Chapter II

Cultural Profile of Kumbri Marāthi

The objective of this chapter is to understand the cultural profile of Kumbri Marāthi. Cultural background has a crucial influence on various aspects of people’s life including their beliefs, perceptions, diet, attitudes towards health and illness - all of which have important implications for health and health care.

The population of Kumbri Marāthi is distributed in Sirsi, Kumta, Honnavar, Ankola, Bhatkal and Siddapur taluks of Uttara Kannada district in Karnataka State. They live in the interior forest areas of Uttara Kannada district. Highest population of Kumbri Marāthi is found in Sirsi, Honnavar, Bhatkal, and Kumta taluks.

Hegde (1981) in his book Kumbri Marāthigara Kathegalu says that the total population of Kumbri Marāthi is around 15,000. According to a survey conducted by the Kumbri Marāthi themselves, Kumbri Marāthi population is 3140 in Sirsi, 2315 in Honnavar, 2161 in Bhatkal, 1382 in Kumata, 448 in Ankola and 386 in Siddapur taluk. The total population of Kumbri Marāthi according to the survey is 9832 in Uttar Kannada district. This survey was conducted in the year 1997 by an organization called Kumbri Marāthi Abhivruddhi Sangh of Kumbri Marāthi.

This survey was done in order to provide information to the Government and to prove that Kumbri Marāthi are economically backward, on order to obtain the facilities provided by the Government for backward classes. The survey focused on population, economic status, and amenities available. According to the people themselves, population of Kumbri Marāthi is even more than that projected by the survey conducted by the Kumbri Marāthi Abhivruddhi Sangh because the survey has not covered settlements in the interior forest areas. Eventually, on August 7th 2002, Government of Karnataka has recognized Kumbri Marāthi as one among Other Backward Classes.

For the purpose of the present ethnographic research household survey has been conducted for three settlements Angane, Kogadde and Alave and in-depth
study has been conducted in two settlements Angane and Kogadde. Angane, and Alave are situated in Kumta taluk and Kogadde in Siddapur taluk of Uttara Kannada district. The total population of these three settlements is 642 (Table No. 1). Of the total population of 642, 329 (51.25\%) are males and 313 (48.75\%) are females. The male population is slightly higher (2.50 \%) than female population. Some of the other settlements of Kumbri Marāthi like Devhalli, (Sirsi), Chita, Bamath (Honnavar) Avalli (Ankola) were visited for shorter duration for understanding the cultural profile of the Kumbri Marāthi.

There are tales related as to how Kumbri Marāthi came to settle down in this region of Karnataka. Kumbri Marāthi say that they have migrated from Maharashtra state. One of the folk tales related to their migration is that during the period of Shivaji’s rule in Maharashtra, Kumbri Marāthi served in Shivaji’s military in Maharashtra region. When Shivaji was defeated by another ruler, Kumbri Marāthi ran away from the military and settled in the interior forest areas of Uttara Kannada district in Karnataka.

Thereafter, they depended on ‘slash and burn’ kumbri kind of cultivation for livelihood. A patch in the forest was cleared and nāsani (Ecleusine Coracana) was cultivated. Such cultivation was done for two to three years in one patch of clearing. After every two or three years they say, they shifted from one area to another where more water and more productive land were available. Hegde (1981) in his book Kumbri Marathigara Kathegalu also speaks of a similar kind of story related by Kumbri Marāthi. The word Kumbri is said to be from Kumbri Marāthi language. It denotes ‘slash and burn’ kind of cultivation.

A saying among Kumbri Marāthi is that dhugtan lägle ghar Kumbrilā chaunche nā that is, ‘they do not live under smoke stained roof’. It means that they do not stay in a single place long enough for the roof of the house to become darkened by the smoke in the sense that, they were always shifting from one place to another. This implies that they followed shifting cultivation. Most of the indigenous groups of Uttara Kannada district depended on the kumbri cultivation (Hegde 1981, Kamat 1981).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Settlement</th>
<th>0-10 yrs</th>
<th>11-20 yrs</th>
<th>21-30 yrs</th>
<th>31-40 yrs</th>
<th>41-50 yrs</th>
<th>51-60 yrs</th>
<th>61 yrs &amp; above</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alave</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kogadde</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angane</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.83%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table no. 1 Settlement wise distribution of population of Kumbri Marathi
Another story related is concerning the name of the community. This story also mentions that Kumbri Marāthi migrated from Maharashtra State to Uttara Kannada region in Karnataka State. Kumbri Marāthi do not know when the migration took place. According to this story, their ancestors practiced *kumbri*. And when they came in contact with the local people like Havik Brahmin, Nayak in the region of Uttara Kannada, they were asked ‘to which *jāti* they belonged?’ (*jāti* is an indigenous term used to refer to strangers, tribes, alien groups and castes) Then their ancestors are said to have replied that they were ‘*Kumbri*’. When the local people asked ‘which *kumbri* were they?’ they replied that, they were ‘Marāthi’, since it was their language. Hence they came to be known as ‘Kumbri Marāthi’.

Kumbri Marāthi accepted the suffix *Marāthi* given by the others. ‘Kumbri’ in the name Kumbri Marāthi refers to the kind of economic activity they performed earlier. Since they were from Maharashtra and spoke Marāthi (a dialect of Marāthi) the term Marāthi was suffixed. They mention their group’s name as ‘Kumbri Marāthi’ in official documents.

Kumbri Marāthi say that their language is a mixture of Marāthi, Konkani and Kannada languages. When they communicate with the people of other castes, they speak Kannada or dialect of Marāthi and Konkani. If others speak the Kumbri Marāthi dialect, then they also communicate in Kumbri Marāthi dialect only. Kumbri Marāthi say that they learnt Kannada and also a dialect of Konkani, as a result of contact with the local communities for economic and ritual purposes. Most of the Kumbri Marāthi settlements have both Kumbri Marāthi and other communities like Nayak, Havik Brahmin, Halakki Vokkal, Madival, which has influenced them to learn Kannada and Konkani since they speak either of these languages. Kumbri Marāthi say that there are minor variations in their language in coastal areas and interior forest areas because of the influence of local dialects.

Most of the Kumbri Marāthi settlements in Sirsi and Siddapur taluks have roads and transportation facility. There are government buses and also private vehicles for public transportation. Some of the Kumbri Marāthi settlements in Ankola, Bhatkal and Honnavar taluks are situated deep in the forest and are not
accessible by road. A couple of settlements in Kumta and Honnavar taluks are cut off from the main road for most of the rainy season because of the flooding of the river and streams.

2.1. Settlement pattern

The settlements are generally hamlets with twenty to eighty houses ghar. Most of the settlements are in the interior of the forest area. The houses are generally found in dispersed fashion. All settlements have a gamut of native deities mirāšesthal. There are mud roads in most of the settlements. Almost all Kumbri Marāthi settlements except those, which are situated extremely interior in the forest, have power supply. Kumbri Marāthi settlements in the Western Ghat nearer to main road have telephone, television, and newspaper facilities. In all settlements, people possess radios and cassette players and listening to drama yakshagan and devotional songs is done with immense interest (Table No. 2). A total of 45 houses that is 35.71% households and 25 that is 19.84% households possess radio and cassette player respectively. Out of the 126 households for which information has been collected, 45 (35.71%) households have power supply. Whenever people are sitting leisurely the radio or the cassette player is switched on. The commonly heard programs on radio with interest are film songs and news. Radio and cassette players are the major source of entertainment for Kumbri Marāthi.

Kumbri Marāthi houses are of three types. One kind is with thatched roof ghautacheghar and the second type is with tiled roof hanchacheghar and third kind is that of partially tiled gautehanhachegahar. For thatching paddy grass ghaute is used. Every two or three years this grass is replaced with new grass. The dried paddy grass is stored after harvesting and thatched just before the rainy season begins. The house types in Angane, Kogadde, and Alve are shown in the table (Table No. 3). It is said that tiled houses are better than thatched houses because, one need not change the grass every two or three years. Also, during the rainy season tiled houses do not leak from the roof as it happens in case of thatched houses. Tiled houses are also considered to be more attractive than thatched houses. As and when people have extra income from the sale of forest produce,
Table no. 2 Settlement wise distribution of electricity facility, possession of radio and cassette player

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Settlement</th>
<th>Electricity Total</th>
<th>Radio Total</th>
<th>Cassette player Total</th>
<th>Total no. of households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Angane</td>
<td>25 (19.84)</td>
<td>26 (20.63)</td>
<td>16 (12.70)</td>
<td>76 (60.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kogadde</td>
<td>11 (8.73)</td>
<td>14 (11.11)</td>
<td>6 (4.76)</td>
<td>31 (24.60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Alave</td>
<td>9 (7.14)</td>
<td>5 (3.97)</td>
<td>3 (2.38)</td>
<td>19 (15.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>45 (35.71)</td>
<td>45 (35.71)</td>
<td>25 (19.84)</td>
<td>126 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table no. 3 Settlement wise distribution of house types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Settlement</th>
<th>Thatched</th>
<th>Partially tiled</th>
<th>Tiled</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Angane</td>
<td>10 (7.94)</td>
<td>20 (15.87)</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>76 (60.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kogadde</td>
<td>9 (7.14)</td>
<td>6 (4.76)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>31 (24.60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Alave</td>
<td>3 (2.38)</td>
<td>6 (4.76)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19 (15.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>22 (17.46)</td>
<td>32 (25.40)</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>126 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Omu’s dwelling- a typical Kumbri Marathi tiled house

Goudäche ghar: the chief’s house one of the few bigger houses
houses are tiled. That is why partially tiled houses are also found. Economic affordability plays a crucial role in changing the roof from thatched to tiled. The total number of thatched houses from the three settlements is 22 (17.46%). There are 32 (25.40%) partially tiled houses and the highest number of houses that is 72 (57.14%) are tiled. Generally those who have separated from the main house, those who have migrated from other settlements and those who are economically not well-off and not possessing any land possess gautacheghar.

