Our country is called 'the land of religious people'. Because of the influence of religion and rituals on the people of India, especially on the Hindus, the Hindu society has been very powerful from time immemorial. In shaping the social life of the Indian people, religion has been playing a great role. In both, the city as well as in villages religious beliefs and practices are still held essentially as supreme. These beliefs and practices have, in fact, upheld the social institutions and provided guidelines for good conduct and better understanding of the members of the different castes. Apart from its function of regulating behaviour and shaping ideology, religion acts as a cementing factor for the members of a community and fulfils most of their vital necessities.

The term 'Dharma' does not fully connote the English term 'Religion'. Again, 'Dharma' cannot be conceived without 'Karma' (deed). Both are inter-related concepts in the Hindu religion. Dharma is two fold i.e. Paramarthic 'Dharma' (spiritual) and Vyavaharik 'Dharma' (secular). The earlier is associated with metaphysical beliefs and divine wisdom. It also deals with religious practices. The essence of
'Dharma' is bearing to desire for self-release, to achieve 'Moksha' (salvation) after life. The English word religion is derived from the word 'religere' meaning coming together.

Belief in Heaven and Hell

Concerning their belief in heaven and hell, the replications interestingly consisted of two viewpoints. According to one viewpoint, heaven exists beyond the sky, and hell exists underneath the earth. By showing their hand, informants would point out one towards sky, and the other towards earth. The other point of view is that there are no heaven and hell. Both of them are non-existent universals. Human beings have created them. One informant from Bommagaripal, however, told that heaven is in 'Satyaloka' and hell is in 'Mrutyuloka', while some of them said that they did not know anything about heaven or hell.

People of both the viewpoints were agreeing in one point, particularly, that it was the 'Dharma' or the 'Karma' which took human beings to heaven or hell respectively. To them, the 'Dharma' is good manner or act. Giving alms to poor, feeding the poor, or presenting clothes constitute good acts. The 'Dharma' is recognised as a synonym to 'Dana' (giving alms). One earns merit by doing 'Dharma' i.e., 'Punya' (merit). The 'Karma' relate to bad manners like
cheating others for one's benefit, troubling others, using reproachful languages etc. Such acts are considered as 'Papa' (sin). The universals of heaven and hell are linked to the ideas of 'Dharma' and 'Punya', and 'Karma' and 'Papa'. One who does 'Punya' goes to heaven, while 'hell' is definite for those who do 'Papa'. In the region where the Killekyatha families reside, the sayings of Basaweshwar-reformer of Veerashaivism propitiated through his 'Vachana' that universals of heaven and hell are to be conceived in one's good and bad acts respectively, are very popular. These have a great impression on the Killekyathas also as is told by many in their replications.

According to them 'Adharma' is not doing good acts, for instance, not doing 'Dharma' or doing 'Karma' as explained earlier. To the question, 'what do they consider to be their Dharma?' they replied the same connecting it to the ideas of 'Dharma' and 'Karma'. Another question was asked particularly, 'do they believe that their 'Dharma' and 'Karma' will be rewarded in this world or in their next life, or of their children?'. Most of the answers revealed that the rewards of the 'Dharma' and 'Karma' of an individual are to be met with in their next life. Some of them opined that their children would get the reward. One informant told that one got the reward in one's life itself and some others pleaded their ignorance on the matter.
Regarding their eschatological belief, most of the informants told that the 'soul' after the death of a person goes to heaven. Some had no idea as to what happens to life after one's death. Some persons from Bommagaripal and Surdi told that the 'life' or 'soul' goes to 'Yamaloka' (world of God of death). At the same time some persons said that the Yamadutas (the servants of God of death) take the 'soul' to God Yama. The informants from Amarnathpur were of the opinion that if there was a good 'Guru' (religious teacher) to guide one, his soul goes to 'heaven'. The 'Punya' and 'Papa' acts are responsible for one's life going to 'heaven' and 'hell' respectively. While responding to this matter, the Killekyathas had differed from responses they gave to the question of the existence of heaven and hell. In every village Killekyathas come in contact with several people. They hear 'vachanas'— They also listen to the various discourses given by people of different schools of thought of Veerashaivism like Shishuvinhal Sharifswami, Siddarudha sampradaya (sect), Nijaguna Shivayogi's Kaivalya system and also by Brahmin 'Kirtankaras' (exponents) etc. So we could see different opinions on the questions concerning behaviour pattern and eschatological beliefs. Like this beliefs in soul, salvation and rebirth are the characteristic features of Killekyathas.
The Killekyathas are trustworthy believers, in a plurality of Gods and Goddesses, reposing at the same time, their faith in spirits and magic. They are worshippers of various Sanskritie, regional and local deities as well as followers of particular cults. Most of them believe that God is but one and that they worship him in his different forms under different names. The influence of Shaktism-cult of Durga or Goddess of strength is found on the entire caste. Most of the Killekyathas establish a seat of Durga in the residential house where worship is offered to the deity everyday and is considered to be the most powerful among the deities. The following are the Gods and Goddesses mainly worshipped by the Killekyathas of all area with few local variations here and there.

Banuman (Monkey - God)

The idol of Hunuman (the monkey God) which is also known as Maruti, Anjaneya, is found in every village of Killekyathas. The worship of Hanuman consists in the smearing of vermillion (Sindhur) and edible oil. In the village Amarnathpur no offering of non-vegetarian food is made to the God, nor can a drunken person can go near the God. The devotees pour milk over God and offer flowers and coconut and gold metalled leaves in the fulfilment of certain promises previously made. Saturday is the most sacred to this God. Women generally visit the temple on the sacred day.
with the flowers and pay homage. No fasts, fairs or festivals are, however, observed in honour of the God in any of the villages. But some individuals of Killekyathas observe fast on Saturday.

The importance of Hanuman is greater for the Killekyathas as they are imbued with the idea, traditionally, that the God possesses strong power to control and overpower the evil spirits which haunt the recesses of the atmosphere. It is said that the witch-doctors are the special devotees of this God. They visit the shrine with a lemon, coconut etc., on the night of the fourteenth day of the waning moon. Magical formulas are recited while sitting at the foot of Hanuman, and charms to drive out evil spirits are prepared at this time. The witch-doctor who invokes Hanuman is supposed to be powerful enough to drive off any evil spirit.

