Chapter 6
Cultural Elements: Continuity and Change

When a group (or an individual) physically moves into a new area, it carries its ‘socio-cultural baggage which among other things consists of (a) a predefined social identity, (b) a set of religious beliefs, (c) a framework of norms and values governing family and kinship organisation, and food habits and (d) language’ (Jayaram 2004: 16). A process of cultural interaction is then set in motion between the new comers and the people already resident there. For the migrants two opposite processes work at the same time: (i) adaptation and assimilation (Punekar 1974: 4) and (ii) preservation of customs and traditions. Through adaption and assimilation the migrants adjust themselves to the new socio-cultural situation. Through preservation, which is the main thrust of this chapter, the migrants negotiate their identity by practising faithfully the customs and traditions of their homeland.

The Masan Jogis, originally an itinerant community, had moved from what is now Andhra Pradesh and spread in several districts of Maharashtra where they have been living for several decades. This chapter focuses on the cultural elements that Masan Jogis brought with them from Andhra Pradesh such as their names and surnames, the long hair tufted on top of their head, food habits, tattoos and the language, and the changes these elements have undergone in their new abode.

Names and Surnames

Names and family names are an important identity marker with migrant communities. Jewish community is a good example in this regard. When Jews migrated to Maharashtra many of them adopted the surname indicating their resident village adding to it a suffix of ‘kar’ or ‘ker’. Thus, Bene Israelis bore surnames such as Rohekar, Penkar, Palkar, Astamkar, and Naogaokar. (Chawla Singh 2009: 73, 87 Note 11).

Masan Jogis as an itinerant community have undergone the process of modifying retaining of names and family names. After surveying their individual names, I categorised them into three
main groups: (i) those who are named after gods and goddesses of south India, (ii) those who have taken up names common in rural Maharashtra, and (iii) those who are given the Sanskritic names.

Many senior men and women fall into the first group, who bear the names of gods and goddesses of south India. The females are named after goddesses Yellamma, Poshamma, Durgamma, Renukamma, etc. The names are ascribed as they are; retaining the suffix ‘amma’ which literally means mother. In the case of males, the suffixes are changed to ‘anna’ or ‘appa’, which mean elder brother or father respectively. Thus, the names for males are Poshanna, Yellappa, Durgappa, etc. The name of Lord Shiva is ascribed to male as Shiva and to female as Shivi. The name of Rama Mama is twinned together with another name of god when ascribed to a male, for instance Shivram. It is Shiva and Ram, referring to Lord Shiva and Rama Mama. Ascribing the name of Rama Mama to female, it becomes Rami. It is not twinned with another name of god or goddess.

The names signify auspiciousness. While addressing the person, one automatically recites the name of god or goddess that amount to a reverence shown to the deity. My informants told me that ascribing the names of gods and goddesses created a sort of protective cover around the families and increased their confidence in the god.

The second group consists of those who have modified their names to the names common in rural Maharashtra. The persons in this group belong to the second or the third generation of Masan Jogis living in Maharashtra. The practice of adding an honorific suffix ‘bai’ to women’s names in rural Maharashtra has been adopted by the Masan Jogi community. Thus, the names of women in Masan Jogi community are changed from Yellamma to Yellabai, or Poshamma to Poshabai or any other name with the suffix ‘bai’ added. The suffixes added to men’s names in rural Maharashtra are according to caste and the status hierarchy of the village. The suffixes are ‘ji’, ‘bhau’, ‘rao’, etc. The Masan Jogi community has not taken up any of these suffixes to be added to the male names. Instead, the males of Masan Jogi community have taken the male names of rural Maharashtra, such as Sakharam, Shivran, Shankar, Maruti, etc. The name Ram here
connotes Rama Mama and not necessarily Shri Ram of the Ramayana. The process of acquiring the local names is a simple one of assimilating elements of local culture.

The third group consists of those who bear names of Sanskrit origin. The recent trend in the community is to name a child with Sanskritic names. Most of the younger generation falls into this category. The names are neither traditional nor modified or assimilated according the local customs, but are an entirely new trend of acquiring the names of Sanskritic origin. These names include, Ravi, referring to the sun; Akash, the sky; Anil, the wind, etc for male children, and Vidyā, the learning or knowledge; Kavita, the poem, etc. for the female children.