Generally every house has an open courtyard yokati in front of the house. Then there is a closed yard jagali. Then as one enters through the courtyard, there is devachekono, wherein the deities are kept and worshiped. Beside the devâche kono, kitchen rândochevori is situated. In the kitchen there are two hearths, one for cooking vegetarian food and another for non-vegetarian food. Across the kitchen connecting the jagali, there is a passage vaðasâlvori, wherein, fireplace is situated. The bathing area nâvanchevori is situated outside the house. Cattle shed ghomo is situated outside at a distance from the house. Beside the houses generally there is one or two coconut trees, flower bed and Tulasi (Ocimum Sanctum) plant in front of the house as their deity dev and it is worshipped everyday.

Every house has a fireplace vaðasal. The fireplace is used for warming and also for drying of fish mäshe, wild fruits collected from the forest like uppângi and vatehuli, and rugs kambâla which are wet during the rainy season, and for producing heat during rainy and winter season. They use lamp bodo for light. Even though many (35.71%) of the houses in the three settlements for which data is available has electricity connection, there is power failure most of the time. Therefore they make use of lamps which are lit using kerosene oil.

Fire āga is not only used for cooking, heating but also for protection. At night they usually carry with them sudî, (which is a long and big burning stick) while going from one house to another house during night. It is not only used for the purpose of light but also for protection from wild animals like, snake divâd, bear, tiger wâgha and pig dukur. It is believed that the animals do not came near if
*Vadasāl:* a fire place also for used for drying the *uppāngi* seeds

Stocked fuel wood serving as a shelter for the bathroom
one is carrying *sudi* with them. Also another kind of *sudi* which is used has a piece of stick wrapped with cloth at the tip and dipped in kerosene oil, and it is wrapped with a plantain leaf leaving some space in front of the stick so that light lasts for longer duration.

For fuel, people use the wood found in the forest. It is collected during the months of October and November. Because, from June to September there are heavy rains and as a result, many trees fall. These dry up by October. If the wood is not dried up by then they cut the trees and bring them home. This work is done by the women. Whenever they do not have work in house during the day, they go to the forest to collect firewood. Fuel is stored in the bathing place. The stored fuel is used for cooking and heating water for bathing, since the piles also act as wall on one side sheltering the bathing area.

The sources of water supply are springs, streams, wells and also bore-wells. For drinking, stream and well water are used since they are believed to be good for health. The stream water is said to be good for health because it is constantly flowing and the well gets water through the spring in the earth and constantly potable water is said to be pouring out. In the beginning of the rainy season, stream water is not used because, it is said to collect all the decayed leaves and mud that flow in with the first few rains.

2.2. Dress pattern and ornaments

Men wear shirt *koto* and a kind of long cloth worn around the waist *mund*, younger men wear trousers *pyānt* and shirt when they are visiting a kinsman’s house or market, or town. Men wear half pant *chaddī* and vest *banya* or towel and shirt while working. Older people wear lion cloth *kach/kāse* when they are in house or during worshipping of the deity and *mund* and *koto* at other times. They wear ear studs *tar* in the ear made of either silver or gold.

Men wear a sickle holder *ankuḍu* made of wood of a tree called *pāḍri* in which the sickle *koyto* is hung. Sickle holder is hung to a wire tied around the waist while going out. Using this wood is believed to protect the person wearing from the effect of spirit *māru*.
Women wear sari kāpad and blouse polak. Younger girls wear the skirt kiragāne and blouse polak. Women and girls wear ear studs kuduku, nose stud natt and three to four bead necklaces gharsal of different colors around the neck. Both young and old women wear glass bangles kānkana on both hands. Wearing of these ornaments is believed to enhance the beauty of a woman. A woman is supposed to remove the nose stud only in case of death of her husband. A woman not wearing a nose stud denotes that she is a widow. Younger girls plait their hair into braids enī and older ones tie it in a knot. All women wear flowers hār in the hair for the purpose of beautification.

2.3. Economy

The economy of Kumbri Marāthi depends mainly on agriculture, agricultural labor, collection, and sale of forest products. Agriculture forms the primary source of income and agricultural labor and sale of forest produce is the secondary sources of income. Almost all Kumbri Marāthi 82.51% have lands (Table No. 4). Maximum of 53 (42.06%) possess 1.1 to 2 acres of land. Below 1 acre land is possessed by 8 (6.35%). And 2.1 to 4 acres of land are held by 13 (10.32%). A total of 22 (17.46%) households are landless. Families with below one acre of land are generally those who have separated from the main family or migrated from other settlements for agriculture labor. Since the land holdings are said to be not sufficient for supporting the family, they also work as agricultural laborers. Average land holdings is 2 to 4 acres and there are 17.46% households that are landless. These families are generally either migrated from other settlements or separated from the joint family and the property has not yet been divided. Generally all families are involved in collection of forest produce. Collection of forest produce is not only for the household consumption but also for sale.
### Table no. 4 Settlement wise distribution of land holdings in acres per household

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Settlement</th>
<th>Below 1 acre</th>
<th>1.1 -2 acres</th>
<th>2.1-4 acres</th>
<th>4.1 acres &amp; above</th>
<th>Landless</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Angane</td>
<td>3 (2.38)</td>
<td>28 (22.22)</td>
<td>26 (20.63)</td>
<td>9 (7.14)</td>
<td>10 (7.94)</td>
<td>76 (60.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kogadde</td>
<td>3 (2.38)</td>
<td>15 (11.90)</td>
<td>2 (1.59)</td>
<td>2 (1.59)</td>
<td>9 (7.14)</td>
<td>31 (24.60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Alave</td>
<td>2 (1.59)</td>
<td>10 (7.94)</td>
<td>2 (1.59)</td>
<td>2 (1.59)</td>
<td>3 (2.38)</td>
<td>19 (15.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>8 (6.35)</td>
<td>53 (42.06)</td>
<td>30 (23.81)</td>
<td>13 (10.32)</td>
<td>22 (17.46)</td>
<td>126 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kumbri Marāthi get one crop of paddy in a year. The Kumbri Marāthi agricultural activities depend entirely on the rainfall. Agricultural lands are in the form of terraces as a result of which, growing paddy is suitable. And those who have irrigated land also grow betel-nut papāl and banana kele. Further, hunting shikāri and fishing māshe dharoche are also done as a source of sustenance.

Agricultural activities begin with the festival parāb called gadipōja in the month of May-June. Gadi refers to boundary and pōja refers to worshipping. Gadipōja is a festival performed for worshipping of the ‘deity who controls spirits’ called bhotrāya and also other native deities for good crops in the agricultural season. For the performance of gadipōja, a fowl kombo is sacrificed by each family to bhotrāya and coconut nāral is broken for other deities as offerings to seek blessings for good crops and good health through out the year. It is believed that within a week of performance of gadipōja, rains begin and people can begin the agricultural activities. Before rain starts, they repair their agricultural equipments and keep them ready for the work to begin as soon as rains start.

On the first day of ploughing nāngar karunche, worship of the cattle and agricultural equipment is performed. An unhusked coconut is kept in the name of deity kuldev which is broken only after all the agricultural activities are completed for the year. The unhusked coconut is kept with the belief that kuldev helps in the agricultural work and also prevents problems that may arise during agricultural activities.

After the first rain, one patch of agricultural land gādo is ploughed and paddy is sprinkled for obtaining seedlings sasi. These seedlings are allowed to grow for a month before they are shifted and replanted. Before shifting the sasi to the field, natural fertilizer sāre is dumped in heaps in the field. For this activity, many people are required. The landowner therefore, takes laborers on wage. The wage per day generally includes Rs. 50/-, breakfast tānik and meal jevan or else five kolaga of rice grain (kolaga is a measure which is approximately two and half kilograms), with tānik and jevan. Another mode of payment involves bartering labor ghar āl. Depending on how many people have worked in one person’s field,
Yanku and Purusha ploughing their field
the same number of people from the other household work for the family which has rendered help. They are given breakfast and lunch.