Krishna

Some of the Killekyathas of Surdi worship Krishna. The idol of God Krishna forms one of the house-hold items. It is kept in a corner of the house in a 'Palki' (wooden framework) constructed to the house deity. On the eve of Janmashtami, which falls on the eighth day of the month of Bhado (Nov-Dec), celebrated as the birth day of Krishna. Among some of the Killekyatha women, the fast is observed and non-vegetarian
food is tabooed on that day. The women fast for the whole
day and half of night, at which Krishna is supposed to have
been born. At mid-night, which is believed to be the time of
the birth of the Krishna they break their fast by taking the
‘Prasad’ (sacred food). They recite the popular story of the
birth of Krishna.

Rama

A few families of the village Bommagaripal have photos
of God Rama in their houses. His photo has a bow and arrow.
The birth day of the God, known as Ram-Navami which falls on
the ninth day of the moon in the later half of the month of
Chaitra (March-April) is celebrated by people of the village
by inviting a religious person (Kirtanakar) to narrate the
story of the Ramayana. It is said that, in on such days
Killekyathas are also invited by villagers to narrate the
stories of the epic.

Saraswati (Goddess of Learning)

In all villages, students and teachers of the school
have been celebrating Saraswati Puja on the fifth day in the
second fortnight of Magh (January-February). They purchase a
photo of Goddess Saraswati and worship her in an elaborate
manner. The expenses of the Puja are met with the
subscription of the students learning in the schools. Prasad
(sacred food) is given to all who come to have Darshan of the Goddess.

Shiva or Mahadev (God of Destruction)

There is no temple of this God in any villages of the study. However, 'Shiva-Ratri' is celebrated by most of the Killekyathas in honour of Lord Shiva. It is a special festival for all, both men and women fast for the whole day, whereas from the Killekyathas of Agatoor and Surdi only a few men observe fast and break it in the noon after a brief ritual of worship. Some of them fast for the whole day and the grown up children also imitate their elders. Those who observe fast for the whole day, break it after sun-set.

Bull Worship

Some of the beliefs and ceremonial observations are mainly connected with the Killekyatha occupation of agriculture. The bull which is the main source of production, is venerated by all Killekyathas. It is supposed to be the favourite vehicle of the pre-historic father-god. It was a proper male regenerative force.

The worship of the bull is performed every Monday. On this day the bull is worshipped with a red mark of vermilion on its forehead and it is not used for ploughing, pulling the cart or for any other work. It is also worshipped when
harvest is ripe in the month of October. On the day following Deepawali it is offered good fodder, a few wheat bread and salt. The body of the bull is painted with different hues and the horns with a special varnish of green or red.

Worship of Bhoodevi

Bhoodevi is another deity deeply venerated by the Killekyathas of Amarnathpur, Surdi and Agatoor villages. It is the hope and glory of the people. If the 'Bhoodevi' is happy and cheerful it will give bumper crops to the tillers. There is no idol form of the Goddess Bhoodevi, nor is there any temple. They worship the earth in the form of their fields. The deity is worshipped for the first time on the third day of the bright half of moon in the month of Vaishaka (April). On this day, they get up early in the morning, take out their Bulls (those are having) and give them a bath. Wheat breads and grass are given to them. Then, in one of the fields, the earth is worshipped by the offerings of cocoanut, flowers and vermillion after which a scrap of land is ploughed by the Bulls.

This is an auspicious day and if the Mother earth is paid all the veneration due to her, the yields are sure to be prosperous.
Killekyathas of Kushalpur and Bommagaripal villages also worship Bhoodevi with meagre change that they go directly to the fields and keep five small stones at one place. There, the stones are worshipped by applying vermillion. The Bhoodevi is also worshipped by Killekyathas at the time of the construction of a new house. When an auspicious day is fixed in consultation with the priest for the erection of a house, the ‘Bhoodevi’ is worshipped. In Kushalpur, Bommagaripal and Surdi the worship is officiated by the caste priest who belongs to ‘Atak’ clan while in Amarnathpur and Agatoor the Brahmin performs this sacred duty. Before the plan is marked on the plot, a coin, a silver thread and flowers are offered to 'Bhoodevi'. The offerings, consisting of coconut are distributed among the invitees. The 'Bhoodevi' is once again worshipped at the time of the harvesting of crops, by an offering of flowers and vermillion. The yields are taken to the threshing-floor only after the worship. ‘Bhoodevi’ is also worshipped at the time of cremation of the dead.

Plough Worship

The plough and other agricultural implements are also associated with the Killekyatha beliefs and rituals. They are the means for exploiting the resources of production and the Killekyathas, therefore, in all the five villages, attach
great significance to the implements. Any mishandling of the
implements leads to the destruction of the family. The
worship of the implements begins on the third day of the
bright half of moon in the month of Vaishakha (April). The
Killekyathas of Amarnathpur worship the implements by putting
a Swastik* mark on each implement.

**River Worship**

Those who are scattered nearby river side for fishing,
particularly the Killekyathas of Agatoor, Amarnathpur and
Kushalpur, worship the river. As the waters first rise in
the river on the commencement of monsoon, they gather on the
river bank and offer coconut, flowers and rice to it. Apart
from these, Killekyathas also worship various water springs.
There is no regular form of worship for the natural springs,
but their water is considered to be as sacred as the water of
the Ganges. Some of the Killekyathas, during Navaratri
celebrations, observe 'Ghata Sthapan' when the barley sown on
the first day is pulled out with its roots and taken to a
stream for submersion. The stream is worshipped by the
offerings of flowers and coconut and the barley plants are
submerged.

* In each and every religious rites 'Swastik' marks put
on with the turmeric paste or sacred ash (Vibhooti).
This mark is symbol of Aryans. This tradition of
Aryanhood has continued among these people.
Cow Worship

In the villages of this study, it was found that the Killekyathas worshipped the Cow. They call mother Cow as 'Gaya Ma'. Even Cow-dung and urine are considered to be sacred. The place where any rite is to be performed, must be purified by smearing with Cow-dung. Its urine may be mixed with water for bathing on certain occasions. It may also be sprinkled for purifying purposes. The tail of the Cow has special significance, it is believed that in each body part of the Cow, there lived various God and Goddesses. The Cow is also given to the daughter at the time of her marriage as a present that has special holy importance. The most sacred day to mother Cow is the second day of Deepawali in the month of Ashwin (October). Another sacred day to the Cow is the Gokul-Ashtami. On this day, Killekyatha women worship the Cow. The worship is carried out by offering a small bundle of grass to the Cow and placing a mark of kumkum (vermillion) and a few flowers on her head. It is believed that, if the worship due, is not offered to the Cow, she may be annoyed as the Cow's curse is feared by all. It is believed that Cow's displeasure may bring disease or ruin to the whole family.

