CHAPTER III

Pregnancy and Childbirth

Kunabi link the well-being of the child to not only practices during pregnancy and childbirth, but also to the stages of life even before the conception of the child. Since it is said to have a bearing on child health, it becomes crucial to look into pregnancy and childbirth. This chapter in this light, focuses on pregnancy and childbirth. The stage of pregnancy is accompanied by various dos and don’ts, which will be analyzed. Also, the rituals associated, health problems during pregnancy and post-partum care is explained. Therefore, ethnopediatrics of Kunabi has not only child health in focus, but also pregnancy and childbirth components as influencing the wellness-maintenance of the child.

For Kunabi, a household går is regarded as incomplete without children porgya. Human beings mānish should reproduce like a plantain tree kel ged, which goes on producing seedling, even after death, there is birth of another seedling, yet another and so on. This is the view of Kunabi with regard to bearing of children. This view regarding the plantain tree is in contradistinction to the general belief held in Karnataka regarding plantain tree. Plantain tree is considered elsewhere as ‘barren tree’ banj bale, banj meaning barren and bale banana in Kannada.

Further, to conceive a child porg a couple gobail is believed to need blessings of God dev. Unless God blesses a couple, woman bailo will not be able to bear a child. Though it is human beings that act, it is the wish of dev to bestow or not. Hence human beings have to try and repeated copulation is required. Mānish karche dev duncho ‘man acts and God gives’ is the belief firmly held by Kunabi. Therefore, it is in the hands of God to give a child. A child is borne by a woman in the name of God devaala naav. If a couple does not have blessings ashiraad of God, any number of copulations will not result in an offspring.

“The majority of world’s communities know that pregnancy (and therefore, conception) is related to sexual intercourse. Such communities recognize the role of the biological father (more precisely, the genitor) in procreation” (Honigmann 1959:560).
It is believed by Kunabi that, it is important to bear a child so that gaṛ family continues. It is through children porgya that kin network expands, that is when a daughter-in-law comes into the family, or when a daughter is given away in marriage hordeek. Further, one needs to have children in order to take care of parents in their old age. The property is inherited in the male line and hence for patrilineal inheritance, one has to have a male chedu offspring. And it is through a son that the gaṛ continues.

Unless a son gives fire to the parents after death, performs death ritual bajja, and invites their spirits jeev to stay in the house, they will not have a place to stay and there are chances that they might become malevolent spirits māru. If they become māru, they may start creating trouble tondar not only to the family members but also to other people in the community. That is why, on the twelfth day ceremony baravi after the death of a person, jeev of the dead more gellal is invited and requested to stay in the house rokkat devan in the coconut, which is worshipped as the kuldev.

It is believed that when jeev of parents is present in the house, life goes on smoothly without troubles. Like parents looking after their children during their lifetime, the jeev of parents will also take care of them after their death, if they stay in the house. It is only parents, who bless their children with all their power and so also the jeev keep blessing the children. Kunabi believe that when spirit of the parent enters the house on twelfth day death ritual baravi, the earlier generations of spirits are free to leave the house transmitting the responsibility to the former. Until eleventh day the spirits remain wandering. The spirits released are believed to go to heaven swarag.

A female chevdu offspring is also essential in order to be given away in marriage. When a daughter is given away in marriage to another family, she will bear children and continue the lineage. Her bearing children will fetch merits punn inte to her natal family garajee. When there is punn in the family it also brings peace and prosperity in the family. Therefore, it is regarded that giving a daughter away in marriage is more meritorious than that of performing marriage of a son. Also giving away a daughter in marriage expands kin network.
It is not only necessary to have a wider kin network to help each other with work but also to participate in the feasts and festivals. Not only will the family participate in more number of feasts and festivals in different houses, more number of kin visit the house when a feast is given. This is a matter, which accords status to the family. This participation enables frequent interaction and better strengthening of kin ties. A person without kin is like an animal jeeval or an outcaste jati baher gellal.

A couple without children is therefore pitied. Childlessness is held to be the responsibility of the woman. A woman without children is referred to as hutbanje and is often pitied at her state.

Rituals associated with the well-being of a child, begin even before the birth of the child. It is believed that the observance of taboos by the woman affects not only conception but also the development of the fetus. The woman as a girl and later as a married woman undergoes performance of certain rituals. And during the performance of which, she has to observe certain dos and don’ts as a part of the ritual performances. These observances in turn affect the well-being of the child.

3.1. Rituals of puberty

In the life of a Kunabi girl, gontle banduche ritual indicates a transition stage. Gontle banduche literally means 'tying a knot'. It is called so because, the traditional way of wrapping the sari kapad among Kunabi requires that a knot is tied on the shoulder to keep it intact.

Gontle banduche is performed when the girl is around nine to ten years of age. It is a pre-puberty ritual. This ritual does not have a direct impact on pregnancy or childbirth. But this is a significant ritual because, it is a milestone in the life of a woman and makes way for other rituals to be performed to her in her lifetime. During this ritual, the girl is wrapped a sari in the traditional manner for the first time in her life.

A girl can wear sari only on the day of wedding and after she gets married. Only adult women wear sari. Thus after the performance of gontle banduche, she is considered as an adult. The significance of the ceremony of gontle banduche is
that the girl is now an adult who can be married. That is, she has reached the stage in her life where she can be married off.

Hoebel (1958) notes that the transition from adolescence to adulthood is fundamentally a biological phenomenon. However, for many cultures it also represents a cultural transition. It acts as a cultural transition, because social status is culturally defined. Therefore, the phase of adolescence in such cultures is, more of a cultural than a biological problem.