The common surnames among the Masan Jogis are Kadminche, Shendre, Shenore, Shinde, Ubde, Mamde, Teke, etc. These family names have their roots in Andhra Pradesh. Kadminche means those who wear the silver ring around their left wrist called kadem; Shenore connotes chickpeas (Cicer arietinum) known as harbhara in Marathi, and commonly known as chana in Hindi and its dialects. Shendre and Shinde are the later derivatives of Shenore. The original surname Mamdage refers to Mango. It has become Mamde in Maharashtra. Ubde refers to the Bhashm, the ashes that applied on the forehead. According to the informants, the title Teke is derived from the name of the teak wood tree, Tectona grandis. (It also refers to the verb tekane which in Marathi means to recline upon or lean upon and also means as dependent upon.) Teak wood trees are most common in the forests in Maharashtra – Andhra Pradesh border area. One informant explained to me that the particular group of people may be closely associated with the tree by way of living around the tree or by way of dealing with its produce, that is, the timber and the leaves, which are traditionally used for constructing houses and thatching roof respectively. Most of the surnames have ‘e’ sound at the end. Some families have changed their surnames to Marathi surnames, namely, Shinde, Jadhav, More, Gaikwad, etc. The association of surnames with names of the plants could not be traced. However, they are not connected to the idea of totem, which apparently is absent among Masan Jogis.
Tattoos

Tattooing is a common practice among many communities around the world (Duary 2008: 98). Tattooing is done as part of the initiation ceremony that marks the maturation stage among boys and girls. Not only as ‘rites of passage, but [it] also had the function of demonstrating availability for sexual access and fertility’ (Kuwahar 2005: 12). The figures that are drawn on the body by tattooing are mostly symbols ‘with profound cultural and social meaning’ (Joshi 1992: vii) in the community. Tattooing is also found among numerous cultural communities in India such as,

Saharia of Rajasthan; Buska, Raji of Uttaranchal; Kota, Kurumba, Khand of Andhra Pradesh; Abuj maria, Baiga, Hill Korwa, Bharia Saharia of Madhya Pradesh and Chhatisgarh; Asur Bhior, Korwa, Mal Paharia of Jharkhand; Bondo, Juang, Mankirdia, Saura in Orissa, Lodha Bhior of West Bengal and tribes of many other states (Duary 2008:98).

So far as the Scheduled Caste communities are concerned, tattooing is predominant in Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Pondicherry and Delhi (Singh 1993: 22).

Masan Jogi women did not wear any signs or symbols of marriage on their face. Putting a vermilion spot on the forehead was never a practice with Masan them. As ascetics, who dealt with the dead and lived in cemeteries, they had no interest in material world of any sort. The women informants from the Masan Jogi community told me that the practice of tattooing had become popular among them during the Nizam regime. They said, ‘We had to resort to tattooing in order to counter the perception of the Islamic rulers.’ During the days of the rajya, the Muslim dominion, it was difficult to distinguish the Masan Jogi women from the Muslim women, because neither of these women wore any symbol used by married Hindu women such as vermilion spot on their forehead or the tali around their neck. Often, if not invariably, people would take Masan Jogi women for Muslim converts and frown at them. When people would see Masan Jogi women in the graveyard, they would take them for the Muslim women and create ruckus, for it was believed that the Muslim women did not enter any graveyard. Villagers would not entertain the Masan Jogi women who came to their doors for begging or selling some homemade ornaments. They were forbidden from making any contacts with the village communities. In was a great task
for the Masan Jogi women to prove their Hindu identity in such a chaotic condition. The women told me how they had to face the situation every other day and how they resented the falsely ascribed identity and the commotion it caused. Referring to their past experiences, the women said, ‘Tattooing was found to be a good way of solving the problem. The permanent marks on the body helped us to identify ourselves as Hindus.’