Tree Worship: (Dendrolatry)

The Killekyatha settlements in villages have trees all round. They have come to attach religious importance to some
of these trees. The trees are supposed to be animated with powerful spirits which help them in hard times if properly propitiated. The commonly venerated trees are Mango and Banana. In the villages of this study, except Killekyathas of Agatoor and Kushalpur, all the people offered worship to the trees on several occasions during the year.

Throughout Northern Karnataka, the Yallamma deity of the Yallamma hills near Saundatti of Belgaum district, Bhavani of Pratapgar, and Panduranga or Vithal deity of Pandharpur near Solapur are famous Goddesses, where the Killekyathas go on pilgrimages. It is said that Yallamma deity has devotees from Maharashtra also. Most of the Killekyathas make pilgrimage to Yallamma hill at the time of Bharat Hunnime (January) which is worshipped by all most all communities of Northern Karnataka. The Bijapur Gazetteer (1884:199) states that their two leading divinities are Mahadev and Durga. Mahadev is said to be found only in the houses of the head of the Ganacharis, but many have Durga in their sheds and worship her themselves. Those who have no image of Durga, on her great day, a Tuesday about Magh fullmoon in January-February, make an image of a meal and worship it. They keep all the leading Hindu fast and feasts, and a few, sometimes make pilgrimages to Parasgad in Belgaum and to Pandharpur in Sholapur. Their priests are Ganacharis and the head
PHOTO 9: THE SHRINE OF GODDESS BHAVANI OF PRATAPGAD
Ganachari is their spiritual teacher. The explanation given of Killekyathas in Bombay Presidency by the authority referred above is more or less applicable to them in the Northern Karnataka.

Coming to the Killekyathas of Southern Karnataka area, we find meagre differences. Here their leading divinities are Chamundi, Maramma and Venkataramana. The Maramma deity of Sirsi in Karwar district is a famous Goddess and it is said that the festival is celebrated with great elation by all the community people. On that day they cook a sweet dish (polis) in the name of the deity, and partake ceremonial meals. Some Killekyathas from Surdi and Bommagaripal make pilgrimage to Dharmsathala and Triupati.

Shiva, Rama, Krishna, Durga, Laxmi, Saraswati, Hanuman are popular throughout India, whereas the rest are local Gods and Goddesses. In fact, a few among the local deities are also found in other localities of the villages, but are known by different names. Some of the Killekyathas from Amarnathpur go to their relatives village Kakanur near Badami of Bijapur district for 'Kalikadevi' fair, another form in which Devi or Mother Goddess is invoked. A reference to Goddess Kalika is made in the Markandeya Purana where the Goddess is supposed to have assumed ten incarnations, including Kalika the terrible, the form which was assumed in
PHOTO 10: PILGRIMAGE TO DHARMASTHALA
order to destroy Raktavija Rakshasa. A temple is dedicated to this Goddess. The image is elaborately dressed and adorned with gold ornaments at the annual fair of the Goddess.

There are also many devotees of Shri Ramarudha swami of Ramarudha Matha at Bagalkot in Bijapur district. Many Killekyathas have become devotees of Shri Ramarudha swami. By 1940's, some richmen had helped the devotees to build a Shrine at Kakanur and Mammatger, near Badami of Bijapur district in the name of Shri Ramarudha swami. The sect belongs to Shri Siddharudha Sampradaya at Hubli - mainly 'Adwaita' in philosophical content. The sect has large number of devotees in Northern-Karnataka.

So far as the Killekyathas were concerned, it is Fakirappa who is the disciple, as it was continued to him by his father Subanaray. He influenced many Killekyathas to become disciples. He, along with some Killekyatha disciples, used to attend the 'Saptah' held in honour of Shri Ramarudha Swami during 'Shivaratri' (February) at Bagalkot. It is said that his father Subanaray (late) became the first disciple and by his extreme skill in singing and expressing the tenets of Shri Ramarudha Swami and Nijaguna Sivayogi's Kaivalya system, he became very popular in those days. When Subanaray died, his body was buried and the disciples from
PHOTO 11: THE SHRINE OF GOD SHIVA OF BAGALKOT
Lingayat, and Shephard castes have been collecting money to build a shrine on the graveyard of the Late Subanray.

It was observed that, there is a image of deity known as Gayatri in the house of Fakirappa. The deity is worshipped by his wife Rukmavva every Friday, as he reads the 'Gayatri' puran. On that day they cook sweet dish in the name of the Gayatri deity at home and partake ceremomial meals. In the Kelur village near Hungund where researcher found one Swami by name Yallappa Maharaj. He too worships the deity by name "Shakti devi" and he also has many disciples of Killekyathas and other communities. Generally, when some families who are well versed in singing and playing instruments, arrange a 'bhajan' party at their villages, it is done in the night. The Killekyathas keep the photos of Shri Ramarudha Swami and Yallappa Maharaj in their settlements, and sing songs, for the whole night. To such prayer meetings, disciples of other castes also invited. The Ramarudha sect has provided more the Killekyathas for their integration with the other communities of the area. On some occasion Killekyathas employ Gondhali dance.

FESTIVALS:

The ritual aspect of Hinduism mainly consists of festivals. Study of festivals broadly helps to uncover the patterns of religious behaviour of the people. Besides,
study into festivals focuses light on several other issues: for instance, the general role of festivals in the social life of the people, the degree of integration between the great and little tradition of Hinduism, the amount of community participation etc. Most of the Killekyathas observe usual festivals which are spread evenly over the whole year, the details of which are given below:

1. **Ugadi**

For all Hindus, this is a new year day who reckon by the moon. It falls on the first day of Chaitra (March-April). Ritual has little part to pay with this festival. Consumption of a little mixture of bitter neem flowers with jaggery is the important feature of the day which symbolises the bitterness and the sweetness of the coming days.

