad
actions lead to hell whereas good actions lead to heaven and thus ceasing
the bond of rebirth. These facts do not substantiate the views of those

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scholars who think that the only goal of the Hindu is to eliminate earthly concerns, desires, and personal existence.

Meaning of Human Life:

The Idigas believe that this world (samsara) is momentary and illusory. Any form of life is very short. To get human form, the life has to pass through many trials and tribulations and so it is very difficult. So they say that one should try to go higher and higher in life form that is, towards the goal of obtaining freedom from transmigration of soul, or for attaining the Brahmapedamu (C.F.Srivastav, 1974:208). However the Idigas say that hardly any one, who seriously tries to attain these goals. Instead every one tries to make this life happier without bothering much of the next life. This shows some similarity with the findings of Kolenda (1964:73) who says that the goal of religion is not salvation or a better next life: Instead, it is concerned with preventing or relieving misfortunes in this world.

Further the religious life of the Idigas can be conveniently studied under the following heads: (i) Magico-religious beliefs and practices (ii) caste and village deities (iii) Fairs and Festivals and (iv) Life cycle ceremonies. In other words can be studied under the categories, cyclic and non-cyclic.

I. Magico-religious beliefs and practices

Magical beliefs and practices among the Idiga are rather rudimentary and play a less significant role in their lives. Destructive magic which was once prevalent in this region is not found today. Protective magic intends to avert misfortune, sickness etc., has a wide recognition and practice in this society.
Some of the widely prevalent magical beliefs and practices are discussed hereunder.

Disease:

If someone is ill the family a magician or sorcerer is consulted to determine the cause and solution for the suffering. On his arrival into the family house, an oil lamp is lit in the centre of a living house and incense sticks are burnt. He chants a few incantations, inviting the household deities to possess him. When he is possessed the victim's kin ask him about the cause of the disease. The deity through the magician specifies the cause of the disease and also informs the ways and means to be adopted, to get the cure. Then the magician gives the suffering person a herbal medicine and at the same time uses some of the magical acts to ward off threats of evil spirits that are responsible for the disease. Like this one after another a number of magical acts are tried. In case the attempt proves futile, the patient is removed to the hospital.

Evil – eye (Dishti):

Evil-eye is a source of great harm. If a person looks and feels jealous of one's prosperity, progress, good-health, and the like they feel that the jealous look affect the health wealth or progress of the concerned. This phenomenon is called evil-eye. To counter such jealousies and bad wishes rites locally known as 'dishti' are performed with the help of sorcerer.

The sorcerer fixes a day for the act and visits the victim to instruct him not to take food and so on till the performance of 'Dishti'. The sorcerer cooks a little rice and makes it into three balls. Then he utters a few incantations in
low voice, so that the other person will not listen to them and also waves the three balls of rice thrice around the victim. After this the victim is asked to walk away and never to look back. Generally it is performed during early morning or late evening hours.

To cure or avoid evil eye, often the women folk among the Igidae, simply wave a ball of mud, taking from the left hand and touching it to the left food of the victim. Old broom sticks, or chillies and salt are also waved round the face of the victim and thrown on the road or into the burning hearth. The sound created by these burning objects is interpreted by the sorcerer whether the victim, is cured of the problem. The Igidae believe that any ill-effect on a person can be warded off by performing this magic-religious rite. In a few cases, to avoid the ill effects of evil eye, the sorcerer takes salt and utters a few incantations (mantras) in a low voice and gives it to the patient. This is usually done in case of rites conducted during the evening hours.

The Igidae believe that standing crops and houses under construction are also susceptible to evil eye, if they are every good. The remedy suggested to avoid it is to plant a pot washed white with lime water and marked with a few black spots (diathi chukalu), using charcoal powder and water. It is believed that it catches the evil looks of the people and averts the evil effects on the crop or the building under construction.

One more magic-religious act is performed to cure the victim of evil eye. The witches takes a big plate and puts little cow-dung in the middle of it and fills it with water to half level. An empty and dry coconut shell (chippa) it fit and taking in the left hand and waved to the patient three times, from left to right.
The same is placed in the plate on the dung, and once again the plate is waved three times. Later she puts the burning shell upside down on the crowding. As she does this water in the plate rushes into the shell making hissing noise. If all the water rushes in and also making the sound, it is the indication of curing of the evil-eye. This type of ritual is locally known as 'kunda-dishit'.

Like evil-eye the ill effects of evil mouth and curses are also cured in this manner.

Datimpu:

'Datimup' is a magico-religious rite performed when a person is very ill. For this ritual the magician need a fresh coconut, a piece of thread of 9 feet length, little incense powder (sambrani), a thin sheet of copper, turmeric powder, vermilion, lemons and little lime -powder. To conduct the ritual the magician arrives at the victim's house in the morning and abstains from eating and drinking until the rite is over. He selects a suitable spot in front of the house and sweeps it and sprinkles water. Using the multi coloured powders he draws a sketch, starting with lime powder, on it. Then he takes three lemons and cuts them and places the pieces at strategic spots on the drawing. Taking the thin copper sheet symbolically draws on a picture of the village deity, here a goddess and rolls it to the shape of a cylinder. Then the thread is insulated on it and smeared with turmeric and incense powders. Betel leaves and nuts are also placed on the drawing in appropriate spots. When all this is arranged one coconut is broken and the two pieces are placed on either side of the drawing. Now the copper sheet becomes a talisman and called 'rakshareku'.
On the other hand the sorcerer rubs the patient with neem leaves three times, uttering a few incantations. Later he ties the tallisman (tayattu) on the right arm hand of the patient. Once this act is over, the drawing on the ground is rubbed off. Once worn it is believed that the tallisman will protect the patient against all types of evils. For his services the magician receives an honorarium ranging from twenty to thirty rupees, besides food grains etc. this ritual is an highly specialized one and only those sorcerers who are trained and well experienced and also possess the magico-religious powers. Can undertake it.

Charmes:

Charmes (Tayattu) are used by the idigas to maintain a good health, both by children and adults, charms can be arranged by a few local magicians also. Use of charms to get prosperity and health is a popular practice among the idigas. Any visiting ascetic or godman (Biragi or sanyasi) to the village is persuaded by the villagers to give charms. Knowing this belief in them they prepare and sell and make profit.

The sacred stones erected at four strategic points of the village and also at the centre of the village settlement are also regarded as charms, to guard the villagers from malevolent spirits (grahas).

Medicines— Man:

There is only one medicine —man who through magical incantations and saves the people from death due to snakebite, high fever and pain. Here the medicine — man is quite different from that of the doctors specialized in modern medicines like Alliopathic, Aurvedic, Homeo, Unani etc. the native
doctor is specialised and experienced in magico-religious activities, folk, therapy and household remedies.

The process of a person getting possessed by ghosts is called 'galleokadem' and magician in the village frees the victims from the clutches of ghosts. The incantation are in the regional language. The magician after learning these incantations must observe certain taboos. Such as (i) He should not eat pumpkin, (ii) He should not lie across a cot, (iii) He should not consume the rice or other edibles put on a mat or cloth for the mass consumption (this is done during community feasts, festivals and marriages, and (iv) He should desist from participating in death ceremony.

Small pox:

Small pox, locally known as 'ammavaru', is contagious disease. It gets its name from its controlling deity, chinnamma. It is believed by the Idigas that she is the sister of Gangamma. This deity is identified with high fever accompanied with pus filled boils all over the body. The patient is isolated of touch and contact by others. A think line of ash is put at the main entrance to the house to caution others who visit the family. The Idiga believe that the modern medicine has no cure for this disease and so follow their own methods of curing when the disease strikes the group.

The person suffering from small pox is put on a strict diet and only served with food which are believed to have cooling effect. The most commonly used items of diet are the curd and rice. He is made to lie down on a mat on which the neem leaves are spread. It is believed that neem tree is the abode of the deity. His body is coated with a paste of tender neem
leaves mixed with butter-milk. The process is continued till the boils dry away. The idigas believe that the small pox will be in a patient for 5, 7, 9, 11 or 21 days. By 21st day. The patient should get a cure. If not cured even after 21 days, they offer a worship to Gangamma and vow to erect her statues, and offer sacrifices. It is firmly believed that after a vow taken the deity will certainly cure the disease.

Spirits:

Idiga believe in evil spirits. It is also believed that these spirits are the result of premature deaths due to various accidents reside in and around the settlement in lone trees, big rocks and abandoned houses. These malevolent spirits usually come out of their abodes during night time, in human form, both men and women. A few spirits come in the disguise of a woman dressed in white and when they move their legs do not touch the ground. It is also believed that the spirits assume several forms such as dogs, cats, goats etc. A few other are invisible and their presence can be felt by hearing their cry. The idigas believe that a few spirits are mischievous and sensing the opportunity to throw stones on human beings when found alone.

