CHAPTER V

Concepts Related to Child Health and Illness

People’s notions of health and illness provide an insight into what are the crucial aspects in the wellness-maintenance of the child. The types of illnesses found and how illness is viewed and treated vary from society to society. As Howard notes, “treatment of illness in western, industrial societies focuses on curing specific diseased organs or controlling a specific virus. In many non-western societies greater emphasis is placed on the social, religious and psychological dimensions of illness” (1989:394). The ethnomedical approach is of immense significance in this context. This approach therefore, includes the study of medical beliefs, medical practitioners and healing techniques. In dealing with these aspects, one has to understand various other related beliefs and practices, which broaden the understanding of health and illness.

In the earlier chapters, antenatal and postnatal care and childcare practices of Kunabi were discussed. This chapter deals with the domain of illness causation, which influences the treatment resorts opted by the Kunabi. It involves an analysis of different concepts of Kunabi, related to the ancestral spirits, the malevolent spirits, the deity, various taboos and observances and the supernatural healing. Apart from the supernatural concepts, this chapter also focuses on the natural causes of ill-health as perceived by the people.

An understanding of Kunabi concept of health in general and child health in particular reveals not only their notions of illness, but also the basic tenets of their worldview. Just as maintenance of health depends upon moral behavior and religious observances, cures of illnesses also depend on sources supernatural in nature. Furthermore, maintenance of health also depends on natural factors, that is, by taking care of the equilibrium in the hot and cold balance. The natural causes can range from the imbalance of hot and cold within the body to those changes in the body caused due to external factors like, climate, food and water.

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The degree of severity is explained in terms that of *khoop najje pollo* that is, a person is very ill. When seen from the point of view of etiology, a physiological condition can have natural, social as well as supernatural cause. Therefore, causation is a factor, which can make it possible to define a condition in terms of more than a cluster of symptoms. Often anthropologists talk about the difference between ‘illness’ and ‘disease’. “Even though beliefs about disease and patterns of incidence may be viewed as socio-cultural phenomena, diseases themselves are strictly physiological processes. Illness, on the other hand, is a broad concept referring to how people conceive of deviant mental and physical states” (Howard 1989:394).

For Kunabi everything is *najje*, whether it is naturally, or supernaturally caused. Further, in the process of treatment seeking also there are overlaps of natural and supernatural modes of treating ill-health the cause and the explanations for a condition may vary but the label attached is *najje*. Irrespective of the etiology, the ‘state of being’ when one is ill is referred to as *najje*. In addition, in terms of ethnoscience both disease and illness concepts exist. People have their ethnophysiology and the etiology of natural causation which recognizes the ill-health condition as a purely physiological phenomena. However, from an *etic* perspective in the bio-medical model even when such categories are ‘illnesses’ because of the ethnophysiology involved in the categorization. ‘Illness’ in fact is the broader category in which ‘disease’ falls from the emic perspective.

For the Kunabi the categorization is in terms of naturally or supernaturally caused, rather than the focus on the identification of the physiological symptoms and processes involved. Because both categories manifest in terms of symptoms. Naturally and supernaturally caused conditions are in fact a continuum wherein one could lead to another. What appear to be naturally caused conditions may in the process of treatment be found that, they are supernaturally caused. At times both natural and supernatural treatments have to be given in order to treat a condition. Supernaturally caused afflictions have physiological manifestations, but
the treatment-seeking behavior, has a different sequence of resorts compared to naturally caused conditions.

Honigmann (1973) notes that there is ample evidence that people, who utilize both modern and indigenous medical systems tend to place illnesses in two broad categories: those that are likely to be cured by a physician and those that are more likely to respond to the ministrations of a healer. He further says that considerable allowance must be made for flexibility in such perceptions. Because, the course of an illness, the outcome of previous treatment for the same condition and a variety of other factors may cause the patient to redefine it and shift from one medical system to another. This observation holds good for the Kunabi also. Their hierarchy of resorts consists of both indigenous and modern medical systems. Further, within the indigenous medical system people categorize illnesses that are more likely to respond to supernatural healing and those which respond to natural treatment.

If for instance, a child is suffering from fever caused due to fright, then the course of treatment is supernatural. But to bring down the fever, concoction or medicine may also be fed. If the child is suffering from cough and cold, which, are believed to be naturally caused, natural means of treatment is sought. That is, home remedies consisting of indigenous remedies, seeking an indigenous medicine man *hokkat devnuncho* or modern doctor *daktru*. But if the condition is not cured in spite of natural treatment, then again one shifts to supernatural treatment. Therefore, the label is not necessarily fixed for the duration of a condition. The label changes along with the shift in the practitioner sought.

The motor development stages as seen by Kunabi were mapped in the preceding chapter. Keeping the same scheme in view understanding of ‘who is considered as a child?’ is obtained. A child upto the age of one year is referred to as a *bālshe*, after one year, the term used for referring to a child is *porg/porgo*. Up to the performance of life cycle rituals like *monde jowla* (tonsure) for a boy that has to be completed by age of eleven years and *gontle baduche* (a pre puberty ritual) for a girl also to be performed by eleventh year, a girl child is referred to as *chevdu* and a male child as *chedo*. The term generally referred to children among
Kunabi is *porgya*. An 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 (Hoebel 1958).