2. **Basava Jayanti**

In the month of May (Aksaya Tratiya) this is observed in honour of Basaweswar who is considered as a reformer of Veerashaivism. On this day Bullocks are washed, decorated and offered worship.

3. **Nagarpanchami**

Nagarpanchami which falls on the fifth day of the full moon of the lunar month of Shravana (June-July). On this day
the Snake God is worshipped in each household of all five villages. Clay images of serpents are specially prepared in every household for offering worship with milk. In some villages snake-charmers move round the village with snakes in baskets. Every person of the family must be present at the time of the worship of Snake God (Nag Dev). In the absence of any member of the family, the person's name is taken by the head of the family when pouring milk on the Snake's image. The head of the family begs pardon with folded hands for any misdeed committed in ignorance. They take prasad first and after that anything else can be eaten.

4. Ganesh Chaturthi

It is also an important festival. Almost all the communities observe this festival, but the pattern of observance differs from family to family. It falls on the fourth day of Shukla paksha when the moon in full shape appears in the sky in the month of Bhado (July-August). Among Killekyathas of all five villages, only few families instal the image of Ganesha to perform this festival. A sacred thread is put on the image and marked with vermillion and turmeric. A little earthern lamp is lighted and kept burning in front of the image. Flowers of several varieties are placed on and around the image and some sweets, fruits are also offered to the deity. When this is done, all the
family members bow down before the image. The sole aim of this festival is to pray for the welfare of the entire family. On the day which they desire to submerge the image of Ganesha, they proceed to a nearby stream or well, and after worship to the image of Ganesha, it is submerged in the waters.

5. Dussera

This is also called Nadahabba or 'Navaratri'. It starts in the month of Aswin (October-November) and lasts for ten days. This festival is not restricted to a particular community. It is a most important and gorgeous festival among the Hindus of India.

In Bommagaripal village, collection of subscription starts well before the actual observance of the festival by all community people. It involves a good amount of money to purchase articles relating to Puja, relating to different materials in the decoration of pandal and also to buy the image of Durga. With the establishment of Kalash worship by a priest, then starts the first day of the festival. On the ninth day, implements of labour, weapons etc., are worshipped and on the tenth day they exchange 'Banni' leaves with one another. In the survey of other Killekyatha villages, it was found in some families that, on the first day of the
festival, barley is sown on the kachha floor of the platform before the Durga photo at home. The ceremony of the submersion of barley plants takes place in the morning of the ninth day. The same day implements of all types and weapons are worshipped and the next day they exchange 'Banni' leaves with one another. At that time it is believed that 'Banni' as a token of gold.

6. Deepavali

Deepavali means a group of lamps. This is a famous Hindu festival lasting for about five days beginning from the thirteenth day of the dark half of the lunar month of Aswin (November-December). In every village, in every house irrespective of rich or poor it is observed with great enthusiasm. They offer 'Prasad' to Goddess Lakshmi. Everyone is very particular to see that the lamps burn the whole night. They believe that the Goddess visits every home on that auspicious night and she imparts wealth to those whose house is lighted with lamps and incense.

A large number of little earthen lamps are kept burning in front of and around the house. Businessmen change their business registers and start new records from next day. People begin to white-wash, clean and decorate their houses before one month of this festival. On this occasion some people try to test their luck by gambling, and those winning
are believed to be lucky throughout the year.

7. Sankranti

Killekayathas of all the villages celebrate it in the form of fair. It is observed on the last day of Magh (January). This festival is marked out as the occasion for the preparation if special dishes. In some well-to-do families, Killekyathas, on the previous day, prepare a sweet dish, and a goat or hen is sacrificed. 'Til' and 'Gul' (molasses) are an essential item of dishes on the occasion.

8. Holi

The festival of holi falls on the full-moon day of Phalgun (February-March). In fact, the whole month of Phalgun is regarded as a month of joy, and all the community members try to make it colourful. In Bommagaripal and Agatoor, girls also involve. Holi is a festival of Rag (songs) and Rang (colours). Especially Holi songs are sung only during a period ranging from Basant Panchami to Holi. The Killekayathas sing Holi songs in Marathi as well as in Kannada. From the day of Holi till the Holi pyre is set on fire, playing with colour is prohibited. After the Holi pyre is set on fire at about 10 p.m., they sing a few holi songs and come back to their respective houses singing and dancing.
The Holi proper, in which colour and coloured water are freely thrown on each other starts at about 8 a.m., the children and young persons play among themselves with coloured water. Usually coloured water is carried and thrown either with buckets or with pitchers. Then they assemble at a few places in batches. There are a few drummers and Holi singers in each batch. Whenever any new batch is met with in the way each batch throws coloured water on the other. This exchange of colour continues till 1-30 p.m. People tired of this colour throwing take bath after which Holi ends.

SANSKARAS (RITES OF PASSAGES)

Sanskra is a ritual performance associated with life cycle. Rituals may be put under one Indian term Sanskara. Right form the day a man is born, he goes through various ritual performances as a result of which he is accepted into that of an adult or a husband or a priest in the course of his life. A person is born in Hindu society as a asocial being. He attains sociality by going through Sanskaras. This is a process of refinement. Below is the brief description of the rituals associated with life-cycle of the Killekyathas. The practices connected with births, marriages and deaths are more or less similar among majority of the villages. They only differ in a few details.
1. Beliefs and Practices connected with Birth