An auspicious day is chosen for the performance of *gontle banduche*. On the day chosen for the performance (by conferring with the Havik Brahmin priest *bammun*) kinsman are invited. Then the girl’s mother, her married sister and brother’s wife wrap the new *kapad*, which is bought for her. Inviting married daughters of the family to participate in the rituals performed at the natal home provides them with an opportunity to be a part of the festive spirit. The necessity of their presence also enables them to visit their natal home. People say that daughters are always keen to visit the natal home as the saying goes *tekkal photate* ‘they are prepared to break their head’. Thus rituals allow them to visit their natal home. Rituals therefore, also act as means of strengthening kinship ties. The head of the family, the grandfather or the father offers worship to the *ktddev*. Then the girl is performed the ritual of blessing by applying rice on the forehead *shenshe* by all the elders. The invitees give gifts of money or sari. Then a feast is served to all the invitees. There is performance of *gumbat* (playing of musical instrument) all through the night.

The performance of *gontle banduche* is said to be becoming less important these days because the girls are no longer married off before puberty. The ritual is now performed involving only the immediate family of the girl and a great deal of expenditure is not made on the performance as it was done earlier.

Hoebel makes note that “in some cultures, puberty is handled most casually. Some ritualize it for one sex or both, with most cultures, placing heaviest emphasis on adolescence rites for boys. And another important factor in relation to puberty is that puberty rites do not necessarily synchronize with biological
pubescence. They fall at the point when culturally childhood is left behind and adulthood is entered" (1958:377).

Among Kunabi, **gonlre banduche** is the ritual performed for a pre-pubescent girl. A parallel ritual called **monde jowla** is performed for a boy. The performance of **gonlre banduche** for a girl marks the transition from childhood to adulthood because in case of death of a girl before **gonlre banduche** she is buried since she is considered as **sannala jeev**. After the performance, in case of death, she is cremated since she is no longer a **sannala jeev**, as adults are cremated.

A generation ago, when marriages used to be performed before puberty, **gonlre banduche** is said to have had greater significance. It was earlier a crucial marker for the marriage of a girl. But presently, the marriages are performed after a girl attains puberty. As a result, the deciding factor for marriage has changed and hence **gonlre banduche** has been losing its importance. Earlier there was lesser waiting period between performance of **gonlre banduche** and puberty. As a result, **gonlre banduche** was performed on a large scale to make it known to all in the community that the girl is now of marriageable age. Now there is a longer waiting period before marriage.

On the day the girl attains menarche **baher davunche**, the girl’s elder sister who is married or brother’s wife gives the girl, a ritual bath **navache** under the plantain tree **kel ged**. The word **baher davunche** literally means ‘going out’. This signifies the girl’s state of pollution. As she is in a state of pollution, she is not allowed into those parts of the house that are considered as sacred. The girl has to sit on a new mat **mandri** for three days confined to the room **kono**. On the fourth day, she is given purification bath under the plantain tree by her sister **akku** who is already married or brother’s wife **honnii**. Then whoever has given the bath, throws rice in all the four cardinal directions, around the girl to protect her from the shadow **shaka** of **māru**. Then the head of the family performs the worship of the **kuldev**, breaks a coconut in the girl’s name praying to bless her with children and applies **shenshe** as a blessing.

The plantain tree is said to be the symbol of continuity and is considered as being of great utility **layak** in every aspect from its leaves to its pulp. Raw and ripe
bananas are consumed. The pulp is used as a vegetable, the bark is used to make threads, and the leaves are used to serve food to the *kuldev*, the ancestral spirits and visitors and guests. For all major festivals a bunch of bananas is offered to the *kuldev*. Most importantly, it goes on bearing seedlings endlessly one after the other. The death of one plant does not mean that a new seedling has to be planted again because it would have left behind another seedling to continue the process.

For the first three days of menstruation, the girl is considered to be in a state of pollution and hence she is not supposed to enter any other part of the house. She should not go out of the house because, whatever she sees is believed to have an effect on the child she will bear in the future. As it is often related, if she sees a monkey *bukko*, it is believed that the child born to her will look like a monkey and if she sees a dog *shuno*, the child will look like a dog. If she sees a person very dark in color, the child will also be of the same color and if she sees a very sick person, or handicapped, the child may be born with a condition similar to the thing she has seen.

Breach of taboo thus results in some mishap as *Paro*’s case illustrates. *Paro* relates that when she attained puberty *baher davunche*, she was confined to the room and her new mat. On the third day, she began to feel bored and ventured into the outer courtyard and there she saw the neighbor’s lame dog. And after she got married, she has borne a child, which is lame *paay kunte dainto*. She said that she was supposed to stay in the *kono* but she breached the taboo and went out and saw the dog, which was lame and hence her child was born lame.

The age of attaining puberty is believed to vary between twelve to fifteen years. A girl who is thin or lean *bareek* is believed to attain puberty later than one who is well built *ang bharuna*. It is regarded that since a *bareek* girl has less blood in her body it takes her a longer time to attain puberty.

A similar ritual called *dindi* is performed after marriage. Marriage is not consummated until this ritual is performed. *Dindi* is performed after the bride has her first menstrual period *dindi dalla* after marriage. When she menstruates, she is given a bath by her husband’s mother *mai*. She is given a new mat *mandri* to sit on and is confined to the *kono* for three days like she was, when she attained puberty.
She has to observe the taboos of not going out of the house for the same reasons as during baher davunche.

She is given a purification bath on the fourth day at dawn and she ‘comes in’ barot, that is incorporated again. As soon as she menstruates, message is sent to her natal family and other kinsman that on the fourth day dindi will be performed. On the day of dindi, the bride and her groom are dressed up as they were on the day of their wedding. Bammun is invited to perform worship of sacramental fire homa and Satyanarayana kathe. Homa and Satyanarayana kathe are performed for the well-being and prosperity of the family. The performance of homa and Satyanarayana kathe are believed to bless the newly weds with children and prosperity in life.

3.2. Infertility

A woman is expected to conceive within two to three years of marriage. If she does not conceive, shaman gādi is sought to perform khuddoche (a supernatural process of warding-off spirits). In order to see if there is an effect of māru on the woman or on the gar, which is preventing the woman from conceiving. Infertility, apart from māru may also be due to the curse shrap of kuldev or also due to a physiological condition called chevi.