After dumping of sāre, the water is allowed to be logged. Since there are terraces, water flows from one terrace to another terrace. After water logs in the field, sāre will be spread in the field. Then they plough the land two to three times, to make the land leveled and for the sāre to mix uniformly with the soil. It is done with leveling equipment called halake. After this, again water is allowed to log in the field for eight to ten days. After ten days the seedlings sasi are shifted and replanted nāti in rest of the field.

On the last day of sowing activities, holāngi worshipping of cattle and agricultural equipment is performed. It is performed as a thanksgiving for having helped in performing the agricultural activities without any hitch. After holāngi, Kumbri Marāthi do not use the agricultural equipments and cattle till the next agricultural season because of the belief that if they are used after holāngi, there will be failure of crops. The next work is weeding the fields, which is done after a month of sowing. The agricultural land is fenced oyi. The guarding of fields is not as much a problem during the day as it is during the night. At night one has to keep guard in order to protect the crops from wild pigs dukur. It is a task generally done by men and boys. Scarecrows are stuck in the fields to scare away the birds pākru.

In the month of February-March, cutting of paddy is done. The cut paddy is piled wodave in one place in the field. The piled paddy is fenced to protect it from the cattle. Harvesting wodave marunche is done by the end of March.

Kumbri Marāthi living in the coastal area complete their agricultural activities by the month of August. Once their agricultural work is completed in coastal area where they reside, they go to the Western Ghat region to work as agricultural laborers. The income that they earn from agriculture is sufficient for meeting the bare necessities and for earning extra income and also those who are landless go to work as agricultural laborers. They return from the Western Ghats before chouti (festival of lord Ganesh). After returning from the Western Ghat,
people generally purchase things like, clothes, gold ornaments, or cassettes and cassette players from the money they have earned.

Kumbri Marathi also grow betel-nut papāl. Those who do not have betel-nut garden tot buy papāl from the market, since eating betel-nut is a crucial aspect of their life. Generally all Kumbri Marathi chew betel-nut, betel leaves, lime paste chuno and tobacco leaves together, which is called kavāl. Chewing kavāl is habit for Kumbri Marathi. Generally they can be seen chewing kavāl most of the time. Kavāl is believed to serve not only as a stimulant but also, is believed to have cultural value as well as medicinal value. Apart from regularly chewing kavāl through out the day, they drink liquor soro and men smoke indigenous cigarette bidi/bida.

Kumbri Marathi believe that when any affinal relative shoheri or a visitor visits the house, kavāl should be given. If they do not give kavāl to shoheri and other visitors, the headman yejamān of the house ghar is looked down upon and even rebuked. When people are invited for marriage horādki and worshippingdevkārya of Tirupati or Manjumatha deities, they give kavāl to all invitees of the ceremony as a mark of respect.

Chewing kavāl early in the morning, is believed to prevent a skin disease called lothi. Because kavāl produces heat in the body and as a result of the heat, one does not get affected by lothi.

According to seasons, Kumbri Marathi change the type of papāl they consume. Different kinds of papāl are, dry betel-nut sukke papāl, wet betel-nut walle papāl and ripe betel-nut pekke papāl. In the rainy season, sukke papāl is preferred because it can be chewed for a longer time and it prevents cold thandi by creating thandi while working in the field. Where as walle papāl is used in the summer season because it can be chewed on quickly. During the summer season, sukke papāl, which can be chewed quickly, is preferred because chewing papāl for longer time leads to heat garami in the body. During winter season nival, there is not much work in the field therefore one is not particular about the type of papāl so they chew sukke papāl as well as walle papāl depending on the availability of papāl.
For keeping all the materials required for kavāl, a cotton bag sānsi or plastic bag kotte is used. Those who smoke bida also keep bida in the sānsi. Generally they use tobacco powder hodi. Men generally smoke bida whenever they are sitting and chatting. Apart from kavāl and bida another stimulant is liquor soro. It is purchased from liquor shops and also prepared at home. The indigenous preparation of soro involves the following procedure. Jaggery is mixed with root bark of a shrub called dodāche yal, and banana kele. Banana is added for taste and it is also believed to prevent side effects of soro on liver or intestine. All these ingredients are put in a plastic pot kodpān for three days. On the fourth day, they distill it in a metal pot hande. Out of three kilogram of jaggery, one and half liter soro can be obtained.

Those who work continuously in the house for making basket hadagi, ropes, those doing betel-nut work (like peeling betel-nut, scraping and boiling it), prefer to make liquor in the house. They prefer to drink soro while working so that they do not feel fatigued. When soro is prepared at home it is less expensive than buying from a liquor shop. Therefore, women generally drink soro wherever it is prepared in the house. But men also drink when they go out and buy it from the shops.

Soro in limited quantities is also used as medicine for cough das caused by the cold thandi and asthma dam, which is more prevalent in winter season. It is consumed because soro is believed to produce heat in the body. Soro is also consumed as medicine to obtain relief when one is suffering from body pain kasu.

Apart from working on their own lands, Kumbri Marāthi also work as agricultural laborers on other peoples land and also go to other places. The average land holding among Kumbri Marāthi is between two to four acres. They say that the produce obtained from two or three acres of land is not sufficient to sustain the family. Therefore, they generally work for daily wages on the land of other caste people like Bhatta and Nayak. Both men and women work as wage laborers. Along with the wage, landlords also give them breakfast, lunch and tea and kaval.

Collecting forest produce is also an important economic activity for Kumbri Marāthi. It not only provides them with products to use in the house
throughout the year to supplement their income. Those who are landless (17.46%), depend on agriculture labour and collection of forest produce as the main source of income. Those with landholdings between 1 to 4 acres (65.86%) depend on agriculture and collection of forest produce as the primary source of income and agriculture labor as the secondary source of income. Those with 4 acres and above land (10.31%) generally depend more on agriculture and forest produce and less on agricultural labor.

- In the months of June and July, Kumbri Marathi collect forest fruits called uppangi. For the duration of collection of uppangi they stay in the forest. The seeds of uppangi are collected and oil is extracted. This oil of uppangi seed is used for preparing sweet dishes during festivals. The dried uppangi is sold in the market.

- From July to April cane betta is collected from the forest. Cane is used for making smaller basket called hadagi as well as bigger baskets called cholo. Hadagi is sold in the market. Whenever they need baskets for their own use, they make them in the house.

- Another forest fruit called vatehuli is collected in the month of January-February. Vatehuli is stored for the coming year and it is used in cooking non-vegetarian food, especially for fish curry. Extra vatehuli is sold in the market or to the middlemen.

- Rampaatre is a kind of spice, which is collected in the month of January-February. It is used as spice masala in cooking and the excess rampatre is sold to middlemen who come to their settlements.

- In the month of January-February pepper miriya and, a kind of wild seed mervandi found in the forest are collected. Both are sold in the market or to the middlemen who come to their settlements.

- In the month of March, Kumbri Marathi collect soap nut shimble and it is sold in the market in a shop.

- In the month of February-March, they collect flower called suragi. It has a ritual significance for Kumbri Marathi. This flower blooms in the period when the sigme festival is celebrated. This flower is used by Kumbri
Alu making a *hadagi* cane basket
Marathi during the *sigme* festival because it is believed to be indicative of Kumbri Marathi. They also sell it since it is used as spice *masala* by people of Nayak and Bhatta castes.

> In the month of April-May seeds called *lippi* are collected for extracting oil. This oil is used as the staple oil in their diet.

Forest produce collected is sold directly in the market or to local buyers of Nayak, Bhatta castes and Muslim *sab* depending on the quantity of produce quality. They act as middlemen. These middlemen come to their doorsteps and purchase the materials. The middlemen find it profitable to buy at a lower rate and then sell at a higher rate in the markets. The people also find it convenient to sell when middlemen come to their settlement. It not only saves time and travel expenses, but also, saves them from the complications like trouble given by the forest guards in taking forest produce to the market because of forest check post and spending the whole day in market for selling the produce. The middlemen pay immediately after purchasing or whenever Kumbri Marathi feel the need of money. Also Kumbri Marathi store the forest produce and when in need of money sell them to the middlemen and get the money.