The first ceremony is performed when a woman becomes pregnant for the first time and is known 'Bayake oota' in kannada and 'Dhaval jevan' in marathi. It is performed in the third month of pregnancy. For this ceremony a few female acquaintances of the family are called for the feast. This is in a way a ceremony to feed the pregnant woman on foods for which she develops a craving. Then in the fifth or the seventh month, a second ceremony is performed. This is known as 'Kubsad Karya' in kannada and 'Choli Pangarana' in marathi. For this ceremony her parents are also invited. They bring a saree, a blouse, fruits and flowers and fill her lap. Some relatives are given a feast. After this ceremony, the pregnant woman, if it be her first pregnancy, goes to her parental place for confinement. She has to go there in an odd month of pregnancy. During this period her food is much regulated. She is forbidden to eat Papaya, Guava and such other fruits as they are considered harmful. She has also to avoid spicy foods. At the parental place a separate place is assigned for her confinement and they place a 'Horasu' for her use. She is forbidden to do any kind of heavy manual work and is usually assigned only some light work. Among the poorer, however, there are several instances when pregnant women have been working at hard jobs right to the day of her delivery.
PHOTO 14: 'CHOLI PANGARANA'  
- THE PREGNANT WOMAN  
WITH HER HUSBAND
Usually the elderly women and an untrained 'Dai' (mid-wife) attend the delivery. They receive about twenty-five rupees and some grains from well-to-do households for their services. Poorer pay them less. Soon after delivery the placenta is cut and placed in an earthen pot and then it is buried in the backyard of their houses. After delivery the mother and the child are given a bath in warm water. The child is fed with a few drops of honey. From the second day of delivery the woman is fed with a wheat bread and ghee she is also given a sweet dish. In the villages Kushalpur and Agatoor, the mother is given some quantities of liquor for two or three days to improve her condition. The practice is not observed in the other three villages. The Killekyathas in the villages give non-vegetarian food to the mother to enable her to make a speedy recovery from the pangs of delivery like, many of the castes, a small function is arranged on the fifth day which is known as 'Aydasi'. They worship the Goddess 'Shetgevva' by offering cooked food and waving a sacred lamp before her. This lamp is then taken away by the Dai (mid-wife) under the cover. It is believed that evil will befall the child and the mother, should any member of the household see the lamp when being carried away. A needle is kept near the image of 'Shetgevva' under the

* Goddess 'Shresthi' is called as Shetgevva or Shetavi by the womenfolk.
belief that the deity will write the fate of the baby on its forehead with the help of this needle.

The 'Ayda' function indicates the end of the post-delivery period of the mother. Pollution by delivery lasts for five days and she is not allowed to enter the kitchen. She is restricted from touching water or clothes. But after this ceremony, the pollution period is over and she is allowed to do all the household work as usual. Her diet is regulated for about a month. There are certain taboos regarding food which are expected to be observed during the month. Green leafy vegetables are not given to the mother, for they are considered harmful to the newly born baby. Rice is also a taboo. Curd and Sugar are also prohibited because they are supposed to affect the child as the child is sucking the breast-milk. Among the Killekathas of Amarnathpur and Agatoor the post-delivery period lasts for a month, for the whole period the mother is supposed to be polluted and therefore she is not allowed to do the household work and enter the kitchen less it brings pollution.

2. Naming Ceremony:

Usually this ceremony is performed on the 12th day for the male child or on the 13th day if it is a female. For this ceremony widows and remarried women are not invited.
FIGURE 5. NAMING CEREMONY

Source: (Nayak, 1984: 26)
Five married women bathe the child and the mother and both wear new clothes. The maternal uncle of the woman presents her and the child with new clothes and the child is given a suitable name after being placed in a cradle by the father's sister. Initially the name given to a child is only a birth name. Then the name given to a child may be called with a name as they wish. A child born may be called 'baba' or 'amma' as a term of affection. In case the parent's previous children have died the tendency is to give some odd and ugly name to the child. Usually the name of a male ends in 'Rao' whereas feminine names end in 'Bai': e.g., Shivajirao and Radhabai. Ramarao and Ushabai. The naming pattern would be clear at a glance, from the following list of some names of both the sexes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Significance of Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shivajirao</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Name of the God Shiva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arjun</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Hero of Mahabharat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krishnajirao</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Great man in Mahabharat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dasharatha</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Father of Rama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramaji</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Hero of Ramayan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranojirao</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Name of a king</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ganapatrao</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Son of God shiva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhimrao</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>One of the heroes in Mahabharat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahalyabai</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>The name taken from Indian epic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soyrabai</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Beautiful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeejabai</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Religious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarabai</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>As beautiful as stars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakuntalabai</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Name from Indian epic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakshmibai</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Goddesses of wealth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PHOTO 15a) : NAMING CEREMONY

PHOTO 15b) : BIRTHDAY CEREMONY
3. Rites for the growth of the child

The period from birth to twelve years of age is marked by various rites and ceremonies. For the first two days the child is not allowed to suck the mother’s breasts and ‘Dai’ feeds the child. Then the ‘Milk sucking’ ceremony is performed. An offering of coconuts is made to the home deity, that it may ever keep the breasts of the mother full of milk. The period of confinement is generally about two to three months among well-to-do Killekyathas and among others it is fifteen days to a month.

After the period of confinement, when the mother visits the well for the first time, a small ritual is arranged. The woman prepares an image of Ganesha in clay and worships it on the parapet wall. She draws some water from the well and sips a few drops. The child is also given a few drops of water. After delivery the woman is given some rich foods, depending on the economic condition of each family. They prepare special sweet balls from Jaggery, Gram, Ghee, Copra etc., to feed her. Sterility or still deliveries are always attributed to sins committed in the past life. Killekyathas then observe special vows to various saints and tombs. The husband of a pregnant woman is forbidden to carry any dead body during his wife’s pregnancy. He is also forbidden to
kill any Snake during this period. Killekyathas believe that such acts will bring evil.

The important ritual takes place only when the child attains the age of ten or twelve. If, in infancy, up to the age of twelve months it weeps at night or indicates uneasiness, some evil spirits are believed to have harmed the child. To remove the evil influence, promises of owes are made to the home deity. Another way of diverting the influence is to put five dried chillies, salt crystals and lemon at the three cross roads at sunset.

4. Mundan Ceremony (Tonsure Ceremony)

It means the complete removing of head's hair. Relatives and friends are invited, women sing folk-song. The actual observance of this ceremony differs from place to place. It is observed at the age of two or five or seven months or after two years.

5. Janau-wearing ceremony (sacred thread wearing ceremony)

This ceremony is performed by some well-to-do Killekyathas. In all five villages, this ceremony is performed at the age of twelve or at the time of marriage. In this ceremony, the boy is put in a series of ritual activities, a series of purificatory activities.
6. Puberty Ceremony

When the girl reaches puberty, she is considered impure for five days, and made to sit in a separate room. She is given a bath every day. Each day women gather in the evening to greet the girl and wave sacred lamp (arati) by singing songs. On the fifth day the girl is given ceremonial bath and given a sweet dish made in wheat flour. Women are given a feast. If she is already married, her husband pays the expenses, and presents her with a new cloth, fruits and flowers. During a girl's first pregnancy, in the third, fifth, and seventh months, while music plays, five married women fill her lap with wheat, a bodice cloth, a coconut and fruits. She is asked to dine by women friends and relatives during the seventh and the eighth month and is presented with robes and bodices. There is no differences between South and North Karnataka area in this custom.