First the shaman is sought to know the reason for a woman not being able to conceive. When the shaman performs the khuddoche, shaman comes to know whether there is effect shaka of any māru. If there is the effect of māru, he wards-off the effect of the māru through the process of khuddoche. Shaman gives māru time duration for which, it should stay away from her or her gar. If the māru stays in the house also it can prevent her from conceiving. Therefore, it has to be driven out of the house. The limitation of the gādi is that he can find out only about the effect of spirits. Therefore, one also has to find out whether the condition is due to chevi or dev.
If the woman is still not able to conceive, then gādi is again sought. He again performs khuddoche and comes to know whether the effect of māru has gone or not. If it is still present, again the same process is performed and the bammun is also sought since his powers are believed to be more than that of gādi. Bammun provides amulet to be worn by the woman to prevent any ill-effects from malevolent spirits and enable her to conceive. If there is no effect of māru, then he informs that the condition is not due to the spirits. Hoebel (1958) makes note that such actions provide time duration in which a couple get an increased opportunity to copulate and this increases the chances of conception for the woman.

Other than māru, another probable reason for a woman not conceiving is a kind of disease called chevi. Chevi is a physiological condition, which is manifested in a number of ways. It is believed that chevi of one kind or the other may be present in a woman. It may be either abdominal cramp during menstrual period, or excess bleeding, or the inability of the woman to retain her pregnancy for the full term. Yet another way in which chevi is manifested is infertility banj.

If a woman is suffering from the kind of chevi that causes infertility, then she will not be able to conceive. To treat chevi, an indigenous medicine chevi hokkat is sought from the medicine man hokkat deevuncho. This medicine consists of various herbs. The medicine has to be consumed twice a day for duration of nine days. The herbs are to be mixed with cow’s milk and have to be kept in front of the kuldev. The woman has to offer prayers to kuldev to cure her of her condition besh kāre and then consume the medicine. The medicine has to be consumed with cow’s milk since cow’s milk is said to be cold in nature. The woman also has to follow certain food restrictions pathya. She should consume only rice and no heat creating beersa foods. If she consumes beersa food, if she has conceived, it may result in miscarriage holgela.

If khuddoche has been performed, chevi hokkat also has been consumed and still the woman has not conceived, then it is thought that it must be due to God devache. To seek the help of God devak sangu unche, a vow sangni is made either to kuldev or to Mallikarjun of Kankona or Dharmasthala. A vow helike karuche can be taken at home in front of the kuldev. Or one can approach the Kunabi priest
mirashe for making sangni. Generally, a close kin like mother, mother-in-law, or father-in-law who have concern towards the woman seek the mirashe. Mother of the woman is concerned because she wants the fertility of her daughter to be proved and the mother-in-law is concerned because she wants the family to continue. Further, it is considered as the duty of the elderly in the family to tackle such a crucial issue.

For taking a vow with the mirashe, one has to seek him and tell him their problem. He asks the person what can he/she offer to God, if the vow is fulfilled. The person tells him whatever he is capable of giving; it may be coconuts or going to the place where the deity’s temple is situated, or offering fowl in sacrifice to the deity. Mirashe is sought since he is regarded as a man of God devala manish. So it is believed that even if the helike performed at home is not successful, the sangni performed with the mirashe will be successful. Since he is devala manish, and he can make the vow reach God.

Presently modern doctors daktru are also sought for, people have become aware that cure can be obtained from modern medicine. This is however, said to be a recent trend, a decade or two old. As a result of the availability of transportation facility, there has been an increase in the number of visits to the town, and exposure to modern health care has increased. When the people of Havik Brahmin bhattur caste started utilizing the modern facilities, this had an impact on the Kunabi also. Because of the close relationship with the Havik Brahmins, the Kunabi seek suggestions from them with regard to health care. Therefore, for infertility modern doctor is also sought. But, if the condition remains untreated even after seeking modern doctor, the belief that, it is due to wish of dev that infertility is caused, is held on to.

**Pattern of health seeking in case of infertility**

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<th>Khuddoche</th>
<th>Chevi hokkat</th>
<th>Modern doctor</th>
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<td>Sangni</td>
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<td>Bammun</td>
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Ultimately everything is left to dev because, if the dev does not bless a couple, they will not be able to bear a child however they may try. And also, one does not know what mistakes one has committed for which dev has made them childless. If the woman ultimately fails to conceive a child, the couple can adopt a child *pashoosi halla*.

If a woman has only one child, she is called *kaak banje*. *Kaak* is a kind of an animal, which is believed to give birth to only one offspring in its lifetime. A *kaak banje* is regarded to be inferior to a woman with more children. A woman has to bear more children otherwise she is as good as a *banj*. Because, if something happens to the child and it dies she will be left childless.

If the couple has only one or more daughters and no sons, son-in-law is generally asked to stay with the wife’s parents. Such a son-in-law is called *gar shairo* meaning son-in-law of the house. He stays with his wife’s parents so that he can look after their property, care for the couple and most importantly perform the worship of *kuldev*. Because, it is only men who can perform the worship of *kuldev*. If this is not possible, then, one of the brother’s sons who live near by is promised the property and belongings of the couple. That person has to take care of the death rituals of the couple and also of inviting their spirits. If these rituals are not performed they become *māru* and start causing trouble to people.

Thus bearing of children is extremely important for religious purposes. It is also important since if a person dies without an offspring, and is not performed death rituals, his *jeev* is not invited for staying in the *kuldev* that is *rokkat devan*, as a result his spirit can affect family members and also others because *māru* can affect anybody.

### 3.3. Pregnancy

A woman is assumed to be pregnant *guruvol*, if she has missed two consecutive menstrual periods *bahe rer davunche*. Missing of the third consecutive period confirms that she is pregnant. If only one period is missed then it may be due to cooling *thand* of the body. If missing of the periods is accompanied by nausea *uggar padte*, tiredness *pure dayinte*, and lack of desire to eat *jung navo*, it is confirmed that a woman is pregnant.
Hoebel (1958) points out that anthropologists have written little on this subject. He says cessation of menstruation is a sign that is recognized universally. The studies conducted reveal that the tribes seem to often focus on one or two of the symptoms as signs of coming events, although it is probable that they make note of all of them. Most of the tribes calculate the expected birth at nine months after the first skipping of the menstrual period. Various Oceanic and African tribes make note of breast changes; the Arunta of Australia, the Pukapuka of Polynesia and the others note ‘morning sickness’ other tribes find that a valuable sign is diminution of appetite and a tendency to become lazy.