Therefore, an individual after performance of *monde jowla* and *gontle banduche* is no longer a child for all ritual purposes. After these performances, he or she can be married, and in case of death, rituals performed are those performed for an adult. Until a girl or a boy is married, he or she is referred to as a *chevdu* (girl) and *chedo* (boy). This reference has the rationale that, earlier a boy or a girl would be married much earlier than they are now and hence, the age would coincide with age when one is still referred to as *porglporgo*. Presently, however age at marriage is said to have increased.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the focus is on the children below 12 years of age and this is age considered by people for defining a child. For people rituals serve as markers in the developmental phase of life. Helman (1994) notes in this regard that the rituals of social transition are present in one form or another in every society. These rituals relate changes in the human life cycle to changes in social position, by linking the physiological changes to the social aspects of an individual’s life.

Age of eleven to twelve years is taken as the upper limit for a person to be called ‘child’ since it coincides with people’s ritual marker of life stages. The stage of shift also coincides with the fact that the child by this age is able to perform its own habitual activities like bathing, going to the stream alone for defecation, to do other chores like taking the cattle for grazing, to fetch water and help in cooking and participate in agricultural activities.

For the purpose of understanding child health, childcare becomes the crucial area of inquiry because, behaviors involved in childcare are pointers for understanding how Kunabi perceive child health. For Kunabi, what is considered as health among children differs in infancy and childhood. A healthy infant is one which feeds well, sleeps most of the time does not cry after it is fed and gains weight as it grows and motor developments occur when expected by and large. A
healthy child is said to be one who eats well, does not cry insistently, plays and sleeps well.

The care giving measures of the people can be categorized as follows:

- Preventive measures,
- Promotive measures and
- Curative measures.

Preventive measures begin even before child is born with performance of the rituals of baher davunche and dindi. Also various taboos observed during the period of pregnancy and various supernatural measures that will protect the child from harm to ensure its well-being, are included under preventive measures.

Promotive measures include, various rituals performed during the life of an individual like, the life cycle rituals, performance of festivals and ancestral feasts and worshipping of kuldev for blessings. They also include day-to-day practices such as those involving diet, oil massages, and hygienic practices like bathing, brushing the teeth, combing hair. All these preventive and promotive measures have already been described in detail in the earlier chapters.

Curative measures involve, the supernatural and natural measures depending on the etiology and diagnosis of the child’s condition. If the cause of the disease is believed to be supernatural in origin, then, supernatural healing is sought. If it is believed to be caused by natural means then, natural measures like, giving herbal medicines, seeking medicine man, or modern doctor are involved.

The issue of whether, a child is healthy or not depends to a large part on the perception of the caregivers. It is basically influenced by their beliefs and notions about the relationship of the child with natural and supernatural world. It is not just the relation of the child with the natural and supernatural world that has an affect on its well-being but also, the relationship of the whole gar family and at times even its lineage kutumb with the supernatural world. If the ancestral spirits jeev are angered by its lineage members and if the feasts and festivals are not performed by the family, the repercussions affect the child.

Thus, a child’s well-being is believed to be influenced by both natural and supernatural powers and also through the social world (in the form of evil eye).
5.1. Supernatural world

The supernatural realm involves three aspects, that is,

- the supernatural powers- spirits and deities
- healer and
- the process of supernatural healing.

The healers are shaman gādi and Havik Brahmin priest bammun. Bammun is generally resorted to at the final stages in the treatment seeking process. That is, when the shaman is not able to cure, they go to bammun. The beliefs about supernatural powers and the supernatural world are intricately linked to each other. Thus ancestral spirits are likely to become angry if the religious duties toward the deities are not performed. When there is affliction of malevolent spirits, the shaman takes the help of the deities to ward-off the effects. Thus the Kunabi supernatural world consists of the following:

5.1.1. Kuldev (deity)

5.1.2. Māru (spirit)

5.1.3. Gadi (the person with supernatural powers/shaman)

5.1.4. Khuddoche (the supernatural process)

5.1.1. Kuldev

Kuldev of Kunabi is Mallikarjun of Kankona in Goa. Once in every two or three years priests from Kankona, bring the deity to Kunabi settlements. An unhusked coconut is kept in front of the deity and the priest performs rituals. From then onwards, the coconut is regarded as the deity. It is believed that kuldev protects not only the family but also the whole Kunabi community. The unhusked
A Kunabi mother with her children
Sāngni: Ramani taking a vow for a male child
A pregnant woman fetching water from the well
Experienced woman bathing the infant (in different positions)
Experienced woman blowing in the ear of the infant after bath
Grandmother giving oil massage to the infant after bath
Infant with *dollo mani* tied around its neck to prevent evil-eye
Child tied to the stump
Parturient woman fetching water from the well as a part of the purification ritual
Shuddhāchār āvudche: removal of birth pollution to the infant by sprinkling panchagamē
Feeding of *chōru*, first solid food

_Haldiche sōth_: tying of waist-string (a part of the naming ceremony)
Kuldev: unhusked coconut worshipped as kuldev
Deev ufáno: woman offering salutations to deev lighted in the name of kuldev
Kunabi medicine man with his family deity
A Kunabi medicine woman (a rare phenomenon) with her kavāl sancti
Khuddōche: shaman performing the supernatural diagnosis and treatment
Bammun performing bālagraha yantra to cure the adverse effect of planets
coconut is regarded as the representation of Mallikarjun of Kankon. It is believed that if kuldev does not bless them, no Kunabi can be happy and there will be no peace of mind. In the sense that there will be no good rains, there will be failure of crops, and there will be quarrels among kin, and also in the community.

Various festivals have to be performed in the name of kuldev to keep seeking his blessings. If they are not performed, wrath of kuldev is aroused leading to ill-health and other consequences like failure of crops, lack of peace of mind. Furthermore, the performance of festivals also provides an opportunity for the people to get together, and strengthens the kinship bonds. Performance of festivals provides an opportunity for the people to take vows with kuldev, to fulfill earlier vows and as such ensure the well-being of the whole family.