The most common locations for tattoo marks were on the face; a spot or three leaves of sacred *Tulasi* (*Ocimum tenuiflorum* plant) at the centre of the forehead and three dots or a design of three tiny buds at the centre of the chin. Tulasi is considered sacred in the Hindu tradition. *Tulasi vivaha*, ceremonial marriage of Tulasi to Krishna, is celebrated on the eleventh day of *Shukla*, the dark nights of lunar month *Kartika*. This is the end of the four-month-long inauspicious period for weddings and other rituals. The Tulasi vivaha inaugurates the annual marriage season. Tulasi plant is placed in front of every *Vaishnava* household and is known as *Tulasi vrindavan*. The ritual of lighting of lamp at the plant is performed every evening. Hindu women devoutly carry Tulsi plant in a decorated pot on their head all through their walking pilgrimage to Shri *Vitthal* at Pandharpur in Solapur district in Maharashtra. Tattoos of Tulasi leaves are engraved on the forehead of some Hindu girls at early age. It helps them later as widows. After the death of the husband women stop wearing the vermilion spot on the forehead and are considered as *abhagini*, the unfortunate one. The tattooed Tulasi mark on the forehead releases them from this perception. Furthermore, the followers of *Vaishnava* sect use the *jap mala* (rosary) made from the roots or stem of the Tulasi plant. Without being aware of its religious significance, the Masan Jogi women tattoo Tulasi leaves on their forehead. Interestingly, though being Shaivites, they use sacred symbols from the *Vaishnava* tradition. They hardly know that they are the mediators of two great religious traditions. Pictures 6.1 and 6.2 show the tattooed spots on the forehead and at the centre of the chin of a woman respectively. The young lady in the picture has placed the *bindi*, a specially prepared decorative spot, away from the tattooed Tulasi leaves on her forehead. *Bindi* is commonly used now days in place of *kumkum*, the vermilion spot. It is considered as married woman’s symbol of *soubhaagya*, the life fulfilment.
Picture 6.1: Tattoo on a woman’s forehead

Source: Fieldwork collection

Picture 6.2: Tattoo at the centre of a woman’s chin

Source: Fieldwork collection
A married woman wears a bindi or kumkum as long as her husband is alive. In her widowhood the tattooed mark of Tulasi leaves on her forehead becomes signifies her auspiciousness even if she has lost her husband.

‘These [the tattooed marks on forehead and chin] were very important spots for us because they were easily noticeable’, the informants said. They told me how they perceived that the reactions of the people changed after carefully looking at their faces and seeing the tattooed spots: ‘The Hindus would begin to look at us with some understanding and concern, and that made us feel at ease’, the women said. The women felt ‘Jeev Shaant Zalyasarkha Vatla’, they experienced the calm within strongly, ‘aamcha kunitari aahe asa vatla’ [we felt there are some people to understand us]. The suspicious looks people always triggered a treacherous feeling in Masan Jogi women, as if they had committed some offence. With the tattoo, the women felt the absence of the notorious suspicious gazes that discomforted them every time they interacted with village communities. They were happy for reaching ‘the final solution’ by engraving the tattooing marks on the forehead or chin.

A problem arose with the tattoo marks on the face. According to the Hindu etiquette, it is improper (barobar naahi), to look at a woman’s face. ‘Such behaviour is unacceptable in Hindu society. However, certain individuals, if not the goons, did not hesitate to look at our faces.’ The women were not spared of the ordeal even during their begging expedition. Some raised doubt about the genuineness of the tattoo marks. It was very hard for the Masan Jogi women to fight such curious gaze. The Masan Jogi women were quick to know this time that the troubles were far from over. After a search, the women found another solution. They began tattooing the forearms and the back of the palms. The limbs provided more space for tattooing large sketches, which were easily noticeable. The large marks convinced people and clarified their doubts. The women felt happy being identified as Hindus and particularly as Masan Jogis.

The tattoo designs on the forearms include goddesses those of Durgamma, Poshamma showcased in their altar or palanquins as well as the sacred Tulasi plant. The tattoos can be put into three categories. In the simple category the tattoos are line drawings of goddesses. A simple
box is drawn to show the palanquin of the goddesses. It is decorated with Tulasi leaves depicted by drawing simple lines (see Picture 6.3). The four corners and the tower of the palanquin are shown with bunches of Tulasi leaves.