The idigas believe in the existence of ghosts and that person who commit great sins become ghosts after death (deyyalu). The general belief is that the ghosts attack a person who responds to their call. So one must not respond to sudden voices appear during odd hours in a day. According to the popular belief that ghosts select only weak minded persons to play their tricks on the evil spirits travel through men and cattle from one family to another and from one village to another. When an individual is attacked by the ghost, he or
she becomes lean and sick. Often it is accompanied with high fever and falling of hair from the head. Protection from the ghosts can be sought from the shaman; who gives a talisman (tayettalu) and also arranges for the worship to satyamma deity.

It is said that the bridal pair and expectant mother are more susceptible to the influence of evil spirits and such spirits are identified, counted and warded off. To prevent the victims from the evil effects of spirits lime, turmeric water, rice and one or two cinders (burnt pieces of wood) are arranged in a plate and waved clock-wise thrice, to the newly married couple, or the mother with a new born baby and a pregnant woman, when they arrive at the house for the first time. After waving, the ritual water is thrown out on the road, in front of the house to ward off the evil. Only in severe cases of ghost or spirit attack, a magician is called. He draws a sketch on the floor and performs the magical rite and finally drives aways the spirit, using his magical incantation.

Snake Bite:

Snake bite is another cure of death among the Idigas. Since they work in open at least on or two snake bite cases are recorded in a year. There is a person who can cure snake bite by using his magic ritual power. On getting information that some one is bitten by a snake he will immediately tears off a piece of cloth from his dress dhoti, and holding it in his hand chants a few formulae. Then the same is brought and tied around the neck of the victim, of snake bite. With in an hour the victim gets the cure. Later the patient will be made to be on a diet prescribed by the magician.
The concept of soul:

The Idigas have no clear concept of the presence of soul. But they believe that there is some thing in a living being other than the life. It seat is the heart and immortal. It is the sole principle of Idiga life.

The Idigas believe that God tears open the soul and this is how death occurs. Their notion of death is that the soul of a person is taken away by a dreadful deity, locally known as Yama. But this deity can also extend the life of a few who are good in their deeds. Similarly it can take away the souls of bad persons any time. In case of human beings the soul goes out of the body through any one of the nine exists in the body.

The Idigas believe that a virtuous man after death goes to heaven (Swargam) and a bad person to hell (Narakam). After death, the soul of a person continues to reside in the house until the death rituals are observed. After the rites, it goes to the place earned by the person hell or heaven. It is a belief among the Idigas that any failure on the part of the family in observing these rites will result in the soul becoming a ghost.

The Idigas also believe that proper observance of death rituals will help a soul to get a permanent abode in their ancestral world. Such souls are considered benevolent and so worshipped once a year. Souls of persons who die a violent death are believed to turn into ghosts. Violent deaths due to fall from a tree or house top and of vomiting blood are generally believed due to spirit attacks. A woman who dies at child birth; those who die of poisoning, drowning, hanging and in accidents, become ghosts. It is said that souls of such victims depart from their bodies with dissatisfaction and so the result.
After becoming ghosts the souls reside in lone trees and also roam about the village, troubling the villagers. It is believed that the ghosts attack people during mid-day and mid-night when they will be more vulnerable and so villagers avoid going near such trees.

Among the Idigas it is believed that the persons who die on the festival days like ‘sankranthi’, ‘vaikunta Ekadasi’, and such other holy days, reach heaven directly. According to another local belief, performance of rituals will bring a free passage to the dead into the heaven.

Ancestral worship:

Ancestors among the Idigas are called ‘peddalu’, the day on which the ancestral worship is conducted, is called peddala panduga and observed once a year, on the day of sankranthi festival. Ancestor are conceived to be invisible segment of lineage. As such a Peron’s ancestors are his dead parents and this includes all the deceased relatives on the paternal side (Ancestors on the maternal side are not worshipped). The Idigas are of the opinion that their deceased live in a separate spiritual world and they usually visit the houses of their living progeny to receive ritual offerings.

The Idigas ancestors get a permanent and important place in the day-to-day domestic worship. The point the ancestral figures by lines, on the wall of a sacred place known as ‘Devunimula’. They cook-sweet dishes (pongali) and offer it on plantain leaves to the ancestors. A variety of vegetarian dishes are also offered. Pieces of a new cloths of various colours liked by the ancestors are placed at the place of worship. A pair of dhoties and a towel are offered for the male ancestors. After festival these new
dresses are worn by the members of the family only. The ancestors are also
worshipped on the other occasions such as marriage, pilgrimage etc.

Older informants among the idigas told that when they get any
difficulties, they pary to their ancestors who they inturn appear in their dreams
and given directions to them to overcome their difficulties. The ancestral
spirits are believed to convey massages through sooth- sayers (gadde) as to
what to be done to tide over the difficulties.

Omen:

An omen is an event regarded as a sigh of prediction of good or ill
success of some undertaking, or of the approach of good fortune, or a
calamity. Omen is only an indicator and not a cause. Belief in omen has a
strong hold on the superstitious life of the idigas.

Omens are only formal to know about good and bad, depending upon
their effects. Omens are related to birds, animals and human beings. If the
omens are bad, people feel unhappy. On the contrary, if they come across a
good omen, they feel happy and go ahead gladly to do the work undertaken.
An owl is considered to be a bird of bad omen. If its sits on the roof of a
house, the idigas anticipate something bad. To ward it off they take the
services of a Brahmin priest, who on arrival sprinkles little sacred milk on the
house.

When a person comes out of his house, in order to attend to some
work out side and sees a dog crossing his path with its tail waving, he
considers it a good omen. If the dog crosses his path with its ears shaking, it
is bad omen. A god climbing to the house roof is the indication of coming
health problem to the family and ritual is performed to ward it off. If a cat
crosses the path of a person left to right, it is a good omen. Reverse of it is a
bad omen.

Similarly, widow or widower, a person carrying firewood, a washer man
carrying washed clothes, a single Brahmin, barber without his service kit,
empty vessel are all considered bad omen. On the other hand a maiden or a
married women, water filled pot, a washer man carrying soiled cloth, a group
of Brahmins, barber with a kit are all considered good omens. Certain
utterances are considered taboo on certain occasions. For example while
leaving the house, one should not bid good bye saying, “I am going or
leaving” and one should necessarily say”, I will leave now and come back
later. But bidding good-by using such words and considered bad when leaving
a mourning family. Like this there are many do's and don'ts and these are
mostly observed by the folk.

Dream:

Dreaming is though considered or normal thing among the Idigas
interpretation indicates good or bad. It is believed that they indicate the future
assurance to the family or person. These may indicate accident, arrival of a
guest and so on. The Idigas believe that dreaming of certain object or person,
signifies a particular event in the near future. A few such examples are given
below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>St. No</th>
<th>Object in dreams</th>
<th>Results anticipated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>House catching fire or burning</td>
<td>Some girls in the family is going to attain puberty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Death of a known or unknown person</td>
<td>Some one related to the dreamer is going to die.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Snake bite</td>
<td>Good health for the dreamer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Fighting</td>
<td>The dreamer's ton is going to quarrel with another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Bull</td>
<td>Bad omen and so a vow to be taken in the name of Lord Venkateswara</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bad dreams naturally disturb the mental peace of the dreamer. When this happens, the person is asked or urged to his pray to favorite deity for help. When it becomes difficult to bear with it, he is asked to wear a talis man and go on a pilgrimage. The idigas believe that the answers appear in dream to guide the progeny.

I. Beliefs related to sun and moon:

According to the idigas there are visible and invisible gods. The visible goods are the sun and the moon only. A mythical story as to why sun is warm and moon is cool and it goes like this. Once they were invited to a dinner by a king. There, they were served with a variety of foods, sweets, fruits, etc. After having their dinner they returned home and their mother come to known this. She asked them what they ate and what they had brought for her? Then sun simply replied nothing. Whereas moon, had not forgotten his mother and had brought some of them hidden in his nails. Their mother felt very happy that
moon remembered her at the dinner and blessed him to be cool and receive praise from one and all. On the other hand she cursed sun, who had forgotten her while eating the feast to become warm every day in the morning. So that is why the moon is cool and the sun warm. In addition, their mother, decided to live with the moon, under the tree which is seen on the moon.

ii. Caste and Village Deities:

The idigas worship both Siva and Vishnu, with equal reverence. (Iyyer, 1930:370). They also worship minor deities such as Muniswara, Satyamma, Gangamma, Maramma, Kannikalu, Gurappa etc; and offer animal sacrifice. Their caste deities are all Katameswara (Kateamedevaru) and Yellamma (Surabhandeswari), the goddess of the toddy pot. A few families keep the images of these gods at home and offer women regularly. Monday is the week day for Katameadevaru, the god of woods, Tuesday and Friday for Yellamma. They celebrate a fair for these two gods annually on a large scale, when all the idigas residing in different place at a convenient distance, assemble for one or two days to participate in the activities.