Thus the main sources of income for Kumbri Marathi is from agriculture, agriculture labor and collection of forest produce. The level of income from these sources ranges between less than Rs. 5,000/- to above Rs. 15,000/- per annum (Table No. 5). Highest number of households 58 (46.03%) have an income of Rs. 6,000/- to Rs. 10,000/-. Level of income is Rs. 15,000 and above for 24 (19.05%) households. Another 24 (19.05%) households have an income of less than Rs. 5,000/-. A total of 20 (15.87%) households have an income between Rs. 10,001/- to Rs. 15,000/-. Those who have agricultural land and also collect and sell forest produce have more income than those who depend only on agriculture labor have lower income and those who have more land and also sell forest produce have higher income. The middle range are those who have 2-3 acres land. Those with lots of land and those with meager and landless are few. This is depicted also in the level of income.
Table No. 5 Settlement wise distribution of level of income of the households

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Settlement</th>
<th>Below Rs. 5,000</th>
<th>Rs. 5,001-Rs. 10,000</th>
<th>Rs. 10,001-Rs. 15,000</th>
<th>Rs. 15,001 and above</th>
<th>Total no. of households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Angane</td>
<td>15 (11.90)</td>
<td>29 (23.02)</td>
<td>16 (12.70)</td>
<td>16 (12.70)</td>
<td>76 (60.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kogadde</td>
<td>6 (4.76)</td>
<td>19 (15.08)</td>
<td>2 (1.59)</td>
<td>4 (3.17)</td>
<td>31 (24.60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Alave</td>
<td>3 (2.38)</td>
<td>10 (7.94)</td>
<td>2 (1.59)</td>
<td>4 (3.17)</td>
<td>19 (15.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24 (19.05)</td>
<td>58 (46.03)</td>
<td>20 (15.87)</td>
<td>24 (19.05)</td>
<td>126 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.4 Food habits

Staple food of Kumbri Marāthi constitutes primarily of rice. Rice is cooked and also consumed by grinding it and preparing pancakes poli. They consume locally available varieties of vegetables like brinjal vānge, ladies finger bhende beans bi, sweet potato, mushrooms anabe, bamboo shoot komba. Apart from anabe and kombo, all other vegetables are grown in the field. Kumbri Marāthi believe that consuming vegetables available in the market as not good for health. They say that they are grown using chemical fertilizers sävkāri gobbar. They are believed to hinder the process of digestion as a result, they cause health problems like abdominal pain. Apart from onion kānda, potatoes batate and tomato tamate, other vegetables are rarely bought from the market.

The food habits of Kumbri Marāthi consist of breakfast tānik early in the morning and two meals jevan. Breakfast consists of poli and chatni and jevan consists of rice gote, curry nistek and pickle ambat. Curry is prepared with vegetables and fish is also used for preparing curry throughout the year since they are available. If an animal has been hunted, meat is used for preparing curry. Apart from rice, which is their staple food, fish and meat constitutes important parts of their diet. Meat is consumed once or twice a week and fish almost everyday. Whereas the food habits of infants above six months is supplementary food phitti consisting of nāsani, cow’s milk goravā dod and sugar sākar. It is said that phitti gives strength to the child. In case of non-availability of nasani, boiled rice with sugar is given to the child. After one year, child slowly starts consuming the food like poli, cocked rice gote, fish and meat goul which adults consume.

Fishing māshe dharunche is done regularly and fish caught are consumed fresh as well as dried and also stored for future consumption. Buffalo and cow, are considered scared and not consumed. Whereas all locally available wild animals are hunted for meat. Buffalo is considered as sacred and useful in agricultural activities, hence, it is not consumed. Meat is consumed when an animal is hunted and the surplus is dried kotto and stored for future consumption. Kumbri Marāthi say that gaul and fish are strength giving and has to be consumed regularly. Fishing and hunting shikāri are a crucial part of their living.
Ramu preparing *dombe* for fishing

Purusha preparing trap with sticks for catching fish in the stream
Kumbri Marathi look forward to good hunts. There are different types of hunting and fishing. There is also a spirit called rangole, which helps in the process of hunting. Kumbri Marathi believe that if they do not hunt wild animals, their hunting spirit rangole, hunts their cattle. After the death of very old persons, their spirit, māru becomes rangole because they have had greater experience in hunting, knowledge about the forest and wild animals and interest in consuming the non-vegetarian food. This rangole is present in all lineages mantan.

Kumbri Marathi believe that animals are found relatively easily for hunting during the mating season of the animals. It is believed that during mating season, which differs for different animals, the animals have more fat and are also tastier. The skin of animals is removed and in case of small animals it is burnt before cleaning. Most important part of the animal is considered to be the fat of the animal. It is regarded as tasty as well as strengthening.

Birds are usually hunted after sowing and during the middle of the winter season. In this season plenty of birds are available. They come to this region for food like insects in the field. Birds are hunted during the daytime. Catapult chilapit is used to hunt birds. Both men and boys hunt birds where as hunting of animals is done only by adult males.

Hunting is done with the help of gun phirangi. During the rainy season pāvasāl, hunting is done during the day. And this kind of hunting is called phirangi. Hunting is done during the day since the leaves are wet from rain and do not make any noise. Unlike rainy season, during the winter nivāl and summer season gim they go hunting early in the morning because, leaves are soft from the mist and do not make any noise. If animals hear the sound of the leaves, they run away and escape. This kind of hunting is the most common kind of hunting. Other types of hunting are byātrishikāri ‘hunting with the help of torch and gun’, kutri jāvunche ‘hunting with the help of dog kutri’ and boundi is ‘collective hunting’ having ritual significance.

**Byātrishikāri**

For hunting at night, people use gun and flash light byatri. Flash light is tied on the forehead of the hunter. This type of hunting is called byātrishikāri.
After new moon day *byātrishikāri* can be done any time since there is no moonlight. After the full moon day *byātrishikāri* is done depending on when the moonlight is less.

In *byātrishikāri*, flash light is important because, the hunter focuses the flash light on the animal’s eyes so that the eyes of the animal shine. Based on the color and size of the wild animal’s eyes it is found out which animal it is. When the flash light is focused on the eyes of the animal, it does not move from the place. It becomes mesmerized by the light. Taking this opportunity, the man with the gun shoots the animal.

The person with gun man ties the flash light on his forehead, and whoever is with him, holds the flash light for seeing the path in the forest. During *byātrishikāri* people speak softly and they do not raise the voice so as to not scare away the animals.

Hunters walk in the forest in such a way, that they keep crossing the road. Even if they have gone deep into in the forest as a result of crisscrossing, they do not miss the road. If they are lost in the forest, they walk along the stream so that they get to the village. If the flashlight becomes dim or they do not get any wild animal at night they stay in the forest till morning because they may find animal early in the morning.

Hunters keep a rug made of sheep’s wool with them for protection from the cold and for hiding small animals from the forest guard *forestar* and people. If other people see the hunted animal, then they have to be invited for meal or they may have to share among *manatan* and neighbors. Whatever is hunted is supposed to be shared by all the members of the lineage. However, if animal hunted is small it is said to be inadequate to share among all lineage members. Whereas when a big animal like deer is hunted, the meat is shared among the people in the settlement. One part of the meat is also given to the *forestar*.

*Kutrijāvunche*

*Kutrijāvunche* means ‘going to the forest with dog’. *Kutrijāvunche* is the common usage for this kind of hunting. *Veranus gār* is the only animal hunted with the help of dogs *kutri*. For this purpose, Kumbri Marāthi rear one or two
Division of the hunted wild pig for all the families in the settlement
dogs in house. Two to three people from different families go with three to four dogs for this kind of hunting. Veranus are caught with the help of dogs and no guns are used. The role of *kutri* in hunting is to find the *gar* hiding in the cracks of rocks, and bush through the smell *parimal* of veranus so that they can be caught easily.

Hunting of veranus is done during the mating season (from early *Mahānāvami* festival in the month of September till *Sankaranti* festival in the month of January). Because veranus have more fat during this period and one is likely to get two or more veranus in the bush, burrows in the tree and or cracks in rocks. When veranus is found in the tree burrow, the tree is cut if it is small or they put fire in the burrow. Even if veranus enters into the cracks of rock, fire is put into the cracks and hunters stand nearby, wait for the veranus to come out and hunt it.

When veranus climbs on a tree, hunters remove their vests, tie it to a long stick and hit the veranus slowly. It is believed that the veranus feels that the eagle has attacked and it loosens its grip from the tree and falls on the ground.

The flesh of veranus and its egg *kotve* are consumed. If the skin is big enough in size, it is used for making, a musical instrument called *gumate*. The *mande* of veranus is also used as medicine for piles *mulavado*, and the dried head of the veranus is kept in the house and used as medicine for scabies *kajo*.

**Boundi**

*Boundi* is ‘collective hunting’ which has ritual significance for Kumbri Marāthi. *Boundi* is done as a performance of offering sacrifice to the malevolent spirit called *holtandmāru*. The blood that falls on the ground when an animal is hunted is considered to be the offering for *holtandmāru*, which is believed to be blood thirsty. If the *holtandmāru* becomes bloodthirsty, it is believed that they hunt both people and cattle and also cause health problems.