Picture 6.3: A tattoo of a palanquin of goddess

Source: Fieldwork collection

In the artistic category, the icons of goddesses are drawn artistically, using different shapes, thickness of lines and maintaining curves and corners skilfully. For instance, the actual icons of seven goddesses are nothing but seven round stones coloured with red lead. The tattooed drawing of these goddesses distinctly depicts their heads, hands and legs, etc.; they are shown standing on the ground with lines. Below this, a bunch of Tulasi leaves are drawn making a shape of a circle (see picture 6.4). In another artistic tattoo, the goddess is depicted with a crown shown on her head; she is seated with folded legs and holding instruments in her hands (see Picture 6.5). All these are shown in curvatures.
Picture 6.4: A tattoo of goddesses standing

Source: Fieldwork collection

Picture 6.5: A tattoo of a goddess in a sitting position

Source: Fieldwork collection
The third category of tattoos consists of letters in Devnagari script. These tattoos include the name of Rama Mama and the woman with the name of her husband or brother. The Masan Jogi women would get the names they intended to engrave on their hand written on a piece of cloth. It was preserved till the time they found a tattooist lady or a man at a festival. The tattooists were invariably illiterate people; they just copied the names without understanding any letter, as the lines are often crooked. The tattooists were not familiar with the figure of Rama Mama, as the deity was a recent addition to the Masan Jogi pantheon. Therefore, his name is engraved instead. The other names engraved included a male name, either of a brother or husband, together with the woman’s name. It indicated the woman’s natal family and her family of orientation. This helped to identify the woman easily and distinguish her from the Muslim women (see Picture 6.6).

![Picture 6.6: Tattooed letters in Devnagari script](image)

Source: Fieldwork collection

In earlier times, a metal piece with sharp edge and juice of a certain plant were used in engraving tattoos. No one from the community was able to specify the plant or its name. The process was long and painful too. Later, some tattooists began using indigenously made
instrument utilising old or discarded car batteries and an iron needle connected by worn out wires. The size of the machine was huge and was cumbersome to carry. The self-made tattooist sometimes pierced the instrument deep into the flesh causing a wound. The bleeding cut was covered with some medicinal leaves. If bleeding did not stop, the women would apply mud over the tattooed area in order to expedite the process of healing. The whole process of tattooing was unhygienic. As reported by the informants and from the tattooed marks most commonly observed on women about thirties show that the practice of tattooing was growing among Masan Jogis till recent times. It almost came to an abrupt end after people learnt that unsterile needle would cause HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) infections leading to AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). Government banned tattooing fearing the high risk of HIV and AIDS. However, with proper care and using modern instruments tattooing is considered safe and it is slowly making a comeback.

Now, not only girls and young women are interested in getting their bodies tattooed, but boys too. The places (face and forearms) and objects (figures of deities and Tulasi leaves, etc.) of tattoos have remained the same for girls. The boys engrave a Christian Cross on their arms or on the back of their right thumb. However, tattoo has not as yet acquired the status of fashion among Masan Jogis.

Language

Masan Jogis speak a language of their own which is a mixture of Telugu, Kannada and Marathi. There is no specific name to this language, however; Masan Jogis term it as Telugu. The informants supplied a clarification for the mixture of languages. They said that, the rajya, the Muslim dominion, was spread into three ‘countries’, which is linguistic geographical regions, namely, Telugu, Kannada and Marathi. The community moved into these regions for their livelihood and, therefore, acquired the languages of these regions. Besides, Hindi and Urdu were the languages of the ruling community, which they obviously learnt.
Although, Masan Jogis use more of Telugu words, their language is different from the language or dialects of Telugu spoken in other regions; especially the Telugu spoken in different parts of Andhra Pradesh. Thus, somebody from the mainstream Telugu background would find it difficult to comprehend the Masan Jogi speech. The Masan Jogi language also differs from the language spoken by other itinerant communities that moved from Andhra Pradesh into Maharashtra, for instance, the languages spoken by the Nandiwalle or Kaikadis. Masan Jogis are often heard emphasising the difference between themselves and other communities saying ‘we do not understand their language and neither do they understand ours’. So, the speech community of the Masan Jogi language is limited to Masan Jogis. It is often used for exchanging information that is confidential and to keep others out of conversation. Knowing this language is a great advantage to the community members who, though rarely, move across the country. When they are in the northern states, their knowledge of Hindi and Urdu makes them feel at home. While in south, Telugu helps them to be at ease.