Katameadevaru is believed to represent Siva, who once had to conceal himself in the house of an idiga. The later was a man of such virtue that as he marked the trees bent on their own to allow him to top the toddy. Siva, wishing to test whether the devotee had an equally worthy mate, went to his house, during his absence, disguised as a mendicant to seduce his wife in vain. When he was still inside the house the husband returned home. Not finding any other place for hiding, the god entered a toddy pot. But he was discovered when his breathing sent up bubbles in the toddy. On discovery a worship was offered by the devotee and his wife. Pleased by this he promised
to stay with them as their community deity. He also commanded them that he be invoked as Katamadevara, in palm groves.

Through this story we can see an attempt is made to respect to the profession of toddy tapping. In the same way another story about Yellamma deity is used for explaining the adulteration of liquor by them. According to a belief there were two brothers and the deity appeared before one of them in the disguise of an ordinary person and asked him to fill the shell of a mangos fruit with her, with toddy. Thinking her to be an insane person he sent her away. However the other brother readily agreed to oblige her. Later, though he emptied all the pots in the grove the shell remained empty. Finally when he begged her to save him from the disgrace he advised him to add a pot of water to the liquor when this was poured, the liquor from the shell began to over flow from the up and later formed three large streams. She then drew for herself toddy from the three trees reserved for her and known as the Basavtree. With this she was much pleased and dropped a handful of precious stones from her cloth in his house and vanished. She has been ever since worshipped as the tutelary goddess of the community.

When the Idigas want to tap toddy from palm trees, first time for the year, they select once or three palm trees and clear the side leaves from them. At the foot of one of them install, on a bed of sand, the Katamadevara deity (in the form of a stone). They worship him like any other holy object but offer only the coconuts. As a rule they never tap these trees for toddy. To identify them from other trees, they remove all wood from the middle of the tapping marks. Anybody who violates this taboo and taps them is liable to be excommunicated. The Idigas hold periodical celebrations and worship to their
gods. There are many temples dedicated to these in or near the groves of the toddy trees, once in a year, either in the month of ‘naitra’ (March-April). After ‘Ugadi’ festival they worship Yellamma, when they set up two pots full Katamadevaru deity (in the form of a stone). They worship him like any other holy object but offer only the coconuts. As a rule they never top these trees for toddy. To identify them from the other trees, they remove all wood from the middle of the tapping marks. Any body who violates this taboo and taps them is liable to be excommunicated. The Idigas hold periodical celebrations and worship to their gods. There are many temples dedicated to these in or near the groves of the toddy trees. Once in a year, either in the month of ‘Chaitra’ (March-April) after ‘Ugadi’ festival they worship Yellamma, when they set up two pots full of toddy in the yard of the house. The devotees of this goddess, mostly belonging to lower castes, are invited. The chaman locally known as ‘Asadi’ a man belonging the Madiga caste and the Matangi, a Basavi(devadasi) woman of the same caste are invited to take part in the worship. As the former sings songs in praise of Yellamma and repeats the story of her origin. The Matangi pours abuses on the goddess and also dances making absence postures. It is believed that if a man and his wife approach each other during this fair, it is considered an act of pollution, and the priest (pujari) of the deity will be able to discover the violators of this taboo when he is possessed by the goddess. To mark them he will put garlands of flowers around their necks and when their identity is known this couple will have to live apart for ever.

A minor shrine is also built for Yellamma deity near all toddy storing places or shops, under a neem tree, which are always situated at some
distance from the village. Before they commence the sale of liquor for the day
the Idigas offer a small quantity of it to the goddess. On Tuesday and Friday
they also offer a special worship by burning incense and breaking coconuts.

Village Deities:

The pantheon of the Idiga consists of a number of major and minor
deities. The village deity has special place in their belief system and
propitiated on all important religious and ritual occasions and distressful
situations. They also worship other local deities and observe local Hindu fairs
and festivals. Besides the Hindu gods they occasionally offer worship and
take vows to muslim saints (pirs) and also participate in the Moharrum
festival. This type of situation was also noticed by lyyer(1990:373) also as
back as fifty five years. Even now, some of the Idiga people often visit Muslim
shrines (Dargah) in Chittoor, Cuddapah, Kurnool, Anantapur towns and
Kasmoor, near Nellore to fulfill their vows. Whenever they are in difficulties
they take vows to these dargahs.

Arbitrarily, the deities can be conceived under two categories,
(i) Deities belonging to Great tradition and (ii) Local or little tradition.

The village deities are mostly female and their names are a suffixed
with the term 'amma', which literally means mother. Most of these deities
either have no temples or if they have one, they are in a dilapidated condition.
The village deities are symbolised in the form of idols or stones and housed
under a neem or ravi tree, under a stone structure three stone slabs placed
together. Animal sacrifice is a must to propitiate them. There are no
designated priests as such for these deities in the way the sanskritic deities
have. The people belong to service castes of the village such as Dhobi,
Pottar, Jengama etc., often act as priests to these deities. Since these deities belong to non-Sanscritic tradition, the upper caste priests belonging to Brahmin cast do not go near them. So no definite pattern or practice of worship and ritual rules are followed.

The image of these deities belonging to the little tradition are either anthropomorphic or Zoomorphic in shape. Representation of these deities in the form of stone balls or slabs, wooden planks, mounds (putta) is common. Goode's (1951), description of the deities as anthropological implying that personified supernatural powers are intellectually aware of the values of society and as anthrop-physic assigning them many traits of human mentality applies here is the context. Regarding the function or origin of the local deities, there is only scanty information and no written evidences are available (Reddy, 1983:224)

There are a few persons in the village who are customarily designated to conduct the rituals and worship associated with the local deities. They look after the up keep of shrine and perform day to day and special worships and are also entitled to receive payments from the devotees. The following are some of the local deities found in the village. However, this is not an exhaustive list.

Sethyamma:

Sethyamma represented by a stone slab, is noticed on the western side of the village and housed in a temple of her own. She protects the villagers from the evil spirits, by preventing them from entering the living area of the village. On the day of worship, the stone idol is ritually cleaned and decorated with turmeric and vermillion powders. A plantain leaf is spread in
front of the deity and cooked food is offered. Coconuts, fowls or goats are also sacrificed. If the village is in the grip of an epidemic diseases such as cholera, small-pox and measles, it is believed that the deity will protect them against these.

Gangamma:

Temples built in honour of (Gangamma) are quite common throughout this part of Andhra Pradesh. In the village the temple of Gangamma, the goddess of water, is situated on the westarmside of the settlement, towards the Gollapalli village. The idol, in the form of a stone, based in small and low roofed stone structure. Gangamma is customarily worshipped by the idigas once in a year in the month of May. On the day of the worship the deity and the temple are ritually cleaned and the deity is applied with turmeric paste, vermilion and flowers. Goats, rams and fowl are sacrificed in good number. Offering of rice cooked with jaggery (pongali) to the deity is also made. The idiga believe that Gangamma protects them from small pox, measles etc. 'Ganga' literally means water and to the folk she is the goddess of water and the second wife of Lord Shiva. The idigas have a number of songs in praise of Gangamma in their foldory.

Nagalamma:

The idiga women worship another deity by name Nagalamma, also knows as Naga Devatha, on the fourth day after the celebration of Deepavali festival. She is represented by a mound under a neem tree. A sacred thread is also tied around the mound which is decorated with vermilion and turmeric and worshipped with eggs and milk. Champhor is also burnt and coconuts are broken. The belief is that Nagalamma protects them from snake bite.
Another belief is that by worshipping the deity for a specific period of time as a vow, a barren couple will be blessed with children.

Akkadevathalu:

Akkadevathalu or Kannikal are believed to be seven sisters, represented Zoomorphically in the form of horse, elephant, etc., they are considered eternal virgins and also referred to as kannikal, (virgins). The idigas believe that kannikal protect them while tapping toddy. A person who fails to respect them is punished by them. To warn them they first appear in their dreams in the form of a woman approaching them riding a horse. Such an appearance is known as spirit attack (sokadam) and indication of his going near death. If a vow to worship in order to appease them is not taken soon they may even kill him as a punishment. When a person is attacked by a spirit he becomes weak and loses weight, when these symptoms are noticed the victim is taken to a shamin; who tells why the deity has become angry and also the way to appease them. Offering of turmeric paste, vermillion and flowers and a he-goat are the items usually suggested to please them. The idigas also believe that Kannikal protect them from epidemic or major diseases.

Maremma:

Maremma is another deity who belongs to little tradition, and she is believed to protect the domestic animals, especially from a deadly disease locally known as ‘Gelf’. The deity is believed to reside in a neem tree and a platform is built around a tree in the village. At times of crisis she is worshipped in the form of a small earthen vessel (Kudki) into which water is poured and twigs of neem tree are placed. After the worship, the pot is taken
In a procession and placed under the holy tree which is on the eastern side of the village, at a distance from the settlement. At the shrine a worship is performed to the deity and food and coconuts are offered.

Muniswarudu:

'Muniswarudu' another local deity is represented by three small lumps of stones. He has no temple of his own but the shrine is situated under a pipal tree (ravi). It is believed that the deity blesses children to the childless. Such a child is named after the deity by prefixing the term 'Muni' to the name proposed to be given to the child. In addition, women who are pregnant, worship the deity in the fifth month of their pregnancy, on a Sunday, requesting the deity to protect their child in the womb. This puja is known as pala puja. After the birth of the child, in the fifth or the ninth month tonsure ceremony of the child is performed in the precincts of the deity. On this occasion a he-goat, a fowl and a pig are sacrificed to the deity. The pig is instantly first stabbed on the right side, on its lung. The goat and the fowl are sacrificed by chopping off their headed at the neck.