5.1.2. Māru

Malevolent spirit(s) māru is believed to cause illness in children as well as in adults. Māru is regarded to have the power to afflict trouble tondar, which are generally health related. The usage ‘māru nagale’ meaning ‘spirit has affected’ is often expressed to indicate the source of ill-health. Children are considered to be more vulnerable than others. It is attributed to their nature like becoming scared easily. It is so because, when one gets startled byalallo, māru affects. Māru has affected means that the shadow shaka of the spirit has fallen on the person.

Māru comes into existence because of following reasons:

- If a child dies before performance of ear piercing ritual, it becomes a māru but, with limited powers. It is called sannala māru meaning a ‘small spirit’. It can cause trouble to only small children and it has no effect on the adults because of its limited powers.
- If a person dies before getting married then the person will become a māru. (The spirits of the adults are referred to as māru.)
- If a pregnant woman adbalanti dies she becomes a māru.
- If a man/woman dies without children they also become māru and
- If a person dies in an inauspicious moment it can result in the person becoming a māru.
If the dead person’s spirit is not invited to stay in the kuldev then, the person’s spirit becomes māru.

The persons, who have not been married, having not borne children, are believed to become māru because they have died without fulfilling their wishes in life. They are angry as a result, and do not want others to be happy. Therefore, cause trouble tondar to not only people but also to cattle. Apart from sannala māru, other māru can affect both children and adults.

It is essential here, at this point to distinguish between the two terms jeev and māru. Jeev is referred to the person after his death in the sense that jeev is invited to stay in the house to protect the lineage. Therefore, the term jeev denotes the ancestral spirits. The same jeev are referred to as māru saying māru nagale ‘spirit has affected’, when jeev are causing trouble to the people. Thus jeev are basically benevolent but can become malevolent. And when they are malevolent, they are referred to as māru.

On twelfth day baravi after death of a family member, the shaman is invited to perform rokat devan. Rokat devan is a process wherein contact with the dead person’s spirit jeev is established through the supernatural process khuddoche. Then the spirit is asked to stay in the unhusked coconut worshipped as kuldev. Shaman performs khuddoche for inviting and placing the dead person’s spirit jeev in the unhusked coconut. It is believed that as long as ancestral spirits jeev stay in the house, there will be prosperity and well-being.

If jeev leave the house, it leads to trouble in the family – emotional discontent, financial, or physical. Ancestral spirits, especially those of parents are retained in the house because, it is believed that nobody thinks of the welfare and blesses children as parents do and bless. Therefore, even after their death their presence is required in the house. Further, if the jeev is not invited for rokat devan they will have no place to stay, they become māru and start troubling people by going into other people’s house. Jeev can be referred to a single spirit or multiple spirits. When one is generally talking about ancestral spirits, it is used in a plural sense and while referring to a dead person or an individual it is used as a singular.
Thus in usage, when the term *maru* is used, it refers to the spirits which are causing *tondar*. Thus *maru* are malevolent and *jeev* are benevolent. The *jeev* do not cause any *tondar* to the family members but, if the members of the *gār* are not performing the rituals properly, siblings are not living together and quarrelling, festivals are not being performed regularly, they cause trouble. Also, when the spirits from other houses enter, *jeev* can create trouble as *maru*. Also trouble can occur when *jeev* leave the house because, it provides an opportunity for the *maru* to have a free hand and interfere in the affairs of the family. That is why it is said that all *jeev* should remain in the house.

The belief in *maru* plays a crucial role in the group's co-existence that is, by guiding the behavior of people. There is an underlying fear that wrong behavior like quarreling, cheating, not performing religious performances, results in affiliation; not just to the individual who has erred but to the whole family. They also play a role in ensuring the continuation and performance of rituals, which not only bring people together but also ensure the maintenance of the entire group's identity.
5.1.3. Gāḍi

A shaman gāḍi has power to establish contact with spirits with the help of dev and remove the effect of spirits. This power, which a shaman possesses, is confined to a family. It is passed on in the patriline. When the father dies, the power comes to one of his sons. Shaman is crucial in diagnosing the ailment of an individual. It is he who decides whether the ailment is due to a māru or not. Since māru play a very significant role in the whole belief system of Kunabi, the decision of the shaman influences the treatment seeking behavior of the people.

5.1.3.1. Janakole

Janakole is a process through which a person receives the power to perform khuddoche and becomes a shaman. Khuddoche is a process performed by shaman wherein contact with spirits is made. The power is gained in dream swapna of the son of a shaman after his death. Goddess called Deviammā is said to appear in the dream and hold out a wooden plank mane in her hands. This wooden platform has some rice grains tandool on top of it. The person in whose dream she has appeared should receive it. If the person accepts it when she offers it, the person gets the power. If he does not accept it when she first appears in the dream, she reappears twice. The person has to accept it in the third and final appearance. Nobody ever refuses to accept because of the fear that rejection will lead to death as a punishment for refusing. Further, it is seen as a blessing, which only selected persons acquire.

5.1.3.2. Janabhashe

When a person accepts the power, Goddess preaches him utterances, which have to be uttered for establishing contact with the spirits and warding-off their effect. This chant and the utterances is called janabhashe meaning the ‘language of the blessed’. The utterances go thus ...