From the time a Kunabi woman suspects that she is pregnant, she does not consume any heat *beersa* producing food. She refrains from consuming heat producing food because, its consumption is believed to result in miscarriage *hol utte*. She has to observe restrictions with regard to food till she is six months into her pregnancy.

Studies reveal that many of the communities across the world, look at the gestation period as calling for a cultural relief of their anxieties. Chief among these anxieties are: fear that the fetus will miscarry, fear that the child will not develop ideally. Also there is the anxiety that delivery may be difficult. Pregnancy taboos and injunctions are supposed to provide relief from these fears (Hoebel 1958).

**Reasons for miscarriage**

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Beersa padarth} \\
\text{Māru} \\
\text{Dev} \\
\text{Chevi} \\
\end{array} \quad \Rightarrow \quad \text{Hol utte} \\
\text{(miscarriage)}
\]

After the sixth month, it is believed that the chances of miscarriage due to consumption of *beersa* are reduced. Up to five months, it is believed that the fetus *bālshe* is just a ball or mass of blood *kando*, which can slip easily out of the uterus *garposhi*. The *beersa* in the food is believed to create *garmi* in the *garposhi* and push the *bālshe* out of the *garposhi* resulting in miscarriage. Apart from *beersa*
creating food, the other reasons for miscarriage are maru, dev and chevi (an abnormal physiological condition).

It is a taboo for a menstruating woman to go near the places, which are regarded as devala of deities, because it will pollute the dev. If the woman has gone near or passed by such places, then she experiences miscarriage because of the wrath of the deity. Also, such a wrath of deity can result in the woman not coming to know if the woman has conceived. Because even if she has conceived, she will miscarry and does not come to know whether she has conceived and thinks of it as a delayed period.

If a pregnant woman is affected by maru, it is believed to result in miscarriage. Maru can affect when the woman is coming through the forest or near the streams. These places are regarded to be the dwelling places of maru. If the miscarriage is the result of the effect of maru, then it can be confirmed by seeking the gādi. By performing khuddo, the gādi comes to know whether the woman has been affected by maru. He performs it and if there is an effect of maru, he drives it away. If its effect persists on the woman, it may again result in miscarriage. If it is not the result of maru, then it is suspected that it is due to chevi.

Chevi is manifested in miscarriage. Under such circumstances, chevi hokkat is administered by medicine man. Chevi hokkat has to be consumed eleven days for three months. It has to be consumed in the morning without consuming any food. Chevi hokkat has to be mixed with cow’s milk, which is believed to be cold thand producing. The hokkat has to be kept in front of the deity and the woman has to pray to dev to bless her with children and then consume the hokkat.

If the woman miscarries after the fifth month, the bālshe is buried. And the woman who has experienced miscarriage, has to follow a strict diet pathya for three months after miscarriage. It is believed that when a woman experiences miscarriage, it will have caused wounds gay in the garposhi. Hence, she is to refrain from consuming nanjache padarth eatables, which create nanj. Nanj is a condition that prevents the wounds from healing because it will not let them dry quickly. She has to consume only cooked rice and a bit of pickle. Curry is regarded to be heat beersa producing since it is spicy. Spices create irritation and
burning sensation in the wounds, and hinder the process of their healing. She also has to refrain from sexual intercourse for three months because of the fear of wounds increasing because of the intercourse.

Once pregnancy is confirmed, the pregnant woman is given a herbal medicine called chevi hokkat. It has to be consumed for eleven days. The hokkat is fed for the following purposes:

- In order to retain pregnancy to the full term
- To counter mishaps or unforeseen complications that may be caused due to chevi being present in the woman.

Even if the woman does not take chevi hokkat in the first pregnancy, if she had suffered miscarriage in the first pregnancy then she would take the hokkat without fail in the next pregnancy. When she is consuming the hokkat she has to follow pathya for the duration of eleven days.

Until the end of the fourth month, it is believed that the fetus is in the form of a mass of blood kando. Therefore, it is easily dislodged and miscarriage can occur. But around the fifth month, the fetus gets life jeev and the body parts begin to appear. (Jeev is a polysemic word, which can mean life, soul/spirit of the dead person, ancestral spirit which is benevolent, and state of being). Then onwards, the fetus balshe cannot become dislodged easily. Hence the chances of miscarriage decrease. If a woman experiences miscarriage in the fifth or sixth month, the cause is suspected to be maru.

It is during this point that when the fetus gets jeev (around the fourth/fifth month) that dev writes devanu baryolan the fate hanebar of the fetus. One becomes aware of the fetus having gotten jeev when one starts feeling it move around in the abdomen pottan like a butterfly.

It is believed that female fetus gets jeev earlier than male. One comes to suspect that a fetus is female if the movements have begun early that is around the fourth month. If the movements are experienced later that is, at the end of the fourth month or the beginning of fifth month, then the fetus is assumed to be a male. Observing the movements thus, is a way of predicting the sex of the offspring to be born.
The fetus is believed to grow inside the uterus *garposhi* from the blood *raggat*, which it receives from the mother *avuge ragatan belsoche*. Mother has blood inside her uterus, which the *bālshe* takes to grow *avuge raggat pottan ronte*, *pottan bālshe belshate*. Otherwise the blood bleeds away as the menstrual blood *baher davunche* that is, when there is no *bālshe* in the *pottan*. It is believed that placenta *keru* stores the blood and supplies it to the fetus through the umbilical cord *nay*. Hence placenta *keru* and umbilical cord *nay* are regarded to be very significant and are regarded as 'life givers' to the *bālshe*.