*Boundi* begins after *māhanāvami* festival (September), and ends with the *sigme* festival (February) (this is believed to be the period when the *holtandmāru* are believed to become free from the deity which controls them). Generally *boundi* is performed around ten to fifteen times during this period. All those Kumbri
Marathi in the settlement who are interested in hunting participate in *boundi*. Generally 30 to 50 men participate in *boundi*.

The decision about the day and time of hunting is taken by the settlement *gouda* and other elders. On the fixed day the whole *boundi* group goes into the forest for hunting. The hunters are divided into the three groups called *endi*, *pirangi* and *horake/hyargay*.

*Endi* means crab, this group consists of majority of the participants of *baundi*. The work of this group is to surround the hunting area in semi circle, and remain shouting continuously to scare the animal out of its hiding. These hunters stand at a distance of 20 to 30 feet from each other. The *pirangi* consists of generally 10 people holding gun. They sit in a line connecting the *endi* group but hidden behind bush or tree and wait for the animal. *Horake/hyargay* is another group. The word *horake/hyargay* means ‘animal has come out’. This group moves in the direction of *endi*, throwing stones into the bushes to make the animals come out of their hiding. When a animal is seen they start shouting *horake/hyargay* to inform the gunman *pirangi* that animal is out of the hiding. Since on the other side, the *endi* group is also shouting, the animal is believed to run in the opposite direction. However, in the opposite direction, the *pirangi* are sitting prepared and as soon as the animal is in the firing range, the person nearest to the animal shoots it.

The person who has shot the animal gets the head, flesh surrounding the back bone and one thigh of the animal. Remaining flesh is divided among the other hunters in the *boundi* group equally. The person who has shot the animal worships the gun, his hunting spirit *rangole* and his lineage segment deity *kuldev* because, *rangole* and *kuldev* helped him in hunting.

Kumbri Marathi in those settlements, which are nearer to streams, catch fish every day. If plenty of fish are caught, they use some and remaining fish are dried on a meshed wire and stored in a bag, to be used later. Dry fish is stored for one or two months. There are different ways of catching fish.

Fishing is done in the night taking light *laita*, net *kandāl* and knife *chaku*. Such kind of fishing is called *laitank javonche*. It is done in the beginning of the
rainy season when the fields are flooded with water and fish come for breeding. Two people are required for this kind of fishing, one for holding the bag and light and another person to take the net and knife to catch the fish. Knife is used to kill the fish if they escape from the net. Since water is shallow, they kill the fish by striking them with the knife.

Fishing is also done with the help of nylon fishing net. When rainy season begins, net is purchased in the market. Net is spread on the bank of stream nahi to catch the fish. It is believed that fish come to the bank of river for food and get caught in the net that is spread.

During the rainy season, fish are caught with fishing net made of sticks called dombe. Dombe is conical in shape and has a handle. It is kept in the creek hal and fish get caught in the dombe. It is generally kept for two to three hours in the creek.

Hook gari is also used for catching fish. When pits in the stream are filled with water, big fish come into pits. Worms kāduka, frog bāduka, and insects like chingla, gānto are used as bait. The bait is pierced to the hook. The hook is tied to a plastic thread tangas. Lead tavare is tied above the hook to make it heavy. If lead is tied, the hook becomes heavier and bigger fish can be caught as they are present in the bottom of the pits.

At the end of the rainy season, big fish come above in search of food. During this period, lead is removed from the plastic thread tangas and the hook is pierced into small live fish and thrown in the gundi. It is said that big fish eat smaller fish; therefore smaller fish are used as bait for catching fish.

At the end of the rainy season and after the rainy season, fishing is done by using herbal poison maddu. The maddu is made of wild fruits called tale, galen, rigiyo seeds and a plant stem called suragi and rame tree. These fruits and stems are believed to be poisonous for fish. These fruits and stem are mashed and put where there is less water in the stream and ripples are created. As a result foam comes up in the water. Fishes in the stream die as a result of the maddu or float up from the water or die at the side of the stream. Wherever maddu is put in the pits, people go into the water in pits to catch the dead fish at the bottom of the pit.
After the rainy season, when there is less water in the stream, then four to five people together catch fish using broader net. The fish are divided among all the people who had gone fishing. This kind of fishing is called *taliyo*. Literally *taliyo* means small branch of tree. Small branches of any tree are put in the water at one point to block the path of the fish. *Dombe* is also kept in the water where the water flow is narrow. In front of the *dombe*, also small branches are spread. At some distance from the place where *dombe* is kept, another net is spread from one end to another end of the stream. Then two to three people enter in the middle of the stream and shake the stones in the stream, because fish can be found under the stones. When the stones are shaken, fish come out and get trapped in the net.

During the winter season, when water decreases in the stream and only little is left in pits, hand bombs *toto* are used to kill fish. When bomb is blasted in the water, fish die. Bomb *toto* is purchased in the market.

2.5. Religion

Kumbri Marathi say that their religion *dharma* and religious activities *karya* are very important for the continuity of their community. If the religious activities are not performed, it arouses the wrath of the deity. When deities become angry Kumbri Marathi believe that there will be no rains, failure of crops, and ill health in men and cattle. Observance of taboos of purity and pollution, ancestral worship, the performance of rituals and festivals are all considered crucial aspects of their religious practices. Breach of taboos is believed to result in sighting of snakes, ill health, crops getting affected. Through religious activities, people come together and perform worshipping for the welfare of the entire lineage and community.

Kumbri Marathi worship an unhusked coconut *naral*, symbolizing their lineage segment deity *kuldev*. It is believed that *pātulachemāru* which is spirit sent by *dev* and which individual obtains after the performance of tonsure and ear piercing. It is kept in the protection of *kuldev* that is, in the unhusked coconut. *Nāral* is changed every six months on festivals of *mahāl* and *shivarātri* since the
coconut in which kernel kāychur has dried up should not be retained. It is believed that the pāṭulachemāru does not stay in dry kernel. The other deities that they worship are Tulasī, Aṃma, Guḍdesidda, and Timappa and Manjunath (situated at Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh state and Dharmasthala of Karnatakal respectively).

Every day, early in the morning water mixed with cow dung is sprinkled in the house by the woman of the household. This is believed to remove the pollution that may be present in the house. Men worship Tulasī deity by offering flower, incense stick and sacred lamps deep. Tulasī is sacred to Kumbri Marathi because she is believed to be powerful and myths are related about her sanctity and power.

Various deities are worshipped by Kumbri Marathi some of them are worshipped everyday and some on particular occasions. Tulasī is worshipped everyday and Tulasī deity has a role to play in the cure of various diseases. She is believed to help the medicine man in curing the sick person. A female deity called Aṃma is worshipped on Tuesday and Friday. Wrath of Aṃma is believed to cause measles. On all festivals she is worshipped so that she blesses and protects them from diseases.

Monday and Saturday are said to be important for religious purposes. On Monday they worship God Manjunath and on Saturday they worship Timmappa and on these two days they do not consume non-vegetarian food goul. It is believed that if they consume goul deity becomes angry with them and will affect them in the form of health problems, snakes coming in front of them and their cattle becoming sick.

Kumbri Marathi believe that guḍdesidda/ guddgegeri a ‘deity of the forest’ helps them in hunting, protects their crops from diseases, from spirits and wild animals. Guḍdesidda is worshipped in the form of a big rock in the forest. This deity is worshipped in the month of December and according to the Hindu calendar in shonyamasa by offering pancake of nāsani, and onion, also a fowl is offered in sacrifice. This deity is worshipped on Sunday ādityavar, before dawn. Only men are to worship this deity. Women from puberty to menopause are considered as polluted and hence are not supposed to perform the worship.
Kumbri Marāṭhi seek advice regarding the auspicious days for the performance of different rituals and ceremonies in a religious institution called chaḷavarmath. They confer here with Brahmin priests for the various religious matters like performance of festivals and also for getting horoscopes done, and for purification of death pollution.

Celebration of festivals has a great significance for Kumbri Marāṭhi for the prosperity in agricultural activities, for the well being of the whole community and to placate the ancestral spirits. If the festivals are not performed deities affect adversely by affecting crops, causing ill health to cattle and human beings. Similar effects are also caused if the ancestral spirits are not worshipped. Some of the festivals are celebrated at the community level and some at the family level.

**Gadipōja**

*Gadipōja* is the first festival of the year and is performed in the month of May-June. *Gadipōja* involves worshiping of all deities, spirits māravā and ancestral spirits kutumbāche māru. This festival is performed at the community level and involves participation of all households. For this festival all men in the settlement gather in the field. Mulkār, and gouda worship the deities and then all men worship bhotaray offer coconuts and sacrifice fowl in the name of bhotaray. Two coconuts each are given to mulkār, gouda and kolakār for having performed the worship.