...jaggeche maru uncho nako kat dan baher karkaavkala, garache tashi roka, avu, appa, aijj, aji, panjo ahi tashi roka... baher roka

Meaning telling the spirit to back to the place where it belongs, where its family is present and to ‘just stay out’. The utterances are neither completely in the language they speak nor completely in Kannada. It is a mixture of both. Through
these utterances, shaman establishes contact with spirits. He calls them to answer his questions. And also through his chanting, he wards them off. It is a taboo for other people to utter these chants. The chants are sacred to shaman. He does not teach them or spell them out to anybody. Only Deviammā can teach it to a person.

5. 1. 4. Khuddoche

Khuddoche is the process by which the shaman wards-off the effect of the spirits. Shaman, by the power vested in him by the Goddess, makes calculations with rice grains tāndooll. He takes a wooden plank and puts a handful of rice grains on it. First he separates the unbroken rice grains from the broken ones. Broken rice grains cannot be used in the performance of khuddoche because they do not facilitate in reducing the power of spirits. Then shaman prostrates to Deviammā and to earth bhumi and sky akash and prays to them to help him in the process of warding-off the spirit. Then he begins to group all rice grains into groups of two and three grains.

While performing calculations with rice grains khuddo, he converses with the spirit. Through the calculation of rice, he negotiates with spirits. He has to have a number in his mind for establishing contact and starting communication. Then he goes on grouping rice grains into twos and threes, and further, these twos and threes into the groups of eight or ten on the wooden plank. Through these calculations, he negotiates with the spirit and tells the spirit that if it is in consensus with him, let the number of rice grains turn up the same number as that which shaman has in his mind.

So if the number, which he has in his mind, turns up on the plank on which he is making the calculations, it means that the spirit is following his instructions. For instance, if he asks for an even number of rice grains to occur in the calculation and if odd number turns up, it indicates that the spirit is not complying with the wishes of the shaman. When this happens, the shaman breaks the extra rice grain, through which he breaks down the power of the spirit and making it to agree with the shaman. That is, if shaman has an even number of four in his mind, and if five rice grains remain then he breaks the fifth one and if he has
an odd number three in his mind and if four remain then he breaks the fourth rice grain making the mâru to succumb to his orders.

Through janabhashe, shaman tells the mâru that it is not the place for it to stay and tells it to go back to its original place wherever it was. And he also tells it to stop troubling the person. If the mâru does not comply with his wishes, he gives it time duration and tells it to stay away from the person at least for that duration. If the power of one shaman is not sufficient to ward-off the mâru, then two or three shamans together perform khuddoche. The calculations are done in the mind of the shaman and they are not revealed to anyone. *Khuddoche* is performed in the morning after sunrise and in the evening after sacred light *deev ulano* has been lit in the name of *kuldev*. It is not performed at dusk, because it is believed that mâru become powerful during this time, especially when there is no light either from the sun, moon or from *deev*. Hence shaman will not be able to ward-off mâru.

Shaman is usually invited to the house for performance of *khuddoche* because it is easier for him to establish contact with spirits in the house of the person who has trouble *tondar*. Or the person with *tondar* may himself or herself go to the shaman for *khuddoche*. If he or she cannot go, then one of the family members seeks shaman. Shaman performs *khuddo* in name of the person with *tondar*. Performance of *khuddoche* is at once a process of diagnosis of the affliction as well as the treatment for *tondar*, which a person is experiencing. Because, both processes are involved in performance of *khuddoche*. The performance of *khuddoche* enables the shaman to know whether the condition is due to the affliction of mâru. And in this process, he drives away the mâru as a result of which, there is relief from the trouble *tondar*.

Helman refers to such processes of healing as ‘rituals of misfortune’. He says such rituals of misfortune “usually have two consecutive phases- phase of diagnosis or divination of the cause of the misfortune, and the treatment of the effects of the misfortune and removal of the cause. In the case of ill health, the first phase includes giving the condition a label or identity within the cultural frame of reference. And the second phase is the treatment of the effects of the
misfortune and the removal of the cause. This implies a concept of how misfortune is caused, and its prognosis, which is shared by healer, the sick person and spectators" (1994:205).

Loudon sees two functions of this type of ritual: ‘a manifest (the solution of specific problems) and a latent function (the re-establishment of disturbed relationship between human beings). In non-industrialized societies, they also function to restore disturbed relationship with the social and supernatural worlds’ (cited in Helman 1994:204)

In a situation of ill-health, ritual provides a standardized way of explaining and controlling the situation. The sudden onset of illness causes feelings of anxiety. There are questions that arise like ‘what has happened?’ ‘why has it happened?’ ‘is it dangerous?’. Part of the function of the healing ritual apart from treating the condition, is to provide explanations for the illness in terms of the cultural frame of reference. The answers obtained through diagnosis convert the chaos of symptoms and signs into a recognizable, culturally identifiable condition. In this way, the uncertainty and anxiety are reduced, by converting the nameless condition into the known illness. Similar observation is also made by Carstairs. Carstairs regarding the behavior of the people he studied in rural Rajasthan says, “so long as the illness was nameless, patients felt desperately afraid, but once its magic origin had been defined and the appropriate measures taken they could face the out come calmly” (1955:120).

In order to answer the question as to ‘why imbalance with supernatural world occurs?’ it is essential to understand the beliefs of Kunabi regarding the causes as to why wrath of deity or ancestral spirits occurs.

5. 2. Trouble, wrath of ancestral spirits and deity

The ancestral spirits jeev and deity kuldev are said to be primarily concerned with the welfare of their descendants. It is when their wrath is aroused that the misfortunes and illness occur. The wrath of kuldev or jeev and affliction of māru leading to tondar can occur for the following reasons:
If feasts and festivals are not performed or if they are not performed properly that is, all the rituals are not performed, or rules of pollution may be not observed.