On special occasions / stones which represent the deity are decorated with sacred ash and flowers. A mixture of cooked rice and jaggery (pongal) is offered to the deity. The maternal uncle of the child cuts tufts of hair in three patches from the head of the child and places them before the deity. After that the customary fixed barber cuts the remaining hair from child's head. On this occasion a grand feast is given, which includes non-vegetarian items also. The idigas also offer a worship to the deity on the occasion of marriage ceremony, praying for the fruitfulness of the marriage, continuation of the lineage.
Gurappa:

Gurappa is based in his shrine and is represented in the form of a lump of stone, under a neem tree, situated by the side of stream, on the eastern side of the village. The idigas offer him coconuts and pongal. Special sacrificial rites are associated with this deity particularly during tonsure ceremony of the children. They sacrifice he-goats to the deity and the sacrificial meal is served in a feast, with friends and relatives. A few families also celebrate the tonsure ceremony of the children at the Gurappa temple since it is believed that the deity blesses the sterile couple with children.

Deities belonging to great tradition:

The Idiga people worship some of the deities belonging to great tradition (of all India level with sanskritic tradition) are, such as sir Rama, Venkateswara, Vinayaka etc.

Vinayaka:

Lord Vinayaka is also known by several other names such as Ganapathi, Parvati putra, Muskivahana, Vigneswara. Hindus believe that he removes obstacles and so before any activity big or small, the lord is worshiped and offered naivedyam. In these villages the deity is represented by a conical stone slab and placed under a pipal tree. On Vinayakachavithi day during the month of August/September a festival is celebrated. It is believed that he specifically comes to earth on the day to bless his devotees. Though a bachelor god he is worshipped on the occasions of the marriage before commencing the ceremony. For children he is the deity of wisdom.
Sri Rama:

According to the tradition Sri Rama is the incarnation of Lord Vishnu born on the earth to kill the demon king Ravana. The deity worshipped on a grand scale on Sri Rama Navami day which is celebrated as a festival. There is no temple and idol for the deity in the village. During the festival occasions picture photo of the deity is established in the temple of the village deity under the auspices of the Bhajana Mandali. Daily singing of songs in honour of Sri Rama is arranged during Sri Rama Navami for nine days. On festival days major ritual is celebrated and this attracts entire village population. The Idigas also go to the temple and offer their prayers and ritual materials one of the elders of Idiga community with devotional mind acts as a priest. Most of the elders along with some young men from a Bhajana Mandali and sing devotional songs.

Lord Venkateswara:

Lord Venkateswara is another form Sri Vishnu and there is a major shrine for the Lord, the lord of the Seven Hills, Tirupati. Since there is a belief that he fulfills the desires of devotees almost all the people of the villages (perakur and perumallapalle) have faith in him. He is worshipped both on festival and normal days. Taking a vow and visiting the shrine to perform them are common and the devotees undertaken pilgrimages to Tirumala to pray and have the holy view (darshana) of the deity. Saturday is the week day for the devotees of Lord Venkateswara and that day devotees offer a special worship, sacred food and break coconuts. Lord Venkateswara is the most popular deity in the area and almost all the Vaishnava Hindus have the images of Lord Venkateswara and his consort Alivelu Mangamma in their houses and worship them regularly.
Man-god relationships:

The Idigas believe that the deities have strong attributes and great powers to influence man. Therefore, in order to attain worldly pleasures man establishes a few types of relationships with the deities in their faith. On a few occasions they also request the deities not only to bless them with happiness during their life but also during next. In such relationship the folk always consider the deities superior to them and so they try to please them in all possible ways. Since they are in folk level no casta give primary importance to a particular deity and instead worship the deities which belong to both great and little traditions. The concept of kula-devatha or kula daivam is very much in vogue among the Idigas. Our observations reveal that women are more considered with having their life made happier than men who often think about the life in their next birth.

III. Fairs and festivals:

Fairs and festivals from an essential aspect of any culture. In almost all societies of the world, festivals are celebrated in one form or other and since time immemorial. Most of the literature on Hindu festival is merely based on listing and describing the festivals in different parts of India, or within a particular region. (srivastava,1974:151). A few studies describe the festival observed by a particular casta spread over a wide region, and not those of a specific community, Oscar Leewie (1958:197) has pointed that any analysis of indian festivals, whether it be historical or functional, should be based on the
descriptions of the ceremonial cycle followed in a variety of specific community. He writes, "until we have such data, it will not be possible to assess that role of Hindu festivals in Indian life and the varying degrees of integration in different localities between the 'great' and 'little' tradition of Hinduism (Ibid, 198).

The festivals celebrated in honor of the deities are locally known as 'Pandugalu'. The festivals that are enshrined in honour of a deity in danger and difficulty are locally known as 'Jatharas' (fair). Generally the festivals 'Pandugalu' are conducted by every household individually. But fairs take place at village level involving all the inhabitants irrespective of caste and creed. The 'fairs' are conducted once in a year or on a fixed occasion by the idigas community in honour of the local deity, sathyamma.

The brief accounts that follow are intended to illustrate the nature of the festivals and their place in the annual round of activities in the community. It is necessary to have the following information regarding the Telugu months of the lunar cycle and their corresponding English months.
Table 6.2
Hindu Months and Corresponding English Months

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Hindu Month</th>
<th>Corresponding</th>
<th>English Month</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Chaithra</td>
<td>March</td>
<td>April</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Vaisakha</td>
<td>April</td>
<td>May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Jaisha</td>
<td>May</td>
<td>June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Ashada</td>
<td>June</td>
<td>July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Sravana</td>
<td>July</td>
<td>August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Bhadrapada</td>
<td>August</td>
<td>September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Asvayuja</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Kartika</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Margasira</td>
<td>November</td>
<td>December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Pushya</td>
<td>December</td>
<td>January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Magha</td>
<td>January</td>
<td>February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Phalgunaya</td>
<td>February</td>
<td>March</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The festivals discussed hereunder are arranged in a chronological order.
Ugadi:

Ugadi (ug+Adi) is telugu New Year Day. It is celebrated on the day chastra sucha pedyami i.e., late in March early April, every year. This is the first festival of the Idigas of Rayalasarma region for the ritual years. Celebrations of the festival indicate the beginning of the lunar year.

The entire Idiga community celebrates Ugadi with colour and enthusiasm. On the festival day all will take a ritual bath and wear new clothes. The bath is special in the sense oil is applied to the entire body and washed only after a few hours. During that day in early hours of the day the houses are cleaned and the front yards are decorated with flour designs(rangavallulu). Festoons of mango leaves (toranes) are tied to the main door of the house. After the ritual bath a mixture of margosa flowers, salt, new tamarind and jaggery, and raw mango bits; locally called "Ugadi Pachadi" is eaten. This dish which tastes both sweet and bitter symbolises the good and bad things in the life to follow that year. The "Ugadi pachadi" is offered to the deity in the temple before it is eaten by members of the family. By rule they prepare and eat a special vegetarian food. But now-a-days a variety of non-vegetarian dishes are prepared. In the evening the folk visit a temple and invite the village Brahmin priest to come and tell them what is in store for them during the coming year by consulting the book of astrology which is locally called Panchanga Sravanam.

It is a common practice to invite especially married daughter for the festival. It is a must for a newly weds. When the daughter return to their conjugal houses they will be given special gifts (ugadi sanyam), which
include new dresses, fruits and sweets, betel nuts and leaves. It is also customary to invite the newly wedded daughters by their neighbors and friendly families and present similar gifts.

Srirama Navami:

Sri Rama Navami is one of the important festivals celebrated by the Idivas on the day of Chaithra Sudha Navami (March-April), in honour of Lord Sri Rama. Sri Rama, the ideal king and an incarnation of Sri Maha Vishnu, was born on this day. The Idivas for the ritual celebration, clean their house and plaster the floor with cowdung solution. They take an oil bath. At the community level celebrations the image of Sri Rama is taken in a procession through the streets. Coconuts are broken and prayers are offered to the deity. It is customary to distribute jaggery water mixed with some condiments (Panakam) and soaked pules (vada pappu) to the gathering. In the evening recitation of holy script in honour of Hari (Harikatha) or some other related to Lord Rama (Puranakalaksheperam) is arranged. The expenses incurred on this celebrations at village level, are met by the villagers, through voluntary contributions.