After the worshiping, everybody pray to the deities requesting for peace and prosperity sukh samriddhi in the coming year. The coconuts broken in the name of bhotaray are distributed among all the households in the settlement.

**Adrevappat**

*Adrevappat* is a festival performed at the end of the adrepāvastal rainy season. *Adre* refers to one of the types of rain and vappat means fasting. During this festival, the female deity Amma is worshipped. Coconut and fowl are sacrificed to her. *Adrevappat* is performed on a Tuesday or Friday, because these two days are considered to be auspicious days for Amma. On the day of adrevappat in every family one man remains fasting till the fowl is sacrificed and one woman lasts till the offering of food to the deity nivedya is made. During
A female deity Ammā
worshipping of Amma they pray to Amma, to give them good health and crops. People believe that both cattle and people fall ill if Amma is not worshipped. Therefore, worshipping of Amma is believed to prevent ill health.

**Bechinsankranti**

Bechinsankranti is a festival which is performed in the month of September. Bechcha is a kind of grass, which grows on the banks of streams. The day before bechchinsankranti, people go to the forest to bring bechcha grass. On the day of bechchinsankranti, they worship bechcha and plant it in the field. This is done with the belief that if bechcha is planted in the field, crops grow like bechcha grows on the bank of streams, that is, in abundance. Bechcha is also kept in deity’s room devāchékono and worshiped.

**Chouti parab**

Chouti parab festival of Lord Ganesh is performed in the month of August-September. Kumbri Marathi believe that celebration of chouti parab brings them peace and prosperity sukha samriddhi. The worship of Ganesh is performed for 5 to 11 days by keeping the idol of Ganesh in the house. Every evening Ganesh is worshiped and they sing devotional songs. Those who have not kept Ganesh idol in their house participate in the worshiping of Ganesh with those who have performed the worshipping of Ganesh in their houses. Those who do not have children make vow harake to Ganesh saying that if a child is born in their house, they will bring Ganesh’s idol and worship him from the subsequent year. It is believed that once begun, the practice of keeping and worshipping Ganesh idol should be continued without fail.

**Shravansomavar**

Shravan is a month in the Hindu calendar and somvar refers to Monday. Those who have visited the pilgrimage place of Dharmasthala where temple of Manjunatha is situated worship Manjunatha. Such visits often occur as a part of taking vows when there is a crisis situation like health problem. Once they visit the temple they become regular devotee since help was sought with the deity. In the name of Manjunatha fast is observed on four Mondays in the month of Shravan (August). On the last somavar of shravanmasa, worship of Manjunatha is
Worshipping of Lord Ganesh
performed. Once the worshiping of *Manjunatha* is initiated, devotees should not consume *kavāl*, smoke *bidi*, nor drink *soro* and should not scold others on the day of worshipping. If the devotee does not observe such taboos the deity is believed to harm the devotee or his family members by affecting their health.

**Divāli**

*Divāli* is celebrated in the month of October-November. This is one of the major festivals for the Kumbri Marāthi which is celebrated for four days. On the first day, water pot *hande* (used for heating water for bathing) is painted red in color and decorated with fruits called *kanta*, and flowers. In the evening, water is worshipped. The next day, ritual bath is taken by all members of the family. In front of *Tulasi* bark of tree called *sārvin* or fruit of a shrub called *kanta* (which are both said to be bitter in taste) are kept. And after bath everybody has to prostrate to *Tulasi* and eat a piece of the bark. This bark is believed to prevent the person from twelve kinds of diseases. It is also believed that if a person is suffering from any skin disease, if he takes the ritual bath and goes to the *sārvin* tree, naked and eats the bark, the skin disease will be cured.

On the third day, preparations of sweets are begun in the evening and it continues till dawn. On the fourth day, cattle and cattle shed are worshipped. New ropes which are prepared in the house are tied around the necks of the cattle. Kumbri Marāthi believe that the cattle help them in the agricultural activities and it is agriculture that provides them with the major source of livelihood. After the worship, the sweets prepared the day before are consumed.

**Mahanavami**

*Mahanavami* is a festival, which is celebrated for nine days. These nine days, all deities in the settlement are worshipped. Every day, people sing devotional songs in the temple or in the house. On the ninth day, worship of all deities in the settlement is performed by offering coconut, banana and flowers. *Bhatta* is invited for worshipping of the deities. It is believed that with the beginning of this festival, the spirits in the process of being exorcised become free from the control of deity. The deities are said to free all the spirits which are in the process of being exorcised. For these nine days, the spirits do not come under the
Worshiping of cattle during divāli parāb
Community worshipping during festival of Mahanavami
control of the diviner gādiga. Kumbri Marāthi say that they get more health problems during this period due to the affliction of spirits.

Mahāl parāb

Mahāl parāb is the worship of ancestors. Apart from mahāl parāb, the worship of ancestors is performed twice in a year, that is, on the day of gadipōja, and on shivaratri. On the day of mahāl, devānchekono is purified by sprinkling purification water panchagavi and worship of the kuldev is performed. On this occasion they prepare pāyas a sweet dish, rice gote and curry of meat nistek. If meat is not available, then they prepare vegetarian curry and offer it to the ancestors. Two plantain leaves are served with food prepared and one is kept in front of kuldev and another is kept on a bush outside the house. The food that is offered is considered to be the food that Kumbri Marāthi are said to take delight in eating, therefore they believe that their ancestors will become pleased if meat and sweets are offered. The ancestors are believed to come in the form of birds and accept the food offered (kept on the bush).

On the days meant for ancestral worship if there is a death or birth in the manatan, mahāl parāb is not performed till pollution jambara period is over.

Sigme

Sigme is a festival celebrated in the month of February-March. This festival begins five or nine days before the holiponam (full moon day). This is a festival which involves singing and dancing. The festival of sigme is awaited by all Kumbri Marāthi and it is a very important festival for them. It provides an opportunity for them to visit different Kumbri Marāthi settlements and also collect money and rice. The nine days Kumbri Marāthi do not go for work and enjoy the leisure and await to watch the performance of sigme groups from different settlements. The sigme performers visit different settlements for five or nine days and perform singing and dancing. On the first day of sigme all people in the settlement gather in front of gouda’s house. Gouda worships Tulasi and one unhusked coconut is kept in front of the Tulasi in the name of all deities. They are broken on the last day of sigme. Coconut is also kept in all the houses in the settlement with a prayer that people who are going outside the settlement for
Narayana offering food to the ancestral spirits during *mahāl parāb*
performance of sigme a safe journey and good health. After the worshiping, those who are going for performing sigme, sing a song pada wishing all people in the settlement good health. The sigme performing group consists of fifteen to thirty people.

The sigme group has to observe certain taboos. Only unmarried men are to hold a ritual stick dānd (dānd is a ‘N’ shaped twig which is tied with a kind of wild flower called suragi). Because, person holding dānd has to collect money, coconut and rice grains after performance. It is generally women who give rice, coconut and money. While taking these materials it is said that there a'e chances of the woman’s hand coming in contact with the person who is receiving them. And it is believed that a married man should not touch any woman other than his wife. Therefore only unmarried men hold dānd and collect the materials. Sigme group has to walk bare foot because it is believed that they are performing religious activity and footwear are considered to be polluting. Breach of such taboos is believed to result wrath of deity as a result of which there may be adverse effect on health of people and cattle and also crops may be affected.

Along with them they take various kinds of musical instruments pāangaru/gumate, madale, and bandgol. While dancing they use tipriyo small sticks which they play with alternate motions and rhythmically banging them with the dancing partner. Kumbri Marāthi use dānd tied with suragi flower. Other community people like Kunabi, Halakki Vokkal who also perform sigme dance do not use suragi flower during the performance of sigme. Therefore the dānd is said to be an identification marker for identifying sigme groups that come to the settlement for performance of sigme.

The sigme group returns to their settlement one day before the full moon day. The collected money, coconut and rice are kept in the gouda’s house. They do not enter in their house or take any food because the sigme group is considered to be polluted. This pollution is believed to be due to having visited settlements and coming in contact with people, whom Kumbri Marāthi regard as ritually inferior. On the same night sigme group sings songs in which they ask the permission of their settlement gouda to enter into the gouda’s court yard.
After the performance, purification of the sigme group is performed. Gouda passes a coconut (taken from those in kept in front of Tulasi) from one person to another person among five boys in the sigme group five times. The coconut offered to Tulasi is believed to be sacred and enables to remove the pollution. While doing this, the boys pray to all deities to remove the pollution. Then gouda pours turmeric powder mixed in water haladpâni on these five boys as a part of the process of removing pollution. Those who are suffering from long term illness take the haladpâni for curing illness.