Tondar can occur also when the jeev from one kutumb lineage enter into the gār of another kutumb. Jeev are believed to have the power to influence jeev of another kutumb when they enter into the gār of the latter leading to tondar. That is, if the ancestral spirits of one lineage enter into another lineage, it results in trouble for the house into which they have entered. Because of the interference of the other family maru the family members are indirectly troubled by jeev. Interference in the working occurs because the maru do not belong to this household.

Tondar is also caused when jeev in the gār are not staying in kuldev (unhusked coconut) and have left the house, because they are displeased with the behavior of the members of the family. When jeev are not in the gār it provides an opportunity for the maru to interfere in the affairs of the family. That is why it is said that all jeev should remain in the house.

When taboos regarding purity and pollution are not observed, there is tondar.

Thus, it is neglect in the performance of duties toward kuldev and the ancestral spirits jeev that can cause disturbances both physiological as well as psychological. Furthermore, spirits also affect because of their malevolent nature. Hence even when there are no mistakes committed, there can be affliction of malevolent spirits.

Men are to perform the rituals of worship for kuldev. The worship of the kuldev has to be performed everyday without fail and the kuldev should not become polluted. Women are not to perform the worship of kuldev. Their menstrual cycle makes them less pure than males.

Women are to perform, lighting the sacred lamp in the evening deev ulano in the name of kuldev. It is done at the nightfall and kept on the threshold bageelpatto. Bageelpatto is considered to be sacred because it is through this way that the deities and ancestral spirits enter into the house. For the same reason,
every day in the morning eldest female in the family sprinkles water mixed with cowdung throughout the house and on the courtyard. She worships bageelpatto by keeping flowers on it with a prayer to ancestral spirits to protect the household gār. Cow dung mixed water is believed to purify the house of any unknown pollution that may be present in the house. The actual worshipping of kuldev by male, is at a higher level compared to the purification rituals performed by the female.

The kuldev has to be worshipped by eldest male in the family. If the father is alive, he performs the worship, and after his death, if eldest son cannot perform the worshipping, then he entrusts this responsibility to one of his siblings. Reason for his inability to perform worship may be that he has to stay at Brahmin landlord’s house bhavanala gar for work or may often stay back at bhavanala gar for work, or may not be keeping well and might not be able to worship kuldev everyday.

Worship of kuldev has to be performed everyday. Worshipping is performed in the evening everyday except on the days of festivals. Since Kunabi leave for work early in the morning, they do not take bath in the morning. Worshipping can be done only after taking bath. After coming back home from work in the evening they take bath and perform the worshipping. On the days of festivals, they do not go to work and take bath in the morning. Worshipping involves putting flowers on kuldev and lighting incense sticks and waving them in front of kuldev.

If rules of pollution are not observed, it can bring wrath of deity and ancestral spirits. For instance, a menstruating woman baher should not enter the house through main door because deity and ancestral spirits walk through this door and will be polluted by a menstruating woman. The term baher itself signifies that she is ‘outside’. She should not go near bathing area or touch pot hando used for boiling water. Because other family members will use the same water and water is polluted when a menstruating woman touches it.

A menstruating woman is regarded to be in a state of pollution. For first two days of menstruation, woman keeps away from the bathing, worshipping and
cooking areas. On third day, she is given purification bath. Bathing area and her clothes are purified with panchagame after she is given bath. On the third day, she is allowed into the bathing and cooking area and on fourth day she again takes a purification bath, which consists of washing hair while taking bath. On the fourth day, she can enter into the worshipping area. Menstruating women are not supposed to go near places where idols of deities are present or devacha places, which are regarded to be of deities.

Entry into the sacred part of the house devala kono represents that she is purified. Degree of lessening of pollution is related to her being able to enter into different parts of the house and indicates her returning to earlier state of purity. For first two days, she is in greatest pollution, so she is restricted to outermost part jagali of the house. On the third day, it is lessened, so she can enter into the cooking area. And on fourth day, she is completely pure, so she can enter into devala kono. The lessening of pollution is associated with the decrease in bleeding.

Taboos also have to be observed with regard to food. Concept of musre guides taboos relating to food. Musre refers to cooked food and any food, which has salt and water in it. Musre food has to be consumed in dining area alone. It should not be taken near devala kono since it believed to cause pollution to deity. If such pollution occurs, there will be troubles like ant infestation in the house, snakes enter into the cattle shed, and one or the other member of the family keeps sighting a snake or food gets spoilt.

Similarly meal should not be consumed in or near temples, since it would also cause pollution. On days of celebration of festivals, it is a taboo to consume musre food until the performance of worship of kuldev. Meat is not to be consumed on festivals since it cannot be offered as an offering nayved to kuldev. Only vegetarian food can be offered to kuldev. The wrath of deity can result in infertility of a woman, recurring sickness to one or the other family members, tasks undertaken are not successful, and no peace in gār.

Children are considered to be especially vulnerable to afflictions of supernatural powers. Their vulnerability is attributed to two reasons. One is that,
they are still young and even a sannala māru (spirit of a child) can affect them. Since they are still young they are easily startled byalallo and scared and it is during such moments that māru affects. Secondly, they are usually very unconcerned about the observance of taboos, as a result, breach of taboos can result in affliction.

Apart from the effect of spirits and deities, another level on which illness causation occurs among children is through the social world that is due to the effect of evil eye dollo pollo. Dollo pollo can be literally translated as ‘casting of eye’. Here dollo means ‘eyes’ and pollo means ‘cast’. To prevent dollo pollo, an amulet dollo mani consisting of beads yellow, black, red and green in color is tied around the neck of the infant.