7. Beliefs connected with Marriage

In Northern Karnataka some of the literate and well-to-do families of Killekyathas observe elaborate rituals during marriages. The marriage negotiations commence from the boy's father or guardian. The horoscopes of the boy and the girl are cast and if the horoscopes agree, they settle the marriage. A lucky 'Muhurtam' for the marriage is fixed with the help of an astrologer. The marriage generally consists of
the following rituals:

**Betrothal:** A party from the boy's home goes with music to the girl's house. The girl and her father seat themselves on two wooden stools. God Ganpati is worshipped. The boy's father or other elderly male members on his side applies 'kumkum' (vermillion) to the girl's forehead and give her the articles of dress and ornaments. He puts sugar into her mouth. The betel nut and betal-leaves are distributed to the gathered and the ritual is over. This is known as 'Sakhar-sadi' or 'Sakharpuda'. From the girl's house a party goes to the boy's house. Ganapati is worshiped by the boy's father. Dresses are given to the boy by the girl's father. The betal-leaves and nuts are distributed and the ritual ends here.

**Patrika-Pujan:** Auspicious moments for the marriage and the termeric rubbing, as well as the names of the bride and groom are written on a paper. Ganapati is worshiped and the settlement papers are handed over to the groom's father and one copy to bride's father.

**Akshat:** It is the bidding procession. First, rice grains are placed before the family God in the house asking to be favourable at the wedding. Next the procession moves through the streets and local friends and kinsfolk are called to the
Halad-Telvan (applying turmeric): A party of married women (Muttaidis) from the groom's house go with music to the bride's house taking turmeric paste, articles of dress, etc. The girl is applied with oil and then the women annoint the turmeric paste, and she is bathed. Next the girl is presented with a new yellow robe, ornaments etc., which she puts on. The remaining turmeric is taken with music to the bridegroom's home. The groom is annointed with it by the same women who annointed the bride and he is bathed. A dress is given to him by the bride's father which he has to wear when he starts for the marriage. Vermillion and turmeric powder are distributed among the women, and the ritual ends with a feast at both the houses of bride and groom.

Devakapratishtha or Deva Karya: That is, appeasing the Gods and ancestors and is observed by both the parties in their respective houses. It is enjoined that the marriage booth should be erected on an auspicious day. In fulfilment of this, a post is planted in the marriage booth (already erected) and a piece of cloth with turmeric root and a betelnut is tied to the post. The images of Gods (Devaks) installed. The article representing the Devak is placed in a winnowing pan along with betelnuts which represent the family Gods. The winnowing pan is placed near the house God and
worshiped. Five married women wash a grindstone and lay sandal, flowers and sweetmeats before it, as a man worships a stone slab (pata). A feast to friends and relatives completes the Devak worship or 'deva-karya'.

In order to prevent any inauspicious occurrence in the marriage, prayer in propitiation of Ganapati the family deity and the ill-favoured stars of the party are held. These prayers commence on the day of the deva karya and continue till the end of the marriage. This rite is called as 'Anustan'.

Vagdan: This ritual takes place in the pandal at the bride's house. The groom's father accompanied by a party of males and females goes with music to the bride's house. The bride dressed in rich clothes and ornaments, is brought and seated on the stool. The groom's father gives into her hand a cocoanut and a betel leaf and says thrice to her father that 'I shall accept your daughter in marriage for my son'. The bride's father says thrice to him "Accepted", and the ritual is over.

Varadhava: When the time for marriage comes near, the groom is dressed by the clothes presented to him by the bride's father at the time of the turmeric anointing ritual. Groom's forehead is decked with the marriage coronet (Bashing) and a dagger is put into his hand with which he
must not part till the marriage is completed. Then he is brought along with musicians. Behind them the men of the groom's party follow. Behind the bridegroom walks his sister closely veiled with a 'Shela' (Gold scarf) holding with Shakundiva (lucky lamps) laid in a plate and another veiled woman follows her with a metal or earthen pot called as 'Shenskar' (holding betelnut, rice and water, and covered with Mango and a Coconut set on a heap of rice in a basket). The party stops at the place i.e., generally at the temple fixed upon for observing the 'Simantapujan'. A male relative of the man is sent back with music to the bride's house. He is called 'Vardhav'. He is treated to a dinner. He is presented with a dress by the bride's father. Then, the Varadhav (male relative) goes back with the bride's party to where the groom has stopped. The groom is worshiped by the bride's father. —That is known as 'Simantapujan'. Both the parties begain to walk towards bride's house for the marriage.

As a rule the marriage was held at the bride's village. The groom's party left their village and halted at a house in the bride's village prepared for them by the bride's father near a bride's house. When the groom's party arrived at the boundary of the bride's village, the Varadhav was sent to inform the bride's father of their arrival. On reaching
the bride's house. The groom dismounts, the priest throws cumin seeds on the booth. The girl's mother meets him at the door of the pandal with a plate holding two wheat-flour-lamps and waves small rice balls and wheat flour lamps around the groom, and lays the wheat-flour-lamps at the groom's feet. Another woman pours water mixed with lime and turmeric on his feet. The woman is presented with a robe and bodice by the groom. The groom's father hands over the groom a cocoanut and leads him by the hand to a place fixed for him near the marriage pandal. The guests are seated on carpets in the hall till the 'Muhurtham' arriving.

Vivaha (lagin) : Before the lucky moment (Muhurtham) arrives, the bride's father worships the paper on which the lucky moment for the marriage is written. Then, two small heaps of rice grains are made near the marriage pandal by the priest and a cloth with a central cross mark is held between the heaps. The groom stands on one heap facing West and the bride is brought and made to stand on the other heap facing East. A mixture of rice grains jiri; and sugar is given into the hands of both. The maternal uncles of the bride and groom stand behind them. The priests stand on either side of the curtain and tell the pair to look at the lucky cross and pray to their family Gods. The priests repeat lucky verses and throw rice at the would be couple. One of the priests distributes rice to the guests, which they throw over the
pair at the end of each lucky verse. The priests draw aside the curtain, and the bride and groom throw sacred rice over each other's head.