Hoebel (1958) says that many tribes distributed have the notion that babies are formed by the coagulation of blood. They reason from the observed fact of cessation of menstruation during gestation. By inversion they say that the clotting of the blood to form the baby stops the regular flow of the blood.

Here it is necessary to understand the way in which the term *pottan* is used. *Pottan* can be translated as abdomen and *garposhi* as uterus. *Garposhi* is said to be situated within the *pottan*. It is a sac *kotte* like structure in which the fetus grows. So when the term *pottan* is used with reference to pregnancy it is with reference to *garposhi*. People while talking about pregnancy, the fetus, and blood inside the *garposhi* generally use the term *pottan*. So when the term *pottan* is used with reference to pregnancy it is with reference to *garposhi*.

The mother through the movements inside her *pottan*, follows growth of the *bālshe*. It is believed that the fetus plays *khelate* in the abdomen and therefore, makes lot of movements (plays) *pottan bālshe khelate*. If there are no movements continuously for two or three days and if the woman is feeling discomfort like the abdomen is feeling hard or she is experiencing pains in the lower abdomen, then it is suspected that the fetus is not alive *bālshe pottan khelana hol utte*. By the eighth and ninth month, the movements are said to be reduced since, the *bālshe* has now grown bigger in size and has no space to play *kelale*. However, mother feels the movements however slight they may be.

### 3.4 Food consumption pattern of the pregnant woman

A pregnant woman avoids heat creating foods *beersa padarth* because they can cause miscarriage. The heat creating foods are jack fruit *ponos*, turmeric
halad, papaya *pappale*, potato *batate*, cucumber, a kind of wild jackfruit *berhalasu*, drumstick *nuggekayi*, grams *kadle bele*, urad dal, and certain kind of non-vegetarian food like the meat *gaul* of wild cock *kambo*, *barka*, deer *meeyru*, crab *esadi*, *pisse*, *sayile*. Such kinds of food are believed to increase the heat in the body and cause illnesses like irritation in the *pottan*, vomiting and burning sensations in the feet.

**Food taboos during pregnancy and post-partum period**

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<td><em>Miriya chili</em></td>
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<td><em>Kambo Cock</em></td>
<td><em>Gaul Meat</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Barka</em></td>
<td><em>Tekka pani Butter milk</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Pappale Papaya</em></td>
<td><em>Dud Milk</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Ponos Jackfruit</em></td>
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</tbody>
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Pregnant woman can consume all kinds of food except those, which are considered as *beersa*. She can consume any amount she desires. It is believed that whether she consumes less or more the fetus will not be affected since it grows on the blood in the *garposhi*. If she has craving *ashshay* for *beersa* then she can consume a small quantity of it, just a mouthful or so after the sixth month. It is believed that if the cravings of the pregnant woman are not satisfied, then she will suffer from labor pains *hadna inte* for a longer duration, even sometimes for two or three days which may lead to the death of the infant. And since she will not deliver easily, it will tire her out.

As ninth month approaches, the pregnant woman begins to consume less because, it is believed that there will be no space in the abdomen. If she consumes more it causes abdominal pain *pottan dubate*. If she eats less she does not have to defecate every day since one has to go some distance from the house to the stream.
to defecate. Also another reason for consuming lesser food in the later stages of pregnancy is that, she feels tired all the time and does not feel like eating pure dayinte.

3. 5. Ailments during pregnancy

The ailments generally experienced by a pregnant woman are as follows:

Uggar padte

Uggar padte (nausea) is believed to be a common problem during pregnancy, which one need not be anxious about. However, some women may experience uggar padte till seventh month. It is generally believed to be more severe during the first pregnancy, and is said to become less by the end of the fifth month at the most. There is no hokkat to get rid of uggar padte.

The only solution is to drink things that are regarded as cooling thand to the body like buttermilk, lemon juice and tender coconut water. These foods because of their cooling nature are believed not to cause any burning sensation urte in the stomach. Due to extreme nausea, some women are not able to eat anything at all, since whatever is consumed is vomited. Uggar padte is believed to be caused due to hot body garam constitution of the woman. So the treatment involves cooling down the body.

Tekkal gudinte

Tekkal gudinte (giddiness) is also an ailment associated with first pregnancy. It is believed to last till third or fourth month and it gets reduced by itself. The women with nanjache prakriti (physiological condition prone to nanj) are believed to experience tekkal gudinte more and may experience in subsequent pregnancies also. Taking rest and not moving around a lot are the remedies for tekkal gudinte. So a woman experiencing tekkal gudinte does not go to work in the field, or go to fetch water in the stream or well or sit in front of the fire to cook.

Ghant

Ghant is experienced in all pregnancies differing in its severity. It is a condition wherein the pregnant woman finds it difficult to walk, her leg or legs feel weak, waist down she experiences tingling sensation jumujumu and also, there
may be presence of severe pain in the waist *kurt* because of the *ghant*. The woman also may experience breathlessness or difficulty in breathing in cases of severe *ghant*. *Ghant* is pain believed to be caused due to lack of blood supply in that particular region.

Since it is believed to be a common problem, home remedy is sought first. The treatment for *ghant* is *ghanti hokkat* wherein a kind of root called *ghanti ber* and cumin seeds *jeera* are ground and prepared into a concoction *kasali*. The medicine is believed to help in proper blood circulation by cooling the body. *Ghant* is also believed to be caused due to the effect of *måru*. Therefore, one also seeks shaman to ward-off the *måru*. If it is not warded-off, even if the woman has consumed the *hokkat* it will not cure her. If the *hokkat* has not taken effect even after consuming *ghanti hokkat* for two days, and if the woman is experiencing the same symptoms after two days of treatment then, the woman is taken to the private doctor *daktru* at Yellapur.

*Ghant* is a common problem, which is experienced by all adults. It is believed to affect any part of the body due to heavy work. But in case of pregnant women it is more likely to affect particular parts like thighs, and waist.

**Pottan dukkite**

*Pottan dukkite* (abdominal pain and irritation) is said to be present through out the pregnancy. These problems are present in the first as well as the subsequent pregnancies. The irritation is both external as well as internal. The internal irritation is due to the burning sensation and the external irritation is due to the stretching of the skin, which causes itching sensation. To prevent itching sensation, coconut oil is applied all over the *pottan*.