As seen earlier, with relation to child care practices, warding-off evil eye is a every day practice during the stage of infancy. Infants are believed to be extremely vulnerable to the effect of evil eye. And as one grows older the power to resist the effect of someone’s evil eye is said to increase. That is why everyday after bath, the evil eye is warded for the infant.

Sight and speech of some people are considered to cause evil eye. Therefore, when someone appreciates or stares, it is said to result in evil eye. If someone comments about the quantity of food intake of the child or the amount of milk produced by the mother or consumed by the infant, it results in drying up of milk in the mother. The evil eye is believed to be caused, when somebody has cast an eye while the child was eating, as result the stomach bulges, the child refuses to eat and the child becomes inactive. It does not play and feels pain in the hands and legs.
The supernatural affliction can cause health problems like, loss of appetite, not sleeping properly, inactivity, fever, scabies, measles and also symptoms that appear to be due to natural causes may have supernatural affliction. Thus supernatural factors can affect a child’s well-being. Apart from supernatural powers, natural factors can also affect the well-being of a child.

5.3. Natural factors

Natural factors are believed to be the cause of a wide range of illnesses *najje* some of them minor and some fatal. Certain states of being are not regarded as illnesses *najje* since they are quite common like cough, cold, head ache, fever and it is said that everybody has it and even if one does not take any medication *hokkat* it will get cured on its own. When the symptoms do not subside even after the assumed period (which is generally two or three days) it is called *najje*.

Natural factors, which can affect child’s health adversely, are as follows:

5.3.1. *Aar* (climate, and seasonal changes)

5.3.2. *Aher* (food)

5.3.3. *Nanjache prakriti* (body constitution prone to condition wherein wounds do not heal quickly)

5.4.4. *Chevi* (abnormal physiological condition)

5.3.1. *Aar*

Changes in the climatic conditions can lead to imbalance of the hot and cold condition in the body, which is said to be the cause of different illnesses. They are the seasonal illnesses like, cold, cough, diarrhea, and fever.

5.3.2. *Aher*

Food is also a source of illness causation when it leads to hot and cold imbalance in the body, and when food is considered as heavy for digestion, or as the source of worms *jant*. Potatoes, cucumber, Bengal gram, papaya, mango, jackfruit, meat of animals like wild cock, deer, are considered as heat creating foods. And, butter milk, sugar, milk, banana are considered as cold foods. Brinjal, horse gram, curds, and certain wild roots and tubers available locally are regarded as foods enhancing *nanj*. Spices are also heat creating especially among children. Sweets *guddale* are considered as causing worms. Food can cause ill-health when
consumed more than the child’s capacity. Water is also a source of ill-health causation. Water is believed to affect because of the differences in the nature of water that is the spring water, and the water from the well.

5.3.3. Nanjache prakriti

Nanj is a condition with which one is believed to be born. Hence every individual should be careful in eating food that are supposed to be nanj. One should also avoid consuming nanj enhancing food when affected by wounds. Nanj is a condition, wherein wounds do not heal as quickly as they are expected to heal. If the child has such a physiological constitution, then, if it has boils or rashes, or wounds, they remain for a longer duration. Children with nanjache prakriti, are told to refrain from consuming food, which are regarded as nanj enhancing. Consumption of such foods would lead to enhancing nanj in the body. Child with nanjache prakriti is often warned to be careful while playing, because wounds do not heal quickly if child gets hurt. Even bites of insects which are supposed to disappear after a day or two, remain for a longer duration and cause a great deal of itching in a child with nanjache prakriti. The food regarded as nanjache are eggplant, grams, and meat of animals like, pissey, kambo.

5.3.4. Chevi

An abnormal physiological condition manifested in a number of ways in children as well as in women is referred to as chevi. However this condition is not manifest in men since they are not associated with bearing children. Chevi is also like nanj present in the constitution prakriti of a woman. The term chevi is attributed to a variety of physiological conditions among women and children. The presence of chevi bring about such physiological effects as, infertility, miscarriages, and death of infants. It is not known as to why a particular person has a particular chevi. The health problems referred to as chevi are all related to mother and child. The etiology of these conditions are not clear and these problems are considered as natural consequence of the presence of chevi in the body of a woman. A woman may have any kind of chevi in her body, which may affect the child-to-be born. Therefore, preventive measure of taking chevi hokkat in the first pregnancy itself is quite a common practice. However, when a specific
type of chevi is manifested in a woman, then, indigenous medicine for dealing with the particular problem is given. Chevi is of twelve kinds. For some kinds of chevi present in the woman, the manifestation is in the child born to her, and for some the manifestation is on the woman herself.

One of the kinds of chevi is infertility in a woman. If woman has banj chevi then she will not be able to conceive a child.

Second type of chevi is one which leads to recurring miscarriages. Even though the woman conceives, she is not able to retain pregnancy to the full term. Therefore, if a woman miscarries, shaman is sought to see if it was due to the effect of spirits. If it is not the effect of spirit, then the suspicion is that the woman has chevi.

Third kind of chevi is one due to which a woman experiences extreme abdominal cramps pottan dukkate during menstrual period. It is believed that if such pain is experienced, the woman will not be able to carry the pregnancy to the full term successfully. But it is not possible to identify which kind of abdominal pain will lead to miscarriage in a woman.

That is why, if a girl before her marriage experiences abdominal cramps, she does not usually take chevi hokkat. If she takes chevi hokkat people may suspect about her ability to bear children. And it may be doubted that she has that kind of chevi which results in miscarriages. It is not necessary that all women suffering from abdominal cramps will also suffer from miscarriage. Further, excessive pain and bleeding are also caused due to the effect of māru. Therefore, one does not risk taking the chevi hokkat before marriage.