Ganesh Festival:

Ganesh festival (Vineyaka Chavathi) is celebrated during the month of August-September (Bhadrapada Sudha Chavathi). Today this festival is celebrated at the school by the staff and students of the village since Vineyaka represents wisdom. The image of Lord Vineyaka is made of clay and decorated with different colours and placed in a frame specially
constructed and decorated with colour papers and green leaves of holy and suspicious trees. Lord Vinayaka is believed to have a great liking for a variety of foods. Among them rice flour bails boiled in steam (undrallu and Kudumulu) are the favorite dishes of Lord Vinayaka and his vehicle Musika i.e. rat. A sweet dish (payasam) is also prepared and offered. According to a mythical story it is a taboo to see the moon on Vinayaka Chavathi. It is believed that those who violate this will be subjected to many problems like allegational and accusations.

It is also customary to dispose of the idol of Lord Vinayaka the same day or after three days by immersing the same in a well or nearby pond or water or a river.

Vijayadasami:

This festival is celebrated on Asvayuja Suddha dasami (October). Vijayadasami is otherwise known as 'Aayudha puja', a legend is associated with this festival. Arjuna the epic hero of Mahabharata, started his "Ultara Gograhamam" on this day and got victory over the kauraves. Hence, it is a belief that any work commenced on this day will end with success. So the Idigas perform a puja to agricultural and toddy- tapping implements. For five days the tools are not taken out for work. A goat is sacrificed to the deity of strength and the meat is consumed in the form of a feast.

Deepavali:

This festival also known as the 'festival of lights' is observed by Hindus throughout India. Deepavali is celebrated for two days in Asvayuja Bahula Chathurdeasi and the next day, which will be a new moon day (Amavasya)

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(October – November). The first day part of the festival is called Narakachathurdasi and a myth is associated with it. Lord Krishna along with the support of his consort ‘Sathyabhama’ fought a war and killed the demon king ‘Narakasura’. This was essential to save the world from ‘Narakasuras’ harassment. To mark this victory of the good over the evil, the festival is celebrated.

The Idigas called this festival a Nomula panduga. On the festival day all members of the family get up early in the morning and take on oil bath and wear new dress. Preparations for the festivals in the form of food ingredients and clothing’s are made well in advance. Newly married daughters of the family and sons-in-law are invited for the festival and presented with gifts of new clothes and ornaments. There is no restriction on the preparation and consumption of non-vegetarian food on this festival day.

Second day, the second part of the Deepavali festival is called Gowri varatam. For the worship an image of Gowri is made using turmeric paste and vermillion and placed on a piece of stone and decorated with ornaments. The women folk observe a fast on this day and visit the place of celebration with sacred thread (nomudaralu), sweets (attirasalu), pulse cakes (vadalu), betal leaves and nuts, and fruits and arrange them in a plate. They are two types of offerings. If each item placed there numbers nine, it is called Yennika. If the items are just kept in heap then it is called rasi. After the worship the goddess Gowri, the sacred thread and a few sweet dishes are sent to their sisters-in-law (adabiddalu) (husbands’ sisters) as gift.
Nagadassava
ti:

The festival of departure is performed on the full-moon day over the Deepavali festival. This is exclusively the festival of women. Coconut, puffed rice, milk and a preparation of gram and jaggery are arranged on a plate, and taken to an ant-hill (putta). It is customary that the worshippers observe a fast. The ant-hill is the abode of snakes or cobras. After the worship, milk, preferably the cow's milk is poured into the ant-hill. The food offerings are made to the mound and worshipped seeking prosperity. Little earth is collected from the ant-hill and applied on the body of persons who suffer from skin diseases and it is believed that Lord Nagendra will help cure these diseases.

Karthicka Deepam:

This festival is observed on the full-moon day in the month of Karthika. The festival is observed by the Idigas on two days in the form of Urukarti and Konda Kari. On the first day the Idigas take a ritual bath, visit the temple of the deity and eat only vegetarian food. In the evening they go to their farm and light oil lamps keeping them on small cowdung mounds. On the second day (festival of torches) konda Kari ritual is celebrated. For this during early in the night, the Idiga youth (males) take torches of grass (sududulu) to Earlia kondi and there an oil lamp is lit on the top of the hillock. Later all the torches are deposited at a place called Chittaluppe. Here it is customary to sing songs full of sex in chorus. This celebration is called 'Konda Kari'.
Valli Ekadasi:

This festival also known as ‘Mukkoti Ekadasi’ is an important festival for all vaishnava sect of Hindus. There is a belief that any person who dies on this day will attain heaven. There is a belief that the doors of heaven will be kept open on this day. The idigas also believe that keeping awake praying and listening to holy scripts will help are to attain salvation. It is also a must to eat vegetarian food on this day.

Sankranthi:

Sankranthi is a very important festival and is known as one of the peddapandugas. It is also called ‘Makara Sankranthi’ or ‘Uttarayana Sankranthi’. It is believed that the Sun will enter into Capricorn (Makararasi) this day and to mark it the biggest festival is celebrated, from 13th to 16th of January, in the Lunar month pushya. It is also known as harvest festival.

According to Hindu astrological belief, the Hindu ritual form is divided into two halves of six months each and known as Dakshinayana and Uttarayana when the sun is in the southern hemisphere, it is considered unhealthy for those who live on the North of the equator since the Sun’s vitality is concentrated on the southern hemisphere. Hence the movement of the Sun to the North, Uttarayana is considered the beginning of an auspicious period and so celebrated in the from of a festival.

The entire month of Margasira (December-January) which is the last month in the Dakshinayana period, is considered an auspicious time to under take good activities. So the devout Hindus get up early in the morning and pray or sing holy songs (bharanes) in honour of the deity. Women folk on
their part ritually clean the house, its and walls and floor and decorate it with sacred marks. Baals of cowdung are made and tucked with locally available flowers, 'gobbermulalu' and placed at the centre of each sacred mark (rangoli). The last day of the margasira month is also the last day of Dakshayana period. If that day observed as the ending of the period, the next day to that is observed as the beginning of the Uttarayana period.

Preperations for the Uttarayana festival will be made for weeks in advance. Houses are white washed at least one week in advance and every day in the morning, the front yards are decorated with sacred marks and gobbermulalu. Maidens of the village sing song in honour of Gowri, locally known as "gobbi patalu". They also go round the village and collect gifts in cash or kind from every household.

It is also believed that with the commencement of the Uttarayana kala the ancestors of the family will begin to visit the family. To symbolize this and to welcome them, the central place in the main hall of the house is cleaned and sacred marks are painted. The arrival of ancestral spirits into the house is shown in the form of a few vertical lines.

Bhogi:

The first day of festival is called Bhogi. On that day during early hours, a huge fire is lit and into which all that is worn out useless are thrown and burnt. Later the houses are also thoroughly ritually cleaned. A local dish of porridge prepared (ambeili) using the newly harvested millets or rice. All the families of the village bring the porridge and pour it into one big pot and is kept in front of the local deity Sathyamma, in her temple. The pot decorated,
using turmeric and vermillion powders and margosa leaves will be placed in front of the deity. The washerman (chakali) lits the camphor and breaks the coconut. He further sacrifices a goat at the altar of the deity and the blood of the sacrificial animal is mixed in the porridge. Later this sacred porridge is distributed to all those present. The remaining part of it is given to the service castes such as washerman, barber and village servant. At individual family level a feast of non-vegetarian dishes is prepared and taken.

Peddapanduga (Sankranthi):

The second day of the festival is Sankranthi festival proper (peddapanduga). On this day mainly ancestral worship is performed by the idigas. Only vegetarian dishes are prepared and offered to the ancestors. A special dish is 'Pongali'. In a beautifully decorated pot little rice, dhal, milk, jaggery and water are mixed and cooked in open, under the Sun. the dish is called 'Pongal'. It is offered to the Sun god and later eaten by all the members of the family. With this the idigas believe that the Sun god gives them sustained life and bountiful harvest.

This festival is mainly concerned with the worship of the ancestral spirits and it is a familiar level festival. On the festival day all the members of the family rise early and take ritual bath. The lady of the house cleans the 'Nattillu' part of the house which is believed to be the abode of ancestral spirits and draws vertical lines (usually 3 or 5) on the wall, symbolizing the presence of ancestors. New dhoties and a towel for male and saree and a blouse piece for female ancestors, are kept on a small wooden plank and offered to the ancestors. The head of the family performs the ritual worship. He takes a string of cotton thread, a blade of sacred grass (darba) and a few
of ginger seeds (mugulu) in a plate and add little water to that. After lighting the camphor, the entire ritual material is disposed off into a well. That day it is a must to eat only the vegetarian food. The ritually linked family of labourers, washerman, barbers, and Meets (Holaya) are given gifts of clothing and food. This marks the end of the second day festival.

Pasuvula Panduga:

The third day part of the festival is called “Pasuvula Panduga”. The Idivas people rise early in the morning wash their cattle and decorate their hands and forelegs with turmeric and vermillion powders. The horns are painted with colours of their choice. Non-vegetarian feast is prepared for the day’s feast. People spend their whole day in drinking and merry making. In the evening cock-fights and races of bullocks are arranged as a part of the post festival activity.