Generally, the Masan Jogi conversation is short and often made up of many incomplete sentences accompanied by variation of sounds. Voice is raised in order to emphasise appoint in a discussion with flaring of emotions on the face. In a discussion on planning a wedding, I heard several persons shouting as if they were quarrelling. When asked about their loud voice and emotional expressions, their response invariably was, ‘I was just making my suggestion’. An expression in loud voice also means concern to a loved one in a family set-up than to reprimand or admonish. Thus, a mother would address her son loudly with ‘angry’ face asking him to eat and not to delay his meal. This way she feels she has expressed her motherly concern towards her son. It happened when I was in a house with the family talking to them casually about mundane things as usual. I heard the lady shout in a thunderous voice at her daughter showing all signs of annoyance. I thought the lady was really angry with her daughter. When asked what was going on, her husband calmly said, ‘my wife is just instructing our daughter how to cook’. While on their loudness of their voice, I have never seen Masan Jogis involved in street fights or hurling verbal abuses at anyone in the open.
The young generation however, is different. They show their concern by expressing it in words; seldom are they heard shouting though. The young generation uses more Marathi words, as opposed to their parents who use more Telugu words. They are moderate in their emotional expression compared to the older generation. They are more attuned to the local ways. Often the boys in the neighbourhood refer to their peers in the Masan Jogi community saying, ‘they are just like us’. This is because the young generation has more contact with the local people than the older generations. School has also played an important role in this process. All those who go to school come in contact with the mainstream Marathi language, which is also the medium of instruction in the school. They are more fluent in Marathi than in ‘Telugu’ they speak at home. The boys as well as girls interact with and have developed friendship with classmates who are from other communities.

I also noticed that those from the younger generation who are involved in earning their livelihood have their friends circle among the local communities. Therefore, the Masan Jogi language varies a lot with different generations in the community. The older generation uses more Telugu words and has Telugu accent when they speak. They often add suffix ‘lu’ at the end of many Marathi words. In enquiring one name’s a Masan Jogi would say, ‘what is your naavlu?,’ using the Marathi term naav for name. Similarly, if a Masan Jogi wants to refer to his vehicle, he would say, ‘my gaadulu’ after the Marathi term gaadi. Other such expressions include shalalu (shala in Marathi) for school and gaavlu (gaav in Marathi) for village.

The language of the Masan Jogi community was the only language of communication within the community as long as the community kept itself away from other communities. This was a time when they lived in cremation ground or graveyard. There was extremely limited social contact with any village community. The situation has undergone drastic change. Due to their engagement in new occupations, Masan Jogis are now in contact with village communities. They have to contact various government officials in order to get the official work done, such as obtaining a ration card or caste certificate. Or, even participating in the electoral process puts them into contact with many communities. The biggest impact on language has been made by
education, as their children started going to school. All these factors have caused changes in the Masan Jogi language.

Folk tales, bedtime stories, lullaby or songs sung on special occasions such as puberty ceremony or at weddings or other occasions enrich the language of a community. These traditional elements, however, are apparently absent in the community, putting the perpetuation and growth of the community’s language at stake. The external factors include mainly the changing socio-economic environment which has influenced the members of the Masan Jogi community, and drawn them into speaking more in Marathi or Hindi, thereby leading the speech community of the Masan Jogi language to shrink considerably.

**Other Cultural Practices**

As Shaivite ascetics in the tradition of Kapalikas and Kalmukhas, Masan Jogis wore beard and grew long hair. As people who do not have interest in the worldly pleasures, they traditionally adopted the spiritual value of *virakti*, the attitude of non-interest or indifference towards the material world. The informants told me that, this is expressed by growing beard and long hair and is symbolised by red colour in clothes. Picture 6.7 shows a Masan Jogi with beard and long hair wearing a red turban.