Fourth kind of chevi is gandchevi, wherein a woman does not bear a male child. Even if she bears one, it dies after birth or is born dead. If she miscarries, then it is suspected that it must have been a male fetus and that is why she miscarried.

As it is illustrated in the case of Paiki, who was married immediately after she attained puberty and a year later she gave birth to a female child, her second child, a male was born two years later but was born dead. The third child was a female. Both the female children have survived. The fourth conception resulted in
a miscarriage. The fifth time around, she gave birth to a male child with *kaleli chevi* wherein the infant is bluish black in color. It survived for a couple of hours and then died. She says and everyone said that she must be having *gand chevi*, that is why, male children born to her have not survived. Generally Kunabi women undergo tubectomy after two or three children. She says she did not undergo tubectomy (family planning operation) *operation*, because she wanted a male child. But she has not conceived after her last pregnancy. She believes that one cannot be sure about *chevi* and what kind of *chevi* which woman has.

Fifth kind of *chevi* is opposite of *gand chevi* and that is, *henn chevi*. In the same way as in *gand chevi*, in *henn chevi* a woman does not bear female children. If she bears one, it usually does not survive. As in case of Satu, who gave birth to a female child a year and a half after her marriage. The infant was healthy at birth. The growth was also normal and around the period when the infant was six months old, it developed fever. Infant was given herbal and modern medicine, and shaman was sought but for no avail and child died.

It was suspected that Satu had *chevi* and she was given *chevi hokkat*. The next child born to her was a male and it survived. Third child was a female and it died suddenly after two months for some reason not known to the parents. Next child, which she bore, was a male and it has survived. Medicine man suspected that she must be having *hennchevi*. And when she conceived again, she was taken to the doctor for an ultra sound *TV kansadu* and when it was known that fetus was a female it was terminated since they had the fear that even if it is born it will not survive. After this, Satu also underwent tubectomy not wanting any more children. Because, she said that she already had two male children, and did not want any more. And she also believes that, if she conceived a female child again, it would not survive.

It is believed that *gandchevi* and *hennchevi* are not treatable.

Sixth kind of *chevi* is that wherein milk production is seen in pregnant woman before delivery, which is not regarded as normal. Breasts become heavy and milk starts oozing out. *Chevi hokkat* has to be taken in order to stop milk production. Milk production resumes after the delivery.
Keragi with her husband stays with a bhattur landlord family. Her husband works for bhattur on a share crop basis. Both her affinal and natal home are at quite a distance from where she lives. She has one child and during her second pregnancy, in the seventh month, her breasts started producing milk. She became scared when it did not stop after half a day. She went and talked to the bhatati (the Brahmin married woman is usually referred to as bhatati). Bhatati asked Keragi’s husband to take her to the medicine man in the settlement, which is about one hour’s journey on foot.

Medicine man gave medicine to her in the evening and asked them to stay at his house for the night. In case the medicine he gave did not cure, he would have to go before dawn to the forest and get some other herbs. She consumed the medicine twice and by the next morning milk production had stopped. Keragi was however worried that she may not be able to produce milk after delivery and medicine man said not to worry and after delivery Keragi did not have any problems with production of breast milk.

Other kinds of chevi are those found among infants. They are as follows:

Kaleli is a kind of chevi, which is present at birth. Body of the infant born is bluish black in color. It is said that such infants do not survive for more than a couple of hours. Chevihokkat is fed to the mother so that medicine reaches infant through breast milk. But for that, the infant has to survive at least for a couple of days so that medicine takes effect.

Thambeli chevi is a condition wherein infant has reddish rashes on stomach and on the back. This is said to be a rare condition and it is believed that rashes create burning sensation and infant incessantly cries and does not feed. Which is believed to lead to death of the infant.

Podya is a kind of chevi wherein the infant will be either born with small boils all over the body or develops them during the next couple of days. This is said to be curable and not a life threatening condition. Chevihokkat is fed to the mother for nine days and this is believed to cure the infant since she is feeding the baby.
Sukkale chevi is a kind of chevi wherein infant appears to be drying up even though it is feeding well. Infant does not gain weight and even a three-month-old infant is said to resemble a newborn in size. This condition is treatable if it is recognized when it is in initial stages.

In case of Rasma and Laxmi’s son, they say, the infant was suffering from sukkeli chevi but they were not able to identify it because they thought the infant was feeding well. Then when it remained lean bareek even after two months they sought shaman to see why infant was not gaining weight. And, came to know that there was no effect of māru. Then, they sought medicine man who said that chevi hokkat should be tried. Child’s mother was given chevi hokkat for a period of five days for two months and infant began to put on weight.

Aad chevi is condition referred to death of children before one year of age. A woman with aad chevi experiences that children born to her do not survive beyond the age of one year. It is said that they seem to die for no reason at all. This is also said to be a very rare condition. As illustrated in case of Shantu, who gave birth to two males and one female child and all three died between six months to one year of age. She was taken to the medicine man for chevi hokkat but she says she did not conceive after death of her third child. She believes, she has aad chevi. It is said that aad chevi cannot be cured.