Kanuma Panduga:

The last day of Sankranthi festival is the ritual of Kanuma; also called “dulla panduga” on this day the Idivas who have cattle with them, let loose the calves in the family. That day milk from their mothers is not collected and totally given to calves. Maidans in the village come together and perform a puja to the goddess Gobberma, near a well in the village. They prepare a dish called “Pongali” using rice collected from each and every family in the village during the festival days. After a worship and offering of ritual food and goddess Gobberma is immersed into a well. This is exclusively the festival of girls and the participate enthusiastically in it and enjoy a lot.
One this day all the idigas people worship "katamaraju" (local deity) housed under a Neem tree. The women folk prepare ritual offerings such as 'pongal' sacrificing of goats, rams and fowls which are common. The sacrificial blood from the animals is mixed with cooked rice and sprinkled in the family cattle shed and crops in the fields. Accompanied by a loud chant of "poli" thrice. Cooking of non-vegetarian foods is permitted on this day. With the eating of this feast, the three day long sankranthi festival celebration concludes.

Mahasivarathri:

This festival celebrated in honour of Lord Siva is very important to the idigas. It is celebrated on the Mega Bahula chathurdasi (February-March). The main part of the festival is fasting and keeping awake the entire night, listening to the holy recitation or watching street drama (veedhinatakam). It is also customary to go on a pilgrimage to mogali shrine where mogileswara, another form of Siva is located.

Village Level Festivals:

In addition to family and caste level festivals the idigas celebrate a number of village level festivals or fairs in honor of deities in the village. For these community level celebrations the village as a whole contributes and participates in the celebration. The three festivals celebrated in the village are the Sathyamma Jathara, Mahabharatha Yagam and Thappa Thirunaiu.

Sathyamma Jathara:

Sathyamma is the patron deity of the village and in her honour an annual festival is celebrated every year during April-May. The elders of the village hold a meeting and decide about the day to perform the fair. This day
will be invariably a Tuesday. The day of the festival will be announced well in advance so that the villagers make preparation to the celebration.

Sathyamma has no temple structure in parakur. Her image is represented by a stone in open, found at the western part of the village settlement. For the fair the stone structure and the surroundings are cleaned and a temporary structure is erected using green leaves and bamboo poles. On the day of celebration of Sathyamma fair, the villagers assemble at the shrine after a ritual bath. By about 4 pm on fixed day, the villagers bring one hundred and one path of holy water in specially decorated pots and place them in a line and they will be worshipped using turmeric pastes and vermillion, and garlands at flowers. Later the water will be poured on the stone image of the deity one after another. After this the deity is worshipped. The festival food offering prepared by the women folk is offered on plantation leaves placed before the deity. Goats, Fowls and Pigs are sacrificed at the deity. Camphor is lit and the deity is asked to accept the worship and ritual food is offered. Later the heads of the sacrificial animals are placed near Sathyamma and they return home without looking back. The meat from the sacrificial animals is consumed in a feast. On this day consumption of locally distilled alcoholic liquor is common.

Pothuraju Fair:

This festival is celebrated in honour of kind of forest Pothuraju – The tiger. Recently this festival has been celebrated as Mahabharatha Yagam. This festival is celebrated necessarily in front of the idol of Pothuraju, during summer months. Arrangements are made to narrate the episodes from epic with the help of scholar, ‘Bhagavathar’. The same episode
is staged by the village folk drama troupes in the night for the benefit of devotees. Like this the celebration goes on for a week or even more up to three weeks, during April-May. These days this celebration is observed only in Chittoor district in the towns at yadamari, pakaia, Chittoor etc. the expenses for the performance of this Yagnam are met out of the contributions made by the people and is known as ‘Pampakam’.

The post festival activities include merry making, trade and business. So a number of businessmen come with their commodities to sell. Similarly a number of entertainers will also come and camp to entertain the devotees.

Theppa Thirunaliu:

‘Theppa Thirunaliu’ literally means float festivals. The festival is celebrated to rejoice the arrival of good rains and filling of tanks and ponds with rain water. So this is the festival mainly celebrated in honour of rain god and water goddess. This celebration is also aimed at preventing floods and their havoc to the crops and the people. The celebrations is arranged as a village level ritual and contributions are collected from all the families who use water from these tanks for irrigational purposes. The rituals are actually conducted by the people who belong to agriculture castes. Professional singers of folk-songs are locally known as (asadulu). They recite songs praising the glory of water goddess (Gangamma) and her role in making the life of the folk happy. The festival of floating is celebrated with the help, contributions and participation of all castes since water is used by one and all. It is celebrated not only to evoke pity but also to provide an opportunity to the people of all strata to mingle freely and breathe an air of divinity and togetherness.
IV. Life cycle ceremonies (Rites of passage):

Ritual act of a society can be divided into categories on the basis of their periodic or non-periodic occurrence. The first category can be viewed as rites of intensification because they are held to maintain social equilibrium by reinforcing the habitual relations of members of the group (Chappel and Coon, 1942) the second category includes changes occurring in the lives of individuals are single individual. It can be closely termed as Rites of passage, 'crisis —rites of life-cycle ceremonies.

The rites practised at birth, puberty, marriage and death have been classified by Arnold Van Gennep (1908) under the title 'Rites of passage' Rites of passage may be regarded as a community process. Viewed in this way each rite appears as a focal or nodal point along the line of development around which the social process pulsed with greater intensity. The rites of passage provide a place for the more dynamic aspects of the social data. It provides an axis of the people's culture from which the regularities and values immanent in that society may be viewed easily. Thus the study of life-cycle ceremonies may provide us a good understanding of the society and culture of a region (S.L. Srivastava, 1974: 67).

Van Gennep classifies the rites of passage ceremonies into three types such as separation, merge (adjustment) and aggression (reintegration).

An individual is first served from his old status and experience and made to adjust to the new ones during the period of transition, and later becomes officially established in the new position.
The recurrent rituals performed at each stage bears the same meaning and importance for all the people, including the Idiga community. However, this is not to say that the crisis rites have nothing to do with the community as a whole, but the meaning and importance depends upon the relation between the individual to whom the crisis rites are performed Vis-a-vis other individuals in the society. The villagers' participation is the crisis rites is directly proportional to the kind of kinship tie they hold with the individual who is undergoing crisis. The cyclic rites are not connected directly with the loss or gain of social members. The periodic or cyclic rituals are discussed under a separate section (Fairs and Festivals i.e. in the previous sub-chapter (iii) This chapter mainly deals with the rites of passage of the Idiga community.

Pregnancy:

The Idigas understand the casual relationship between sexual intercourse and conception. They also realise that mere sexual intercourse does not necessarily lead to conception and consider children as the gift of God. A sterile woman is compared to an alkaline land (Chavatibhumi) and say that no seeds grow on such land. The main signs they observe to detect pregnancy are stopping of monthly menstruation and swelling of breasts and abdomen.

A woman pregnant with child is not allowed to attend to work which strains her although she is not prevented from doing routine work, which is believed to facilitate with easy delivery of the baby. In the early stage of pregnancy a woman develops nausea and later develops longing for certain items of unseasonal and unusual foods. Often they are seen eating charcoal (Boggu) and clay suds.
An Idiga woman in her pregnancy is required to observe certain taboos. She should avoid visiting places believed to be haunted by evil spirits; crossing a river or a culvert; and eating eggs. Besides it is a taboo for her to participate in the activity such as filling rat-holes. She should not go to the burial ground or see a corpse. In the advance stage of pregnancy she should also not lift heavy things. The husband of the pregnant woman should also observe a few taboos such as not a to dig pits, kill animals and shave his beard during the ninth month of his wife’s pregnancy. On the days of eclipses a pregnant woman is not allowed to stir out of the house lest her baby should suffer from some form of deformity such as the harelip. She should not consume twin fruits and vegetables.

Normally the first child among the Idigas, is born in the natal home of the mother. During the fifth and the ninth month of pregnancy the expectant mother’s parents come with steam-boiled rice-cake (Vuldir), jaggery, cashwnuts, groundnuts and cardamom to her conjugal home and invite their daughter and also ask the consent of the son-in-law and his parents to take their daughter with them. This is marked with a ceremony called ‘Seemantham’. If the parents fail to conduct this ceremony for any reason, it is the husband’s family which celebrates this.

Child Birth:

This delivery of the child takes place in the main house itself. As the labour-pains start, the expectant mother is conducted into a closed room where the child is delivered by the local mid-wife (manthra-santi) only when complications arise. The pregnant women are taken to maternity hospital situated in the near by town.
After the baby is born the umbilical cord is cut by the mid-wife using a locally made knife (Kodavalli). The placenta (maya) and umbilical cord are placed in a winnowing fan (chata) made out of bamboo ribs and buried on one side of the house. If it is buried elsewhere, the magicians may use the same for magical purpose. If it is eaten by the dogs, the child may lose health and become mischievous, according to the Idiga people.

The Idigas have a few benefits about the position of the child and birth. If the baby is born with its legs first, it is believed that he / she becomes an expert native doctor. With this belief it is further believed that if that child's left is rubbed on the sprained part of a person, the pain will disappear. In some case a child may be born with some amniotic material around its neck. This is considered inauspicious to the child's material uncle. To counteract this a hen is waved round the child and later sacrificed to one of the village deities and later given to the local mid-wife.