Then all males from elder to younger stand in a line. Gouda worships Tulasi and sprinkles the panchgavi to remove the pollution. Then gouda's wife gives panchagavi to all men standing in the line. Then three women together perform arati, waving a sacred lamp, in order to ward-off evil eye châk. It is believed that when sigme group goes from one village to another, they will be affected by evil eye. In the arati men put a piece of coconut or money as an offering in return for having warded-off the evil eye.

The day after sigme a community meal is organized in gouda's court yard using the rice and coconut collected during sigme. On the next day, all men gather in the courtyard of gouda, and the coconut remaining after the community meal is distributed among the performers in sigme group. The money collected through out the sigme is counted and the accounts are maintained by an educated person. This remaining money is lent as loan on an interest of Rs. 20/- for every hundred rupees borrowed.

Ugadi

Ugadi is a festival celebrated in the month of March-April. For this festival bhatta comes from Challawarmath, a religious institution to read out the panchang the Hindu calendar. He tells about the forthcoming festivals by reading panchang. He is given coconut naral and rice grains tändula for his services. People say, now a days, they depend on calendar kyalendar for festival dates and the priest no longer visits. Presently, the gouda collects rice grains and coconut from all the people in the settlement and gives it to Challawarmath.
2.6. Rituals

Helman (1994) says the rituals of 'social transition' that is the rites of passage are present in one form or another in every society. They relate changes in the human life cycle to the changes in social position within the society, by linking the physiological to the social statuses of an individual's life.

Rituals kārya are of crucial significance for Kumbri Marāthi because they have social and supernatural significance. It is rituals that enable the individual to be incorporated into the community. If certain life cycle rituals of an individual are not performed, the person may become a māru and cause trouble to the family members through affliction.

Pantora

Pantora is a ritual performed after delivery for the whole lineage mantan to remove pollution jambra caused due to childbirth. The lineage in which the birth has taken place is considered to be polluted. Jambra is observed by all members of the lineage in which birth has taken place. During this period, members of mantan do not perform any religious activities. The message of jambra and duration for which, it should be observed is sent to the whole mantan and also to those in other settlements.

The ritual is performed on 5th, 7th or 9th or 11th day after childbirth since odd numbers are considered to be auspicious. Usually people perform it on 5th day or the day is fixed depending on the health condition of puerperal woman balanth. For removing jambra, ash rāk is brought from washer man Madival's house. Madival collects the ash, from the hearth of sacramental fire homa performed by the bhatta in the temples during the fair of the deity and stores it in his house. This ash, tulasi leaves, flowers pol, dry paddy grass karki and water are mixed in a small pot. The ash mixed with pol, karki and water is believed to remove the pollution. This mixture is called kāranche pāni. Before sprinkling the kāranche pāni in the house ghar, all the clothes are washed and the house is smeared with cow dung. Until the kāranche pāni is sprinkled the other mantan people do not take food in the house where delivery has taken place.
Community worshipping of Tulasi during sigme festival

Hasaprâni: a ritual bath during the sigme festival
Sotave

*Sotave* is a ritual performed after the purification ritual *pantora*. The goddess of fate called *sotave* is believed to write the fate of child. *Sotave*, is worshipped so that she writes good things for child. This ritual is performed in the evening. For worshipping *sotave* rice is taken in a winnowing pan *asdoche* along with two coconuts, some money and flowers and are kept for the deity. After the worshipping of *sotave* one coconut is broken in the name of *sotave*.

Then, another coconut is broken in the name of cradle *pālane* and the child is put in cradle. The broken coconut is kept in the *asdoche* which is later offered to the ancestral spirits. While putting the infant in the cradle, naming is performed by calling out the name. The names given for males are generally Eru, Alu, Yenku, Narayan, Dhaku, Omu, Purusha. And for females Taki, Dhaki, Omi, Paru, Roopa. After the naming, a string called *munj* is tied around the waist of the infant. Tying *munj* to the infant is believed to incorporate it into their religion *dharma* and from then onwards it is considered as a member of the *mantan*. In case if the child dies before the performance of *munj* the death rituals are not performed to the child since it is not yet a member of the lineage. It is also believed that the tying of *munj* to the child prevents worm infestation *janta*. After the rituals are performed, feast is given to the *mantan* members and other invitees.

Late in the night, on the same day, an old woman keeps the *asdoche* on the bush as an offering to the ancestral spirits. It is believed that during delivery if the mother or the newborn baby had any health problems the health problems would get transferred to old woman. The old woman may die any because she is already aged. Therefore, by transferring the health problems to her, the mother, and the newborn who have still a long time to live will be healthy.

Cholangi

*Cholangi* (tonsure) is performed for males after one year of birth and before the eleventh year. The child’s mother’s brother *mama* performs tonsure. He touches the hair with betel leaves symbolically indicating cutting of the hair. After that barber *hajam* removes the hair, except a tuft on the back of the head *chendi*. The cut hair and the betel leaves are left in the stream. Display of *chendi* during
the tonsure is said to be typical of Kumbri Marathi. Child’s parents give a gift of clothes to mama for having performed tonsure.

**Kānchochunche**

*Kānchochunche* (ear piercing) is performed for both males and females after three years of birth. It is believed that after three years if the ears are pierced, the child will be able to bear the pain of piercing. After three years it is not delayed because the skin is believed to become hard. Elderly female in the family performs ear piercing since they have the experience of piercing the ears and know how to pierce without hurting the child.

It is believed that if a child dies before the tonsure or ear piercing, the child’s māru spirit becomes *chāli*, a spirit, which gives trouble to people and also it is believed that these rituals are not performed, the individual will not get the pātulachemāru.

**Horādki**

*Horādki* (marriage) is performed generally between the age of 20 to 27 for male and between 17 to 23 for females. A generation ago giving bride price *tira* was in practice. Now the practice no longer prevails, because people say that the population of females has increased and these days dowry *vardaxine* is given.

The ceremony of marriage lasts for five days. The first day involves preparing the wedding arch *chapparghaluche* in front of the bride’s house. All people in the settlement participate in this ceremony. Feast is given to all people taking part in the ceremony. The next ritual involves the worshipping of *Tulasi*. The next two days the bride and groom visit all the houses in their respective settlements. They are given snacks *tanik* on visiting each house. After this and prior to the main wedding a ritual called *neembsandönche* is performed. It involves taking the bride and groom to the field for bathing (in their respective settlements). In the field, married women pour water over the bride’s head. In such a way that the water being poured on the bride’s and groom’s head falls over the hair of old woman who is made to sit by the side of the bride/groom. Doing this is believed to transfer troubles *kāta* which the bride and the groom may have to the old woman.
Nēmbsādunche: a ritual transferring of health problems from the bride to a old woman (a part of marriage ceremony)
In the evening on the same day, a sacred lamp is lighted in the name of kuldev, in front of Tulasi, in the bride’s house so that the kuldev (belonging to the bride’s family) and Tulasi bless the bride and the groom. This lamp should remain burning, therefore a person is put in charge of pouring oil and seeing that the lamp does not get put out.

On the day of wedding, the groom’s people come to the bride’s house. Bhatta performs the ceremony and the bride’s father gives away the bride. A feast is given to all the invitees. On the same day, the bride is sent along with the groom to her conjugal house.

Death rituals

Kumbri Marathi cremate the dead. Presence of all immediate family members is needed for cremation of dead body med and to have a last glance of the dead person one last time. Therefore, med is kept in the house till the children, siblings arrive. All types of wood except kajure are used for cremation. Wood of kajure tree is believed to be inferior kil to other trees. It is believed that if kajure is used, the dead person’s spirit becomes inferior in nature. Such spirits do not come under the control of gadiga. If the spirit does not come under the control of gadiga, it is difficult to cure the person whenever the person is afflicted.

When a pregnant woman gurvarin dies, her med is kept on the wood in the burial ground and her abdomen is cut and fetus is removed. And cremation of the woman and of the fetus is performed separately. If they do not separate the dead child from the dead mother, the spirit of both mother and child form into one and become a strong spirit which is difficult to be ward them off in case they afflict someone. Cutting the abdomen of gurvarin med is done by the husband of the dead pregnant woman. If husband is unable to do this, he symbolically touches the abdomen with sickle koyato and some one else performs it.

On the third day after cremation, the remaining ash is collected and worshipped. The remaining bones are collected and immersed in the river. On the eleventh day after death bāradivasi, they go to chalavarmatha where the priest bhatta utters the sacred chants mantra and gives panchagavi. Panchagavi is
Alu with his wife, children and grand children
sprayed in the house in order to remove jambara. The jambara is observed for 11 days from the day of death by the whole mantan.

Up to the performance of the ritual called eklanāvache vāduvonche (lit. ‘Offering food in the dead person’s name’) the dead person’s family consume gote cooked rice and curry nistek without salt. Until eklanāvche vāduvonche which is performed on the eleventh day, Kumbri Marāthi do not perform any religious activity and they do not consume non-vegetarian food. As this is a period of mourning, they abstain from consuming non-vegetarian food since it is said to be associated with pleasure and happiness. It is a pleasure to consume flesh of a hunted animal or fish. For the feast given during rituals and festivals non-vegetarian food is consumed.