Excluding chevi, diseases caused due to nanj, aher and aar can also have supernatural causation. If the suspected cause is supernatural in nature, then, shaman is sought. Etiology of ill-health condition is confirmed by diagnosis by the shaman. And in case if the cause of the ill-health is perceived to be natural in nature, then, herbal or modern medicine is sought. However, the pathway from etiology to treatment is not always clear-cut. Understanding of treatment seeking behavior reveals as to how, at times diagnosis and treatment overlap, also as to how there is pluralistic treatment seeking. It also enables to understand hierarchy of resorts and shift in suspected etiology in response to failure or success of treatment.
Etiology of ill-health conditions

Thus, ill-health can be caused due to natural, social and supernatural causes. Both natural and supernatural causes can be controlled to some extent by taking preventive measures. Further, once a child is affected then also resorts are available at both natural and supernatural level. At the supernatural level also there are remedies at the home remedy itself in terms of warding-off evil eye, and taking vows to deity.

Caregivers play an important role in not only treatment seeking for the children but also health-maintenance. Children are active participants in so far as the sickness behavior they display. Depending on the symptoms exhibited by the child, in terms of behavior like activity level, sleep, crying, and restlessness, the caregivers decide the course of action to be taken. Children are generally seen as passive participants in the process of decision-making and treatment seeking. In the sense that the decisions about the sort of treatment to be given, the provision of
medication are all decided by the caregivers. Broadly speaking, all actors involved in the maintenance of a child well-being are ‘caregivers’. But it is the family and those in its immediate social world that are the significant caregivers.

The caregiver’s of the child can be categorized after Klienmann (1980) into the following sectors of lay, folk and professional. Though Klienmann has recognized them as sectors involved in health care, the sectors can be extended to be applicable to the whole caregiving package, since health care is a crucial part of the package. Since all those involved in the three sectors are a participants in the wellness-maintenance of the child. The three sectors are:

- Lay sector,
- Folk sector and
- Professional sector.

Such categorization is essential in order to understand, what kind of role which caregivers plays at what stage in wellness-maintenance as well as in treatment providing. Broadly speaking, all actors involved in the wellness maintenance of a child are ‘caregivers’. The term includes all those in ‘lay’, ‘folk’ and ‘professional’ sectors.

‘Lay sector’ is nothing but the realm which includes the parents, kin and neighbors figuring in the immediate social world of the child. This is usually, the first stage, where health and illness of the child are identified and defined. There
exists an established set of beliefs and practices regarding what the ideal state of well-being of the child is and how departure from this state can occur and what constitutes illness. The caregivers are therefore, involved in taking preventive, promotive and curative measures for the well-being of the child. Customs, beliefs and practices act as their guidelines in providing care and at times they are not able to provide the rationale for their behavior.

Levine makes a similar observation in his *Child Rearing as a Cultural Adaptation* "customs of childcare evolved as adaptations to environmental features that generations of parents perceive as frequent or especially threatening obstacles to their conscious child rearing goals. When these customs are functioning adaptively, they provide parents and other caretakers with an established solution to a traditionally recognized problem, eliminating the necessity for parents to consider anew, the adaptive function of the custom. One result of this is that parents guided by such customary formulae are frequently unable to explain to an inquiring outsider 'why' they are doing what they do. Their behavior is more adaptive than they are aware of or can put into words" (1977:12).

The mother, elderly in the family, the women who help during deliveries are the primary health providers either by virtue of their experience, or knowledge, or their observations and understanding. Those in the 'lay sector' provide both diagnosis and treatment like those in the folk and professional sectors.

'Folk sector' includes individuals associated with various healing processes. They are shaman gəti, priests bəmmun, medicine man (herbal specialists) hookat deevuncho and massager nagdoche. Their 'skills of healing' is passed on from generation to generation. They, like those in the lay sector provide both diagnosis and treatment. But, the treatment provided here, is more particularistic in nature. People come to them with the suspicion about the condition and the specialists provide diagnosis, etiology and treatment for the condition. The payment for the treatment is more often in kind than cash.

'Professional sector' is the medical sector, which includes the modern doctors daktru, Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM) nuresebai, and the anganawadi worker (AWW) teacherbai. The introduction of professional sector is said to have
brought about changes in the pattern of treatment seeking behavior, and also expenses incurred in treatment seeking. Compared to the lay sector, where the treatment is inexpensive, and folk sector, where the reciprocation is more often in kind, the professional sector is considered by Kunabi, to be expensive in terms of both time and money. However, with regard to professional sector it is availability, accessibility and awareness about its services that influences the treatment-seeking behavior.

The caregivers' understanding of and methods of curing illness are based on their notions of what caused the illness in the first place. The beliefs of Kunabi, regarding illness causation can be said to be similar to the model of Personalistic Vs Naturalistic explanations as delineated by Foster and Anderson (1978). In a personalistic system, illness is thought to be purposely caused by a supernatural being (such as a evil spirit or ghost) or a human being (such as a witch or sorcerer). By contrast, belief systems based on naturalistic causes explain illness in impersonal, systematic terms and commonly posit that good health depends on maintaining an equilibrium within the body. When this balance is upset by natural external forces, such as, heat or cold or internal forces illness results.

The indigenous medical belief system of Kunabi consists of both personalistic and naturalistic beliefs. The spirits, deity, evil eye, are the causes of illness. However, there is not always a one to one relationship between the person affected and the cause of supernatural affliction. Spirits afflict also because it is in their nature to afflict and create trouble. Further, the effect of evil eye is also not always considered as an intentional act. But with regard to naturalistic beliefs, often direct cause and effect relationship is perceived. Howard observes that "systems of causation belief are rarely rigid. However, it is extremely crucial to understand these causation beliefs, because it is often the cultural beliefs about causality that influences how people decide to treat the ill health condition" (1989:406).

With an understanding of the concepts related to causation beliefs of Kunabi regarding illnesses among children, the subsequent chapter will discuss childhood diseases and the entailing treatments as its basic focus.