The long flowing beard suits well with the attire they wear when on begging expedition. The tuft of hair is tied on the top of the head, which is covered with turban or long cloth usually red in colour (see Picture 6.8). Even if the colour of the turban is not read, the shirt or the cloth they put on the shoulder has to be red. If there is nothing worn by the person red in colour, the thread worn on the left wrist has to be red at least. The affinity towards the red colour shows their deep-rooted Masan Jogi identity. Picture 6.8 shows a Masan Jogi with his tuft of hair tied on the top of his head and covered with red cloth.

During the 1984 riots, following the assassination of Smt. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, by her Sikh security men, the Sikh community was targeted by the attackers. The males of the Sikh community traditionally wore beard and grew long hair. The enraged
An elderly Masan Jogi with beard and long hair

Source: Fieldwork collection

A Masan Jogi with tuft of hair covered with red cloth

Source: Fieldwork Collection
crowds indiscriminately attacked anyone with beard and long hair. Many who resembled Sikhs were killed and some were burned to death by the violent mobs. In order to protect themselves, Masan Jogis shaved their beards and trimmed their long hair. Although their traditional attire not disappeared completely, the number of Masan Jogis wearing beard and growing hair has reduced considerably.

Ornaments are personal adornments encasing the community’s element of culture. Ornaments embody shared meaning that pass from one generation to the other. Often migrant communities retain their own traditional ornaments or, in a process of assimilation, acquire those of the community they come in contact with. Jewish women, who migrated to Maharashtra, began wearing saris and ornaments the Maharashtrian women wore. Embracing Maharashtrian cultural symbols did not threaten their Jewish identity (Chawla Singh 2009: 73).

In the early days, Masan Jogis hardly wore any ornaments. Women wore a black thread around their neck as *tali*. It symbolised married status of the woman. For women, as also for Masan Jogi women, it is a precious adornment symbolising their love and commitment to their husband. Later, it was made into a necklace of black beads. It is believed that the black colour prevents the evil eye. Now, Masan Jogi women wear *mangalsutra*, the marriage symbol commonly worn by Maharashtrian women. It consists of minimum two strands of black beads skilfully woven around a thread keeping the two gold beads or gold cups at its centre. There are *mangalsutras* with four and more strands of which two strands have to of black beads. Once the *mangalsutra* tied in marriage it is never taken out. It is displayed prominently over the chest above the garments. Family is considered as completely ruined if it is pledged or sold. Most of the young Masan Jogi women use ornament very similar to mangalsutra called *pusla* with silver colour beads. The strands of black beads obviously have to be together. For Masan Jogi women, *pusla* is a sign of marriage than sign of wealth and prosperity.

In earlier days, Masan Jogi men wore a *kadem*, a silver band on their right wrists, as a sign of strength. Women begin wearing ornaments only after their marriage. They would first pierce their left nostril and place a small wooden plug called *nattu* into it. Some pierced both nostrils for more
adornment. There were no other ornaments worn in those days. Women now use silver ornaments to adorn themselves. It was observed that the no one wore gold ornaments. There nattus of small in size yet different in designs. A design with three tiny cups embedded with three colours – red, yellow and blue – are popular with young women. Nose ring, which is called nath in Marathi is a similar ornament used by women in rural Maharashtra. It is made of gold.

Elderly women wear kadem, a thick silver band on their lower left arm (see Picture 6.9), just above the elbow. There are two types of arm-bands: one with round cross section and the other with square cross section. The arm-bands young women wear are usually thinner and are rounded at both ends. Most of the young women use arm-bands with round cross section. Many told me that the thinner size and rounded ends add to the beauty. It is believed that the band gives women strength, especially at the time of child birth. It is also supposed to protect them from the evil spirit. Picture 6.9 shows an arm-band with square cross section.