Abdominal pain and burning sensation are usually experienced after heavy work or after being in the sun for a long time or after doing work, which requires bending over for a long time. They are usually left to cure by themselves. If the pain or irritation is severe, then concoction of cumin seeds is consumed. This concoction cures the pain and irritation because cumin seeds are believed to be cooling in nature. Heavy work and being in the sun for a long time create heat in
the body, which causes irritation and pain in the *pottan* and the cumin seeds cool the *pottan*.

**Puray dayinte**

*Puray dayinte* (fatigue, tiredness) is believed to be more during the first and third trimester during all pregnancies. The tiredness is often accompanied by pain in the waist, legs, and feet and at times all over the body. In the third trimester, the pains are believed to increase due to the increased body weight of the woman. Rest is said to be the only treatment for *puray dayinte*.

*Puray dayinte* is not an ailment in itself but it is regarded as a problem associated with pregnancy.

### 3.6. Routine of the pregnant woman

The day-to-day routine, which a woman had before she became pregnant, continues throughout the pregnancy. She fetches water from the stream, cooks, grinds rice, cleans the cattle shed, goes to work in the fields, and fetches firewood and grass for the cattle.

After the eighth month, if the place where the woman goes to work (that is the *bhavanala gar*) is far from where she stays, and has to walk through the forest then, the pregnant woman does not go to work. She also does not go into the forest to fetch grass for the cattle or firewood. Even if she goes, she does not go alone because the fear that she may deliver in the forest all alone.

Elderly women relate often that they pounded paddy when they were pregnant and did not feel tired at all. Pounding paddy is considered to be a very difficult and strenuous task. The point is that physical strain does not have an adverse effect on the fetus. Instead, it is regarded that the pregnant woman should keep working because it is believed to help in her easy delivery. If the woman performs physical labor, her body becomes light and flexible *sapur* and if she does not do any work, it is believed to become heavy and swollen *alat* and lacks flexibility. As a result, delivery becomes difficult. If her body is *alat* then, it will lead to longer labor pains making the delivery difficult. The elderly women say that since they did strenuous tasks, they delivered quickly. The younger women are no longer subjected to strenuous tasks like pounding paddy (presently, paddy
is sent to the mill to be husked) as a result of which they do not deliver quickly and suffer labor pains for a longer duration and some even go to hospital for a delivery. It is also believed that, if the abdomen is protruding below the navel bombri, the woman will have an easy delivery. And if she is doing work throughout the pregnancy, the protrusion of the abdomen is below the navel.

3.7. Taboos to be followed

Apart from the restrictions on food consumption like not consuming beersa padarth, the pregnant woman also observes certain other taboos, which are as follows:

During solar or lunar eclipse giran, a woman should not do any sort of work until the giran is over. She should not cut or grind anything. If she cuts vegetables, she will bear a child with a cleft lip peevno ruyna, or a deep line on the scalp badso seer. If she grinds anything then it is believed that the child will be born lame.

The pregnant woman must refrain from sexual intercourse during eclipse. Because if she has sexual intercourse, then it is feared that twins awali porgya will be born. Multiple births are looked down upon and not regarded as human. Like bearing only one child in the lifetime of a woman is animal-like, bearing more than one child at a time is also regarded as animal-like. It is thought that only animals like dogs and cats give birth to many. Such animals are regarded as lower animals.

A pregnant woman should not leave any task she is doing incomplete, whether she is grinding, or cooking, sowing. She has to complete the task she has started. It is believed that if she leaves a task incomplete the fetus’ growth will also be incomplete. The infant may be born with some part of the body missing.

A pregnant woman also should not see the idol of lord Ganesh. Since lord Ganesh has the face of an elephant, seeing his idol may lead to the infant being born with an elephant-like face with big ears. She also should not see the idol of Devi amma a Goddess, who has a ferocious looking face. Seeing the Goddess would make the woman give birth to a ferocious looking child.
3. 8. Pregnancy ritual

During pregnancy, natal kin and affines invite the pregnant woman *guruvolni* for lunch *jevun aphorche*. She is fed food, which are regarded as taboo after delivery like those, which are regarded as *nanjache*, cold foods like butter milk, sweet dishes, curries which are spicy. After delivery, the woman is not supposed to consume any of these foods nor should she feel the desire to eat any of these things. This ritual also acts as a means of providing the pregnant woman with extra nourishment. Similar observation is also made by Hutter (1994) in her study of pregnant women in rural South India.

Honigmann notes with regard to practices of food restrictions and cravings “the reassurance provided by the food observances in cases in which a woman is anxious about her condition should not be overlooked. The ritual aspect of it should also be noted. They express the concern a woman is supposed to feel at this time and call the community’s attention to an impending social change” (1959:364).

If a Kunabi pregnant woman has desires to eat any of these foods, which are tabooed the breast milk begins to dry up *ashshay karlan doodh sukhate balandallani ashshay karuni*. That is why she is fed all those tabooed foods as much as she wants, so that she will not feel the desire to eat them after delivery.

3. 9. Delivery

Generally among Kunabi all deliveries take place at home. It is only in case of emergencies that the woman is taken to the hospital for delivery. The cases in which delivery have taken place in the hospital are generally due to prolonged labor pains.

The pregnant woman may or may not go to her mother’s house for delivery. But her mother’s presence with the delivering woman is customary and especially crucial for the first delivery. She has to be present by the delivering woman’s side. Her mother is asked to come to stay with her during the delivery to help her by giving courage. Any of the elderly female kin like mother-in-law, or maternal or paternal grandmother, usually perform the delivery. Women who have experience in performing delivery and who are brave enough to handle
emergencies usually assist in the delivery. Three women are usually involved in
delivery, one woman holds the pregnant woman from behind, another sits in front
of her and the third is usually present to fetch water, cloth, or anything that may be
required.