Soon after its birth a baby is washed in taped water. On the first day of her confinement, the mother is given neither food to eat nor water to drink. Instead for eleven days, small quantities of herbal extract (Kashyam) is given. Hence forth, if the mother does not want to have children, she is given with a native medicine (oddlu mandu) on the first day of the delivery and before the administration of the herbal extract. On the second day, early in the morning, she will be given a small quantity of boiled rice along with powdered curry leaves (Kariyepaku podi). The mother should not suckle her breast milk to the child on the first and second days, since the colostrum is believed to be unfit for consumption. Such milk is squeezed by the new mother into a dish (as per the elder women folk) and throw it on a tree. This is practiced for about three days.
Purification rite and naming:

The Idigas observe a birth pollution period of 9 or 11 days. On the last day a rite locally called purudu observed. Depending on the financial position of the family the purification ritual is performed with much pomp and colour. On the birth of the child the ritual status of its mother also becomes impure. On the purificatory day she is given a ritual bath and made to overcome that status. The mother and the child are given a ritual bath on the ninth or eleventh day. The entire house is ritually cleaned by white washing. All the earthen cooking pots are replaced by new ones. Later turmeric water is sprinkled on the house and house-hold objects to purify them. The baby is given a ritual bath and kept in a winnowing pan sieve filled with paddy at the bottom and covered with a piece of cloth. The mother is also ritually purified by giving a bath in tepid water. A few customs are observed to prevent the pady and mother from diseases and attack of evil things. When the child's umbilical and is cut the mother is staunched with a redhot needle on her and this treatment is believed to prevent the child from getting convulsions. At the threshold of the confinement room, an old winnow pan and a boometick are kept, and a bunch of margosa leaves are stuck to the door frame to prevent the entry of evil spirits into room.

The day of naming the child is an occasion for rejoice. So relatives and friends are invited to take part in eating the feast. Pieces of new cloth are presented by the invite to the mother and the baby, besides fruits, flowers, betal leaves and nuts and some cosmetic materials. The maternal uncle (menamama) plays an important role in this celebration. He is obligated to bring a gold ornament to the child and new clothes to this sister and the child.
On this day the washer man and the local mid-wife are also suitable rewarded for their services. There is a custom among the Idigas that the maternal uncle of the child is not allowed to see the baby until the 'pollution' is over.

For convenience the naming ceremony of a child generally takes places on the day of the purification ceremony. As a custom the paternal aunt give the name to the child and she also puts the child into the cradle for the first time. Generally the names of the family and favourite deities and ancestors are given to the child. The actual name is selected by the elder members of the family. However the sooth sayer is consulted for the same in advance. If a child gets ill during its infancy or suffers from any other type of misfortune it is believed that the name given is unlucky and there is provision to change it. There is also the custom of giving a false name to a child to deceive the God of death, after a low or filthy object, to show that they attach no particular value to its existence. (Ananthakrishna Iyyer, 1930: 368). If a vow is taken to a deity, praying for a child, naturally the name of the deity such as Gangamma, Venkateswara, Gurappa etc. is given. You have to tell first what this ceremony is and how it is observed.

Tonsure Ceremony:

Cutting of the hair of a child for the first time is observed as the tonsure ceremony (Puttuventrukalu taeyuta). Generally the rite is performed before the child completes its first year. Tonsure ceremony is a costly affair since it has to be performed at the shrine and for this all co-operative kin and friends are invited. If the family can not afford they may observe the same during fourth or fifth year of the child. Some times it may go up to the eleventh year. In a few cases such as difficult delivery vows are taken to the deity covering
the difficulty or to benoquent ones to care the situation and to fulfill the vow
the child will be named after that deity. Similarly vows are also taken to
conduct the tonsure ceremony on his/her name and at their shima.

Tonsure ceremony is celebrated on an auspicious day and fixed in
consultation with the elders. The ceremony will be arranged by the side of a
brook and under a holy tree such as neem. A day earlier to the tonsure
ceremony, the house is dusted, white washed and ritually cleaned. The
maternal uncle of the child and other cooperating kin are invited. On the day
of the ceremony the parents of the child observe a fast. The maternal uncle
brings the ornaments customarily prescribed such as the ear-rings, nose-ring
and new garments to the child and a sari and blouse piece to his sister. He is
also customarily required to meet all the expenses at the rite. Other invites
too bring gifts varada to the child and mother. The namadarulu sect among
the idiga celebrate tonsure ceremony at Gurappa, motudaaru at muneswara
shrines situated on the out-skirts of the village. On this occasion a goat or a
chicken or pig is sacrificed to the deity. The child its parents and invitees go in
procession accompanied with holy music to a margosa or papal tree, where
usually an ant (snake) mound is noticed. Cotton thread dipped in turmeric
water, is placed around the ant-hill seven times and turmeric and vermillion
powders are also applied to the mound. There earthen cakes decorated with
turmeric paste and vermillion are kept near the margosa tree. The decorated
bricks are an indication for the divine presence of the deity according to them,
for the purpose. Parched rice, fruits and flowers, dried bengalgram, soaked
greengram, Jaggery, sweet-jelly and coconut are offered to one of the deities
mention of above depending on the family tradition.
The child is made to sit in front of the ant hill, on a low-wooden stool covered with a piece of new cloth. A worship is offered to the deity. Then the maternal uncle symbolically cuts three patches of hair from the child's head. Later the barber trims the remaining hair. Immediately after the tonsure ceremony the ear boring ceremony is performed either by the goldsmith or the maternal uncle. If the child is female its nose too is bored to fix nose ring. For his duties the goldsmith gets the customarily fixed reward from the family. It is also customary for the relative to drop a few coins in to a cup filled with water, after wishing the child a healthy and prosperous life. The barber as a customary right takes away the ritual material arranged. The pipers belong to barbers castes, who provide holy music to the occasion are paid customarily in both cash and kind. After returning home the child is given a ritual bath the dressed in the new clothes. A feast is arranged in which all the invitees take part. The maternal uncle who plays an active and focal role is also presented with a pair of new dhoties.

A few families who can afford and according to their vow, conduct the tonsure ceremony of their children at the shrine of Lord Venkateswara at Tirupati or of Lord Siva at Srikalahasti, of temples at Lord Subramaniveswara Swamy (Thiruttani) depending upon their faith.

Puberty ceremony:

Among the Idivas the attainment of puberty by a girl is a blossoming happy and important occasion. That status of sexual maturity the girl is locally referred to as becoming a Rajaswala literally meaning blossoming into a woman or a peddamanisthi, or becoming an adult. In this region the girls come of age between the age of eleven and fifteen years. Soon after noticing the
maturation, the girl herself who notices the blood stain on her dress, informs her mother about her condition. On noticing her condition the girl is secluded or kept a part from others in to a portion of the house and immediately the news of her attaining puberty is sent to her maternal uncle. She is treated ritually impure till the purificatory rites are performed on the third day. During this pollution period she is kept in a temporary shed erected using a green leaves, in the yard of the house. Daily she is given a bath and dressed in a white garment and made to stay in the shed. Her dress, bedding material are also changed daily and fresh green leaves are put on the shed. On the fourth morning, the girl personally pulls down the shed and throws away the materials. After this she is given a ritual bath and it is only after this, she is allowed to come into the house. The spot where the leaf shed stood is swept and applied with cowdung solution and food offering of curds and cooked rice are placed on a plantation leaf. Incense sticks are burnt and a coconut is broken.

On the fourth day a rite is observed to purify the household and its members. For this a priest is called to perform the purificatory ritual and conducts rites to bring prosperity and happiness. From that day women folk of the locality assemble at her home in the evening and dress the girl in their best. The girl is made to sit on a decorated seat and sing folk songs suitable for the occasion. They also present her with coconuts, plantations, etc., and also wave sacred lamp. If the girl is not yet married the expenses of the rite are met by the maternal uncle. If she is already married they are met by her conjugal home. On the last day a sheep is slaughtered and served with community members in a feast.
In the case of married girls attaining puberty, the last day of puberty celebration is used for the consummation of the marriage. The couple are made to seat side by side and smeared with turmeric paste and waved with sacred lamp and also presented with fruits, flowers and gifts.

Marriage Ceremony:

Marriage is a rite which results in both separation and unification activities. Among the Idigas the marriage are arranged, and involve a lot of many transaction and so on ritual activity. Among the Idigas the marriages are arranged at the place of the bride-groom or in a temple. When celebrated at home a pendal using green coconut leaves and bambo sticks erected infront of the house. The house and the surrounding are cleaned and applied with cowdung and decorated with green leaves and flower branches.