**Kanyadan:** Next, the hands of the bride and groom are joined by the girl's father. A pot of metal bell is held under them by the priest, as the bride's mother pours water with some coin in it over their clasped hands. This completes the girl giving! The bride's father presents the groom with cloths, ornaments, etc. Next the priest sprinkles sacred water over the couple, repeating Mantras. The bride and groom throw sacred rice over each other and put garlands around the necks. Married women on the bride's side seat the couple facing East. The bride is given a robe, a bodice, an upper garment, and a lucky necklace, which she puts on. The groom ties on other necklace around the neck of the bride. Ganapati is worshiped and money is distributed to priests by both parites. The priest then worships five betelnuts and ties them into the upper garments of the bride and groom. These betelnuts are thus kept separate till the marriage is over. The hems of their cloths are then tied into a knot by the priest. Blessings are invoked upon them by elderly persons on both sides.

**Vivahahoma:** The vivahahoma is performed in the marriage pandal. The Pandal is a square. The length of its sides are
four or five times the span of the girl's hand. The hight is one cubit from the ground. It has steps and over it, is raised a small canopy. The bride and groom are seated on stools set on the pandal. The bride sits to the left side of the groom. The bride's father stands near them, holding parched grains of rice and sesame seeds, etc. The fire is lit and fed with grains of rice, butter, sesame seed and other sacred wood.

Saptapadi: The bride and groom leave their seats and walk seven times from right to the left round the sacred fire and the 'Saptapadi' is over. Next they prostrate before the family Gods and the marriage programmes are over. From this day onwards the groom can take the bride to his house for consumation of the marriage.

Varat: After performing some other minor rituals, bride and groom go into the Gods-room and prostrate to the Gods and to their parents. They start in procession for the groom's house. On reaching there the image of Laxmi made of wheat flour is worshiped. Milk is offered to the Goddess. The groom's mother gives milk to the groom and then to the bride. Sugar, betelnut, betel-leaves are distributed and the party disperses.

Devakotthapan: It is the closing rite of the marriage. It is performed on the second, fourth, fifth, seventh or eighth day.
of the marriage. The details are the same as are observed in 'Deva-Karya'.

They give two types of dinners, the 'godi' or sweet (sweet dishes without flesh) before, and the 'khatti' or sour (flesh dishes) after the Devakotthapan ceremony. The researcher observed a marriage ceremony of a relative of ex-serviceman and the researcher recorded the detailed marriage ceremony observed by him in Ilkal near Hungund of Bijapur district.

8. Beliefs and Practices connected with Death

Death is supposed to be physical and the soul is believed to survive in the form of a spirit which is disembodied—on the extinction of physical activities. In almost all the cases except Amarnathpur, Surdi and Agatoor villages, the after death ceremonies are few in number and simple in nature. Among Killekyathas of these three villages special ceremonies are arranged on the 3rd, 5th, 9th, and the eleventh day after the death. Some of them perform a ceremony called as 'punny tithi', every year subsequently. Many of them observe pollution for 9 or eleven days.

After the period of pollution is over, the house is usually cleaned and the clothes are washed. When a person is about to die, his eldest son pours a few drops of water in
PHOTO 17: DEATH ANNIVERSARY
the mouth of the dying person. Soon after death, news is spread among relatives and friends. The corpse is washed, clothed and covered with new cloth, decorated with flowers and ultimately the corpse is tied with a bamboo or wooden bier, or some time the corpse is carried in a sitting posture in decorated bier called as 'Viman'.

In the villages of this study, it was observed that the Killekyathas of Kushalpur and Bommagaripal bury their dead. Only pregnant women and women who die in confinement are cremated. Among Killekyathas of Surdi, Agatoor and Amarnathpur, all are cremated except young children. The funeral fire is generally carried by the eldest son. If the deceased has no male issue, the fire is carried by the nearest male relative. The funeral procession, which consists of both men and women, is accompanied by music. They arrange a single ceremony on the third day followed by another on the ninth or eleventh day.

A special treatment requires for abnormal death. A young boy or girl dying without marriage, a woman dying in pregnancy or a person dying without having been satisfied with any of his deep cravings will experience difficulty in their rehabilitation in the super-natural world. Their souls will keep on returning to the world of living periodically. Those are the persons who often turn into ghosts and reside
permanently in the area of death and create difficulties in the normal life of the community, until they are served with needful rituals of offering oblations making pilgrimages to holy places.

SOUL, SALVATION AND REBIRTH:

Beliefs in soul, salvation and rebirth are the characteristic features of the Killekyathas. The physical entity of life is considered 'Mati' which means soil. The body is regarded as something which is perishable and the 'Atma' is believed to be immortal. The belief is often extended to the animal and plant world by some of the Killekyathas. The 'Atma' is thought of, as an insubstantial wrath which is formless. Dreams are considered as the forebodings of something bad and good. As the departure of the soul from the body, the dead is interpreted. After receiving the summons of God the 'Atma' departs the body.

It is believed by them that after death the good or bad deeds of a person are judged by Chitraguptas. If the 'Atma' is found to be honest, rewarding, helpful, well behaved, then it is sent to heaven with a view to enlightening the 'Atma'. This is done in the recognition of his pious life he or she led during his or her mortal life on earth. If the individual was ill-natured, who may have committed sins and
vices. He is believed to be sent to the hell or 'Pretyoni' where the soul has to hover for its specific terms as 'Pret' or 'Bhoot' (apparition). Mukti can be had through honesty, love for others, good conduct, worshipping of God, pilgrimage etc., during the span of one's life.

Parmartha is realised by two accepted ways viz., the way of renunciation and the way of action, 'Pravritti marg' and 'niviritti marg', as they are called in Hindu Philosophy. The Bhagavatgeeta calls them 'samkhya yoga' and 'karmyoga' respectively. But most of them do not profess this high Hindu Philosophy of the Hindu way of life. But they show somewhat very similar to this and may be thought of a degenerated form of Hindu concepts. Some of them donate some articles, money to a Jangam or Brahmin at the time of dying. This is done with the hope that it would help them cross the mythological river, which leads to heaven.