Diviner is invited on the day of eklanāvache vāduvonche to call the dead person’s spirit. The spirit is offered food and the diviner requests it to stay in the house. The spirit has to protect the pātulache māru of the individuals and also to prevent outside māru from afflicting the family members. With the performance of eklanāvache vāduvonche rituals of death come to an end.

2.7. Marriage, family and kinship

Kumbri Marāthi believe that marriage is crucial to continue the family kutumb. The rules of marriage are such that there exists lineage exogamy. They do not marry within the lineage and members of a lineage are considered as brothers and sisters lineage segment kutumbache. Marrying mother’s brother’s children and father’s sister’s children that is cross-cousin marriage is a commonly found practice. When there is a suitable girl the boy’s family through a kinsman approaches the girl’s family for asking the girl in marriage. The kinsman of the boy is sent to know whether the relationship is possible. In case if the girl’s family agrees then the negotiations continue.

Kumbri Marāthi have lineages mantan consists of a group of moita kutumb joint families and kutumb nuclear families. Therefore at the lineage segment level are of groups of families belonging to a single lineage. Each kutumb has a kuldev. Every lineage has a deity called mirashethal. When a joint family is divided, the deity kuldev is retained by the eldest son. The deity is borrowed by other brothers
when there are rituals like marriage and devkarya in their family. If the eldest brother refuses to give the deity, the family can perform the worship of an unhusked coconut and thereby the family gets a kuldev.

Kinship has a very strong role to play in economic activities and there is mutual interdependence among the kinsman. Bartering labor for various agricultural activities is done among both consanguines kutumābcche and affines sohere. When there is birth or death in a family, all members of the lineage mantan have to observe the rules of pollution. For offering the food on 11 day ritual after the death both kutumbāche and sohere are to be present. Kinsman also act as advisers in times of health crisis. Generally most of the families in the settlement are related to each other as affines or consanguines.

The property asti is inherited in the patriline. In case of divorce sodunche, the children are retained by the children’s father. Divorce is allowed if the woman is not able to bear a child or if she has extra marital sexual relationships. Women also can divorce but people say, women do not divorce because unlike men, women cannot remarry.

2. 8. Political organization

Angane, and Alave settlement come under the Santle Gram Panchayat. Other Kumbri Marāthi settlements under this Gram Panchayat are Alave, Himboli and Orshe. The Gram Panchayat is situated in Santle village. A Kumbri Marāthi woman from Angane at present is a Gram Panchayat member. The settlement of Kogadde comes under Mane Gram Panchayat.

From the funds provided by the Gram Panchayat of Santle, school building, and roads have been constructed, two bore-wells and wells have been dug. Twice a year ‘gram sabha’ which is a community meeting is conducted by Gram Panchayat for discussing the problems and needs of the people. Gram Panchayat has a village accountant’s shanbhog office wherein Kumbri Marāthi register births and deaths and land records.

Traditionally, political power of Kumbri Marāthi lies in the hands of the chieftain gouda/gawadi of a settlement. Under gouda, is a person called kolakar who spreads the message regarding celebration of festivals, community work dāh
logache kam, boundi in the settlement. Further, when a big animal is hunted in a settlement, kolkâr is informed about it and he spreads the message to the people informing them to come and collect their share.

Mulakâr, is in charge of religious activities. Mulkâr means the person who settled first in the settlement. Mulkâr's lineage is believed to have been the original settlers before all other lineages in the settlement. The functions of mulkâr are religious in nature. He officiates at the worshipping of all the deities worshipped by Kumbri Marathi. Though mulkâr primarily is in charge of religious duties, his presence is essential for decision making regarding community work and for settling disputes.

Traditionally, for taking decisions regarding disputes of people in the settlement, like division of property between brothers, divorce, and also with regard to quarrels in the settlement, people first approach gouda, kolkâr and mulkâr and elders of the settlement. If judgment is not satisfactory, then the family members can approach the sime gouda (who has authority over five to seven settlements) through their settlement gouda. Sime gouda considering the matter invites gouda from all the settlements of Kumbri Marathi for a meeting. Sime gouda spreads the message in his settlement, about particular day and settlement where meeting will be held. Other than the gouda, elders and interested people to take part in the meeting. The judgment of sime gouda is considered as final. A generation or two ago, this would be the final decision. But now people have begun to take the matters to court, though not on a large scale.

During the festivals, when the deities are worshiped jointly by all households in the settlement gouda, kolkâr and mulkâr are honored. Kumbri Marathi offer coconut nârala, banana kele and rice for the services performed by them for the people in the settlement.

2. 9. Health facilities

Angane, and Alave settlement come under the Santle Primary Health Center (PHC). Kogadde settlement comes under the working of Mane PHC. There are also modern doctors (private) at Kumta and Siddapur. ANM visits the settlements once in a month for providing mother and child health services.
Delivery generally takes place in private hospitals in Kumta and Siddapur since they are believed to provide better care than government health centers. When diseases are minor they visit PHC, and when a disease is severe they go to private doctors. There are indigenous medical specialists who cater to the health care needs of the people. Supernatural healers called gadiga (diviner) are also crucial in diagnosis and treatment for the health problems.

In 11 settlements including Angane, a NGO called Vanavasi Kalyan provides medicines for minor ailments like fever, cough, common cold, body pain, wounds and scrapes through their community worker residing in the settlement. The organization also conducts sessions in the settlements for creating hygiene awareness. The organization apart from health services also provides education for children below six years.

2.10. Education

In the settlements of Angane, Kogadde, and Alave (where research was conducted), except Alave other two settlements have school upto 5th standard. The school at Alave has up to 7th standard. For further education the children in these settlements have to go other places. Therefore, they generally do not continue education.

Traveling to other places to go to school is difficult during rainy season for the children of both the settlements except Kogadde. Further, economic burden of purchasing books, traveling expenses and expenditure incurred for the stay in the hostel are said to prevent the children from studying further. It is believed that children should be able to read and write so that they are not cheated when official documentations, loans are involved. So if they are able to learn that much, it is considered sufficient and further education is not considered essential.

2.11. Socio-economic interaction

Kumbri Marathi believe that they belong to the fold of Hindu religion. The other local people that they come into contact on a regular basis are Bhatta, Nayak, Madival and Sab. Kumbri Marathi believe that they are next to Brahmins in the Hindu social hierarchy. Others like Madival, Nayak are said to be below them in the hierarchy. (They also say that Brahmin priests bhatta do not allow them in the
temples because they are non-vegetarian). Kumbri Marāthi have religious and economic relationships with the Brahmin, Madival, Nayak castes and Muslims.

Kumbri Marāthi bring ritual water *panchagavi* for removing various kinds of pollution from *bhatta*. That is for purification of the household after the delivery, and death. For officiating at the marriage ceremony also *bhatta* is invited.

Brahmin priest is also invited to perform the worshipping of Satyanārayana deity, performance of *Shani kathe* once in a year and for worship of deities on the occasion of festivals. Satyanārayana kathe is a worship, which involves the story of God Satyanārayana. *Bhatta* relates as to how the performance of worship of Satyanārayana brings prosperity to the family in which the worship is performed. *Shanikathe* is a worship wherein the story of Shani is told by the *bhatta*. It is believed that if this story is related and worship is performed once in a year, there will be no troubles *tondar* like ill health, failure of crops, quarrels in the family. These worships are performed once in a year and also after a marriage has taken place in the family for peace and prosperity in the house.

There are also *bhatta* who are supernatural healers and whom Kumbri Marāthi seek. They provide amulets for warding off the effects of spirit affliction. Kumbri Marāthi bring ash (from the Madival caste) after delivery has taken place in the family. This ash is believed to remove pollution *jambra* caused due to delivery. Certain families in the Madival caste collect ash from *homa*, which is performed by *bhatta*.

There exists economic relationship with people of Nayak, and Shetti castes and with Muslims sāb. During the rainy season, the merchants belonging to these castes visit the interior settlements in the forest for selling bangles *kākana*, *pan* betel leaves, clothes *kāpad*, and rugs *raga* and fish. Those who have money pay the amount and purchase whatever they need. Otherwise, after harvesting they pay in terms of cash or rice grains. These merchants also buy the forest produce collected by the Kumbri Marāthi. Kumbri Marāthi also work as wage laborers for Bhatta and Nayak landlords.
With this cultural background, the following chapters focus on the indigenous medical practices, their notions regarding etiology, diagnosis, and treatment. An attempt to understand their supernatural beliefs and practices regarding health and illness which is a dominant theme of their medical system has been attempted. Indigenous medicines used by Kumbri Marāthi, and their treatment seeking behavior also have been discussed.