On day earlier to the marriage, the deities in the village and ancestors are worshipped for help and blessings for the family and the bridal couple. Before the commencement of the actual marriage, the bridal couple take a ritual bath and worship Lord Vinayaka, the deity who removes the obstacles. Later the bridal couple wear new (white) dresses and garlands of flowers. A Brahmin priest is invited to conduct the marriage rites. On the appointed hour the lights the sacred fire. Later the bridal couple are led to the pendal and made to stand facing each other and a piece of cloth is held between them. After the chanting of marriage spells or holly syllables the priest asks the bride groom to tie the sacred necklace or thali bottu a marriage indication around the neck of the bride. The couple are asked to witness the arundhati star later.

After the marriage the bridal couple and a few kin stay back and others return to their village. On the third or fifth day after marriage, the bridal couple are
taken to the house of the bride. On that night, the nuptial ceremony is arranged. The various stages of marriage ceremony step by step are described in detail in the chapter on social organisation under the sub-chapter marriage.

Death:

Death is considered a natural cause of event in the life of an individual among the iodigas. If a person dies after living sufficiently a full life, it is considered natural. Untimely and violent deaths are believed to be the acts of supernaturals. They do admit that diseases and other calamities are also responsible for the deaths which are supported to be caused either by supernatural forces or due to natural course of events. The iodigas keep watch on a person, who is down with prolonged illness. The elderly persons of the locality by virtue at their experience forecast the time and day of his death. The person on the death bed is shifted out of the main house to a verandah and made to lie on a mat or cot. All available kith and kin assemble around the person and one by one drop the holy water which has the leaves of Tulasi plant (Tulasi theeatham) (ocimum sanctum) are put into this mouth.

Soon after the death of a person news is sent to the village manorial servant (totvadu). On his arrival at the family the caste elders instruct him of arrange for the special messengers from his caste to convey the news of death to the relatives and friends of the family residing in other villages. Meanwhile the kith and kin who are already assembled bathe the corpse,rees him / her up with a new piece of cloth and arrange for worship. The customary grave diggers are asked to dig the grave at the spot suggested by the family. As the kith and kin arrive they worship the corpse and pay their last respects.
The Idigas who belong to the two Hindu sects follow two types of funeral practices according to their Shaivite and Vishnavite customs.

After the death and when the body is arranged for funeral rites both are groups put a mixture of betal - leaves and nuts into the mouth of the deceased and however the shiyates also put a coin along with it. Both groups put their religious marks on the forehead of the dead such as three horizontal sacred ash marks by the Shivites and three vertical line (namalu) by the others. Musicians belonging to Harijan Caste are invited to play funeral music using drums and horns. The vishnavites invite their customary priest who belongs to satani Brahmin group to arrange for the funeral rites. The priest on his arrival sacrifices a goat and arranges to cook the same for the feast. All along the activity he goes on chanting holy syllables mantras. Later all the relatives and friends of the dead, together with the mourning family members, consume the food. After this the corpse is given a ritual bath using hot water and soap-nut powder. Three types of fats viz., ginger oil, coconut oil and ghee are also applied. The shalivites do not have the custom of sacrificing a goat before the disposal of the dead. Except this the remaining practices are common both the sects.

The Harijans apart from providing the funeral music also prepare a bier (pedi) using bamboo poles. A piece of new white cloth is covered round the corpse and turmeric powder is sprinkled upon it. Later the body is placed on the bier. The bier is generally carried by brothers and parallel cousins only. It is the practice among both the sects of the Idiga community. It is also customary to throw betal leaves, coins and parched rice upon the bier as it is being carried to the burial ground. Generally the coines are picked up by the
Harjisan only. The bier with the corpse is placed at a place known as dimpu du kallam on the way to burial ground, to make sure the dead person has not come to life again. They do so since there is a belief among the kallas that the life of a dead person may return to its abode devaling Lord Yama. As a custom the chief mourner stands near the corpse and calls out the deceased three times to make sure. On making sure that the dead has not returned, lights camphor and breaks a coconut. This rite is known as dimpu du kallam ceremony. From this spot the women folk are not allowed to follow the funeral procession and so they get back to the house. Now when the bier is lifted the pall-bearers change their places - those who are carrying in front go to the back place and those at the back come to the front. Now onwards only the men folk are present at the funeral activities.

The kallas customarily bury their dead. However those who suffer from leprosy are cremated with the belief their body will pollute mother earth and thus results in drought condition during the year. Corpses of pregnant women are disposed of by a separate burial known as kalluuseva meaning burial under a heap of stones. Iyer (1930) mentions of funeral instances where the corpses of lepers were left exposed in woods under a shed, so that the birds may do their jobs. However today such corpses are conveniently cremated.

After digging the grave the Harjisan vacate the place. The body is placed into grave pit placing the head towards south and face is tilted towards the Eastern side. After this the cloth wrapped round the corpse is removed. In case of males the waist thread is cut off. The chief mourner generally will be the eldest so in case of women and youngest in case of man. If there are
no son, the grand son (son's son) or younger brother for the deceased plays this role. The chief mourner first throws handful of earth three times into the grave and other relatives follow him. Later a pot filled with water is brought on the shoulder of the chief mourner and taken thrice round the grave. At each round the pot is pierced once with a knife. After the third round the pot is dropped behind him from his shoulder. It is an age old tradition. An oscimum plant, 'Tulasi' is planted on the grave. From here one participant in the funeral go to a rivulet or tank for a ritual wash. The chief mourner is required to take a bath while other wash their feet and sprinkle water over their hands. After this before they go home, visit the house of the deceased and bow to the sacred light, placed at the spot where the deceased breathed his last. It is customary to place a vessel full of altar and burning light for the whole night for the use of the spirit of the deceased. Other customs is that the persons who carried the bier do not enter the kitchen and domestic holy altar room in their as well as in other houses till the purificatory rite is observed on the third day of death.

On the third day of death a rite known as chinna karmma is observed for which the agnates of the deceased pay and attend. The kinsmen including women go to the funeral ground and after milk to the dead by way of pouring on the grave. If the deceased has been a bachelor, only milk clarified butter and little parched grain are placed on the grave and no other ceremony is observed. If he has been married, all the agnates go to the grave yard with cooked food and after it to the deceased after breaking a coconut and burning frankincense. They invoke the spirit of the deceased to come and take it. When the crows come and devour the food offered, it is believed that the spirit has accepted it.
The idigas believe that death brings pollution to both men and household. In order to remove it and to give rest to the soul of the dead, all the rites and ceremonies connected with funeral are beautifully performed. The pollution period is observed for nine to eleven days. During this period the chief mourner and other male member of the family do not take shave and do so only after performing the rites.

A few taboos are observed by the mourning family. The chief mourner should not enter any house until the purificatory rite is celebrated. The family should not celebrate any rite, feast or festival for one year, there is also a ban to partake in marriage celebration. The chief mourner should not also touch others.

The last funeral rites for the dead, locally known as peddakarma are arranged on the ninth or eleventh day after death. After fixing the day, relatives and friends are informed. The wife's brother brings the clothes (guddalu) and money to the deceased family. This is done in the event of the sister's husband is dead. A Brahmin priest is invited to conduct the rituals. It is believed that on this day of rite the priest help the spirit of the dead person into ancestral fold. With this the living kin will cut-off their ties with the dead. So all the agnates take a ritual bath to symbolise this. The priest will also purify the house and for his services he is offered a few coines and uncooked food grains. The fire required to cook food in the family that day also has to be lit by the priest. Of the food prepared, a portion is offered to the dead by placing it on the grave and a little of it is also scattered on the root of the
house for the spirit which is believed to come in the form of crows. The pallbearers are specially invited and the chief mourner applies milk and ghee to their shoulders, while they are seated on the pounding pestle. A feast is also given to the members of this caste for their help and co-operation given to the family at the time of crisis.

In case of death of a man, his wife is allowed to wear all her ornaments and essential objects normally worn by a married women till the day of the last funeral rite. During this period of mourning, she is decorated with flowers, vermillion and bangles by her relatives. On the day of final funeral rite, these ornaments including the sacred lace (tali), vermillion, flowers, bangles and other ornaments are removed. Then she changes her clothes and wear the white dresses (mundakoka), brought by her natal home. Later the widow is conducted to her husband's house. The saree worn by her earlier should be given to the washerman linked with the family. Now since she cannot wear glass bangles she starts wearing copper or gold bangles. To mark the day more religious, arrangements are made to recite holy script (harikatha) during that night. Next day a lavish feast is given to the invitees, including the non-vegetarian food.

Three months after the death in the family the idiges arrange for the worship of the old clothes which belonged to the deceased. Once again during the eleventh month after the death another ceremony is observed and new clothes are offered to the deceased. Actually this rite makes the end of the funeral rites among the idiges people.
It can be stated that in the religious sphere the Idligs of this region seen to be integrated to a greater extent with the regional Hinduism through the process of universalising several of their religious practices. By and large, the Idlig religion is primarily utilitarian. Their ritualistic performances are both individual and communal. They have no fixed time for worship. Gods are remembered only at the time of disease and difficulty. Barring the worship of several deities, and celebration of life crises, rituals and festivals, there is little devotional or spiritual activity or mysticism in the religious life of the Idligs of the region. However the people of older generation after complain that there is lessening degree of faith in the religious life of the people of younger generations.