Killekyathas believe in rebirth and think that they may be born again in the form of man or animal according to his deeds during one's lifetime.

GENERAL SUPERSTITIONS:

Among Killekyathas superstitions are attached to dreams, and these are interpreted accordingly. If a person dreams in the early morning, it is believed to come true. If in a
dream, a dead relative appears it means that the relative is quite well. If any relative appears with new clothes it shows that, the person who appears in the dream is suffering from some sickness. The omen is inauspicious if in a dream, copper or iron is given to the person dreaming. A dog coming towards the person to bite him is also considered ominous and is called as the effect of some bad 'grah'. An elephant in a dream means that God Ganesha is blessing to the dreamer. If a hog (porker) appears in the dream, Maha-Dev (Shiva) is signified. Crossing a stream in a dream points to some trouble ahead. But if an ailing relative is seen dying, he or she is believed to recover soon.

1. Magic and Sorcery

Some fishing Killekyathas from Northern Karnataka were very frank in stating that they did not believe in ghosts and evil spirits. The Bijapur District Gazetteer (1884:199) states that Killekyathas believe in omens, and consult soothsayers. But some of the Killekyathas of Amarnathpur interjected that "Do you think that our people would be able to take movement for fishing or any kind to other work if they were to believe in ghosts and be afraid of them? Our people are required to camp in lonely places where none may give them company". While they did not believe in such supernatural beings. They believe in spirit possession as
they witness that human beings are possessed by evil spirits and taken to mosques and temples for remedy. They say that they have learnt from others to believe that there are spirits and the latter posses human beings. It is believed that when a person dies with some kind of desire (asha), he becomes an evil spirit after death; and harass the people.

Killekyathas believe in the 'evil eye' (drusti). Some people are considered to have 'bad eye' which affects adversely. If such individuals were to see and think badly in any matter, like other people eating, dressing, or a Cow or Buffalo giving good quantity of milk, etc., affected individuals may suffer severely. The most common remedy is to burn a mixture of few sticks of broomsticks, dried chillies and salt after waving them on the affected one's anticlockwise. Many Killekyathas in this region believe in the power of amulets (yantra). The 'yantra' or what is called as 'tayata' are got made by the priests of temples, or Mulas of mosques. When anybody suffer from any disease, or so-called 'fear', 'tayatas' (amulets) are tied to their necks.

So far as astrology and palmistry are concerned, the Killekyathas said that they never believed in them. Some youths told that the astrologers are liars. They take money and tell things which never come true. Asked why a few women
consulted a Kurramama—a nomadic astrologer, who was on movement in their villages and who was giving them predictions. The youths said that for mere curiosity they might have consulted, but they did not believe. They have strong belief in the good and bad omens (shakunas). A good omen is that if a dog runs after spreading its ears, this omen indicates success if such an omen were to take place. They are set for movement of work. The Killekyathas may not start on their movement if they were to experience bad omens like a cat passing from the right side, a dog stopping after spreading its ears, a person coming with empty pot, etc.

In the Southern part of Karnataka, quite apart from the unshakable faith in a multiplicity of Gods and Goddesses, the Killekyathas of this region believe in supernatural powers like ghosts and spirits. Each village has a good number of witches and 'witch-doctors' who are object of fear to the people. The witches are supposed to be capable of inflicting all types of physical sufferings starting from temporary to a long and continued illness, blood-vomiting and finally to death. In such situations Killekyathas of this region, generally take recourse to a witch-doctor and infrequently to medicine. However, cases of natural illness and disease are invariably referred to the present-day medical practitioners. During the Durga Puja, generally, the witches exercise the powers of their magic to gain maturity by
dancing naked at dead of night in lonely and dreadful places like cross-roads, burning ghats, ponds etc. They offer prayers to the 'Durga' and 'Kalika' daily during the period to get their blessings for the success in their art. Dasara worship is also considered as an opportune time for those who want to learn this art. It is said that special care of children is taken so that they might not fall a prey to the evil eyes of these witches. Most of the villages are infested with a number of snakes and scorpions. There are some people, who successfully cure cases of scorpion-bites by chanting Mantras and local Dawai.

Atmas (souls) of immature deaths, are believed to become ghosts (Bhoots). The male ghost is called 'Pret' and female ghost is called 'Pretni'. The young married or unmarried females easily become the prey of male ghost. At that time, the service of a witch-doctor is badly felt in need by the Killekvathas, who successfully deals with such cases.

In most of the villages, regarding 'Brahmadaitya' it has been said that, about 'Brahmadiatya', a Brahmin who has died an unnatural death is believed to become one so after his death and often becomes a tutelary deity of the village. The worship of this Godling is usually carried on under a tree, quite often a banyan tree on which the Brahmandaitya is supposed to haunt. The trunk of the tree is besmeared with
vermilion and a mound of earth is created on which are placed clay figures of elephants or horses. The worship is performed with flowers, betel-nuts and the like, by a special priest who may not necessarily be a Brahmin. Sometimes the priest is overpowered by the Brahmadaitya and in such a state utters prophecies which are implicitly believed by the devotees.

There are numerous types of methods by which magical effects are obtained. Even the Gods and spirits are subject to the effect produced by the magical formulae. Most of the Killekyathas of the villages believe in certain rites and taboos which can help them to achieve their desired object. It is not necessary to take the assistance of a spirit.

2. Curses:

A curse is a kind of supernatural maisma which harms and injures the man against whom it is addressed. The curse uttered by an old man is supposed to be most powerful. Similarly the curses of women are believed to come true. The curses pronounced by daughters and nieces are most dreaded. The Killekyathas try always to keep their daughters and children happy. The curse of the poor is supposed to be so effective that it will invariably hurt the man and in no case will it prove abortive. Curses coming from Jangams, Sadhus, and Brahmins are also said to be effective.
3. Oaths:

An Oath is a solemn appeal to God or object that a statement made is true or a promise made shall be kept. The individual who takes an oath binds himself to the consequences if the promise is not kept. Generally, the Killekyathas swear by the sacred waters. They also swear by the name of village deity or family deity. Sometimes an oath is taken in the presence of the elder members of the community.