For the first pregnancy, and in case of complications during subsequent
pregnancies usually women who are experienced in performing delivery are
invited. Usually, all settlements have one or two such women, who are experts by
experience in performing delivery. Two people are said to be sufficient for the
subsequent deliveries. For the first delivery, there is an anxiety that something
may go wrong, therefore experienced women are required. Neighboring women
keep coming and going in order to see how the things are going on. For the
subsequent deliveries, elderly women in the family are sufficient and the number
of women who participate in the process of delivery also decreases.

When the labor pains begin, the shaman is invited to perform *khuddoche* to
ward-off any *māru*, which may affect the woman and create problems in delivery.
The shaman performs *khuddo* and protects all the four cardinal directions and
prevents the entry of any *māru* into the house and ensures an easy delivery. Thus
his role is to overcome postulated difficulties such as spirits hampering childbirth.
Especially the spirits of those people who have died without giving birth to
children in their lifetime are said to cause trouble and make the delivery difficult.

When the labor pains become frequent and begin to appear at lesser
intervals, coconut oil is massaged around the navel *bombri* to loosen up *jalle* the
abdomen for fifteen to twenty minutes. A concoction *katney* is prepared using
*ponasasal* a kind of a bark, *garlic lassan*, bark of mango tree *ambyasal*, and cumin
seeds *jeere* is given to the woman. These ingredients are ground and mixed in
water and a cup or two of it has to be consumed by the woman. All these
ingredients are regarded to be heat creating in nature and as a result, they create
heat in the *pottan* and expand it and facilitate the *bālshe* to easily come out.

During this time, all the knots tied in the house whether it is for the ropes
or clothes are unknotted. It is believed that this makes the path easier for the
Hoebel in his discourse on childbirth points out that “contrary to the popular notion that childbirth is easy for ‘primitive women’, there is empirical evidence that they often suffer much agony and difficulty in childbirth. The multifarious magical provisions designed to assure an easy birth are surely ample evidence of their fear of hard delivery” (1958:373).

Among Kunabi, delivery takes place in the sitting position. A rope is hung from the ceiling for the woman to hold on to and apply pressure. It is believed that if a woman delivers in the sitting position, it prevents her from becoming unconscious during the delivery. It is believed that because of the labor pain hadna inte there are chances of the woman becoming unconscious. If the woman faints during delivery, the woman and the baby may both die. If she is lying down, the nanj can reach the head easily but if she is sitting it cannot rise up.

It can be noted that in most communities for which information is available, from the work of Honigmann and others (1959) in 64 communities across the world, women give birth while occupying a sitting position (15 cases). Less commonly she kneels (11 cases) or squats (3 cases). Alternative positions are allowed in ten communities but rarely does she take the reclining position assumed in modern hospitals. Like among the Kunabi in many tribes, the parturient woman is supported from behind during the delivery; she grasps a stake, which has been driven into the ground or pull on a rope hanging from the ceiling.

Kunabi give concoction katney of the bark of jackfruit tree ponasasaal, bark of mango tree ambyasaal, and cumin seeds jeere, which is prepared in water and given to the woman for quick delivery. They are believed to create heat in the pottan and help in delivery.

As soon as the balshe comes out, it is held on an old cloth kapad, which has been softened due to several washes, so that it does not rub against the skin of the newborn. Then the expulsion of placenta keru is awaited. It is believed that if the placenta is not expelled, the woman may die. If the placenta is not expelled, then again the concoction fed earlier is fed. This concoction enables the expulsion
of the placenta. Immediately after the placenta is expelled, the woman is given a concoction of garlic lassan, turmeric halad, and bitter pepper kalanjeero. They are ground into a paste mixed in warm water and given.

The concoction is said to have the ingredients that prevent the woman from becoming unconscious. If the concoction does not expel the placenta, then the experienced woman puts her fingers inside the birth passage of the woman and pulls out the placenta. Even if a small bit remains inside, it is believed to cause nanj, pottan dubate and excess bleeding. After the placenta is expelled the umbilical cord nay is cut.

To cut the umbilical cord, a small piece of pot is held below the umbilical cord and it is cut with a blade rajje pan. A new blade is used because used blades are regarded as polluted because they have been used for shaving, which is in itself a polluting task. The piece of mud pot is used so that one can make a sharp and clean cut without having to stretch the cord or make more than one attempt to cut the cord. Stretching or making two or more attempts to cut the cord causes wound gay which if it does not heal properly may cause nanj to the infant. The umbilical cord is cut keeping two nodes do grena of space from the infant's side.

The placenta is placed in betelnut sheath poi and buried by the woman who has performed the delivery. If the bālshe is born dead, it is placed along with the placenta. All the materials used for the delivery are also buried. It is believed that after the fifth month the bālshe will have gained jeev and therefore, it has to be buried. It is buried in the ground where the bath water runs so that it remains cold always.

Studies conducted in 64 different communities reveals that the placenta is buried in 30 communities. Judging from available evidence, it is never discarded carelessly, a precaution that is definitely adaptive in view of infectious nature of the placenta (Ibid.).

3. 10. Post-partum care

Honigmann observes that in 48 out of 64 communities, both the mother and the child are required to remain secluded for some days. They occupy a special birth shelter or remain isolated in the dwelling. Seclusion he says is adaptive. It
reduces the chances that the mother’s still open wounds will become infected through social contact and protects the infant much as isolation in the modern hospital does. The period of isolation further ensures that the mother will not resume customary activities until her body has had some chance to heal. Finally, seclusion safeguards other members of the community from the contact with the infectious discharge (lochia) that flows for seven to ten days after delivery (Ibid.).

After delivery, the parturient woman balanth is believed to be tired therefore, she is not given a bath on that day. She is cleaned and allowed to rest. She is given bath on the next day. After the bath she dries herself and sari kapad is twisted like a rope and tied yodo marcho around the pottan below the navel bombri. The kapad is tied for three months. It is believed that if the kapad is not wrapped then the pottan will remain bulged and will not flatten. The bulge is regarded as being ugly. It is believed that if one has a bulging pottan she cannot be active since it causes difficulty in sitting and getting up. Since the hearth and grinding stone are on the ground, it requires a great amount of sitting and getting up in order to perform the day today chores. Also it is said that a lean body makes climbing up and down the hill easier.