Picture 6.9: An arm-band worn by women

Source: Fieldwork collection

In olden times, silver bangles of considerable thickness were worn on the both the wrists. Now, a thinner version of the same is worn together with fashionable plastic or glass bangles. Bangles are another symbol of marriage. Among Hindus, when the husband dies glass bangles are
crushed into pieces soon after his burial or cremation. It is a symbolic gesture to show that, after her husband’s death, the woman has no interest left in life. Masan Jogi women wear bangles, but there is no practice of crushing them after the burial or cremation of the husband.

Women wear a silver band, also known as *kadem*, on each ankle. It is positioned about two inches above the ankle on the lower part of the shin. The bands that elderly women wear are thicker than those worn by young women. These too are of two types: one with round cross-section and another with square cross-section. Another ornament worn on the ankles is known as *chainlu* (chain+lu). It is an ornament with four or five strands of fine silver chains decorated with small silver flower shapes that bind the chains together at a distance of two cm or so. A similar silver ornament, known as *painjan*, is worn by women, especially by young women in rural Maharashtra. It has a number of small bells of round shape attached. When the woman walks, the bells chime softly and melodiously.

Silver toe-rings are worn by women in rural Maharashtra to show their marital status. A pair of ring is worn on the first toe from the main one. Elderly Masan Jogi women wear silver toe-rings with five rounds of spiral windings while the toe-rings worn by young Masan Jogi have two or three windings (see Picture 6.10).

Picture 6.10: *Kadem* and *chainlu* worn by women

Source: Fieldwork collection
Masan Jogi men do not wear few ornaments. Some wear a silver band on their wrist. Many wear strands of rosaries made of big size coloured beads to show affiliation to particular deity. Young boys do wear huge metal crosses as a fashion.

Communities and groups are often found conditioned by culture-specific foodways. The eating habits of people depend on, among other things, beliefs, customs and practices of the community. Some communities term certain food items as ‘hot’ while others term them as ‘cold’. Similarly, certain food combination is considered incompatible by some communities, while other communities consider it as a wholesome (Mahadevan 1961: 387–96). Due to the beliefs, customs and practices, affinity to certain culture-specific food remain with some migrant communities for decades and even centuries. For instance, the Jew migrants in Maharashtra adjusted to the local food without compromising the kosher requirements (Chawla Singh: 2009:73).

Masan Jogis have adapted to the food habits of Maharashtra by eating roasted Jowar or Bajra roti, known as bhakar in Marathi. They believe that this food has no ‘real substance’ and that eating rice gives tremendous so that one can undertake hard work. Citing the example of farmers in Andhra Pradesh, Masan Jogis often say, ‘with a good meal of rice, they work throughout the day.’ Common diet in rural Maharashtra does not include rice. In fact, rice is cooked only on special occasions. I have often seen Masan Jogis feeling content after eating rice. Masan Jogis also believe meat provides all the nutrition and it keeps them healthy. Whenever they buy meat or kill an animal it is considered as a big feast. I have seen everyone eating well when meat is cooked. In olden times, on special occasions, such as marriage or tenth-day celebration of the dead, rice was served with tamarind chutney. This combination still remains a rare treat for Masan Jogis. Whenever this combination is served, they feel great, and eat with great relish savouring every bit the meal.

Summary
Cultural elements of a community are its roots and they always lead to the origin of the community. Masan Jogi may have acquired many cultural traits of Maharashtra since their
migration but they have preserved some core elements of the community’s origin. We have observed how the pattern of personal names changed from the traditional to sanskritic among Masan Jogis. Although, some surnames have changed to become Shinde, Gaikwad, More, etc. many have still maintained the original surnames from Andhra Pradesh. Similarly, tattoos acquired at the time of difficulty have become part of the community so much so that it may not be separated for centuries. So also the language, or wearing of long hair, or affinity to red colour, ornaments or food habits will remain unchanged.

The cultural elements preserved by the community are links to its original identity. Amidst the process of assimilation and adaptation the community struggles to keep the cultural elements going. By preserving the cultural elements in some form or the other, cultural continuity is maintained in order to preserve the identity of the community. As cultural links to the Masan Jogi identity, they will not be severed abruptly.

With the process of adaption, the community apparently assimilates local culture more and more, so much that it gives the impression that it soon will become part of the local culture. The dynamics of culture are never so linear.