The parturient woman is given bath in the morning every day before the day becomes very hot. Bathing, when it is too hot, is believed to cause fatigue. Hot water is splashed with a great amount of force pani esaphoon udtan all over her body. The force with which the hot water is splashed is believed to relieve the aches and pains caused due to the delivery. Hot water is believed to make the body strong, since she has become weak and tired by suffering the labor pains. This kind of bath is given for a month. After the bath, she dries herself and she is tied the kapad around the pottan. Then she lies down beside the fireplace uijo. A fire is kept constantly burning by the balanth and the balshe so that they remain warm and do not catch a cold thandi. If the delivery has taken place in summer, then she warms herself only after the bath.

3. 10. 1. Diet after delivery

After delivery the balanth has to follow a strict diet pathya for the next three months. She has to consume only quarter the amount of rice she usually
consumes. As a part of the *pathya*, she has to consume one handful *hund* of rice twice a day. Small amounts of food are consumed because if normal quantity is consumed, it leads to bulging of the *pottan*, which is not desirable and ugly. Since she is not doing any kind of work, consuming normal amount of food would lead to indigestion and also bulging of the *pottan*. Along with rice, she consumes a bit of pickle *nunche* either of lemon or of raw mango. She should not consume cold or leftover rice as it causes abdominal pains in the woman since she has become weak after delivery. She is also not supposed to consume spicy food *teekh*, sweet dishes *methe* prepared from sugar or jaggery *gud*, meat *gaul* and water *pani*. Spicy foods, meat and water are considered to be ‘preventing the healing of wounds’ in nature *nanjache*. If consumed, they hinder the process of healing of the wounds caused during the delivery. If the *nanjache* foods are consumed they are believed to increase the wounds. Sweet dishes prepared with sugar are avoided because sugar is regarded as cold in nature and it causes cold and cough. Therefore, tea is consumed without sugar. Things, which are cold in nature, can also accentuate *nanj*.

She also consumes a thick concoction *katney/miriyakadi* prepared from bitter pepper *kalanjeero*, garlic *lassan*, and turmeric *halad*. All these ingredients are ground and mixed in hot water for the *balanth* to consume. *Kalanjeero*, which is very bitter in taste and heat producing, helps in healing the wounds and preventing *nanj*. *Lassan* and *halad* also help in the prevention of *nanj* and thus help in healing the wounds.

The consumption of this concoction is said to create a hot burning sensation throughout the body. This sensation is believed to be crucial aspect in the healing of the wounds. *Kalanjeero* is also believed to help production of breast milk. No matter how much food she consumes, the breast milk will be produced if she consumes the *katney* regularly. The production of breast milk in a woman is said to be affected if she has a kind of *chevi* that leads to drying up of breast milk. If such a *chevi* is present, milk production gets reduced after three or four months.

If the child born is a female, the *pathya* is followed for three months and if it is a male then the *pathya* is followed for five months. There is a longer period of
pathya after the birth of a male offspring because it is believed that more wounds are caused when a male child is born.

3. 10. 2. Activities and care

Until seven days, the balanth is believed to be in state of pollution mail. She is not supposed to touch anything or anybody or go near the cooking or worshipping area. This pollution is similar to the pollution during menstruation. In both cases, until the period of pollution is over anybody who touches her has to take bath. Therefore until seven days are over, she is not supposed to do any work.

Especially after the first delivery, the woman takes longer period of care because it is regarded that her body is adjusting to the changes that have taken place in her body. After the subsequent births rudhi dallan tras dallanu, the woman becomes used to giving birth and she does not need a longer period of rest and care. After the first delivery for three months, she should not do any work. She has to eat, and sleep in the first month. In the second month she can do chores, like cleaning the rice grains and plucking flowers, making garlands, that is, work which does not involve much physical exertion or which do not require her to come in contact with water or which do not require much moving around. It is believed that if she exerts herself, the wounds do not heal quickly and nanj increases. And if nanj increases, the wounds start bleeding if they have not dried up. If the wounds do not heal properly the woman may not be able to bear a child later on.

Healing of the wounds is also important, because if they do not heal properly the woman may suffer from abdominal pain, backache, and pain in the thighs and waist when she resumes her normal activities. Therefore, three months of care is essential for the wounds to completely dry up and heal. After three months, she can do grinding, fetching water and firewood, cutting grass for the cattle, cooking, that is all the work that a woman normally does.

After the first delivery, one of her kin, like her grand mother or her sister come and stay with her, if she is not living in a joint family ekkachgar, wherein, there are other women who can manage the household and perform the day-to-day chores. For the subsequent deliveries, it is believed that four to five weeks of care
is sufficient. The care she has to essentially take is with regard to following the pathya, consuming the katney regularly and keeping herself warm. After she has fetched water or washed clothes, she has to sit by the fireplace and warm herself so that, she is not affected by cold thus protecting her from nanj.

The problems, that a woman is believed to suffer from, after giving birth to children are aches in the various parts of the body. The existing pains increase in severity because of heavy work like fetching firewood, bending over for sowing, harvesting, weeding, and cleaning the cattle shed. Further, pains are believed to intensify during winter and rainy seasons because of drenching in the rain and cold. The cold remains in the body and intensifies the pains.

Thus in this chapter, it was seen as to how pregnancy and post-partum periods are accompanied by injunctions that are said to be observed for the well-being of the mother and the child. There are anxieties about the woman being able to carry the pregnancy to the full term, about the childbirth, and about the appearance of the child. The taboos pertain not only to food but also to activities that the woman performs. The taboos also continue into the post-partum period. There is also separation and incorporation of the delivered woman and the newborn child into the everyday living. The taboos regarding the purity and pollution observed are intricately connected to the well-being of the mother and the child. In the following chapter, the focus shifts from mother to child and different aspects of 'caregiving package' will be analyzed.