Design Exploration Seminar (DES)

Infographic on Warli Festivals being celebrated by their Community

Guided by:

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By:

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Acknowledgements

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I would also like to thank Prof. Prasad Bokil for leading the previous project (Design Studio II) in April 2019, thanks to the Nakhre Family in Kalamvihira, Palghar District and my classmates who stayed with me during those four days. Because of its memorable and impactful experience, it inspired me to work on this area again, with a different project goal in mind.

I would, finally, like to thank my parents for motivating me throughout the project and my peers who did not hesitate in giving me honest feedback about my progress, when approached.

Contents

Introduction

A group of students resided with a Warli-artist's family (The Nakhres) in Kalamvihira, a village in Palghar, Maharashtra, for five days in April, 2019. We spent our days immersed in their culture, absorbing their ways of life. The primary focus was to learn more about Warli art, the style of warli painting, the stories behind it and understanding their living conditions. Our final output was an illustrated 1*2m Warli painting using their traditional methods and tools, depicting our experience of the Warli Tribe, their traditions and agriculture during the stay with the Nakhre Family.

Why again?

Because of its rich culture, out of curiosity, I separately collected information about their traditions around agriculture and festivals, solely based on the daily lifestyle of the people in Kalamvihira and Pathardi, Palghar Dist. and created an "Annual timeline of the Warli Tribe" here. I wanted to use this information as a part of a project and DES seemed like a good starting point for that, a.k.a in the form of a visualization.

Figure: FInal Group Picture with the Nakhre Family

Figure: Final Output - Ongoing

Context

Warli Paintings are believed to be one of the oldest forms of tribal art, originating from Maharashtra, India. The Warli culture is centered around the concept of "Mother Nature" as they greatly respect/worship nature and wildlife for their resources (food and everyday living) and farming is their main way of life (and a large source of food in the tribe). Warli Artists traditionally use the walls in their clay huts as their backdrop/canvas for their paintings. But over time, in order to make these paintings more commercialised, a canvas of red mitti on white muslin cloth along with white paint (made from rice powder) is used. They mostly cover themes like festivals, harvesting, folk story, celebration, and marriage.

The information collected during the previous project was mainly based on the northern region of Maharashtra i.e. Palghar Dist. since we resided in the Village of Kalamvihira. It was observed that there were three main aspects that influenced their culture and everyday life:

- Agriculture
- Festivals, and
- Water Availability

Hence, they were my main focus in the previous output (link here). For this project, I eventually decided to focus just on the individual festivals and how the Warli community celebrated them.

Motivation

I wanted to convey their warli culture better through a visualization hence, being able to easily identify relevant information about the given festival. I'm hoping that this also serves as a way of lightly familiarising and introducing an aspect of their culture to people new to it.

I also wanted to experiment and improve my information visualisation and visual design skills through this project.

Objective

My initial aim was to create a large poster, using the same information about "Annual calendar of the Warli Tribe" and creating a better version of it, with more focus on the visuals. Over time, I decided to get more specific and the aim morphed into creating an infographic on, "How the Warli tribe/community celebrates their festivals".

Research

From the Initial Output

I started by summarizing the data from the previous project. Since their lives usually revolve around agriculture, festivals, and water availability, those were the three main themes I had considered, a.k.a influencing their annual cycle.

After that, I divided information related to agriculture and festivals into two separate columns, following the timeline from January to December here. Reading through it, I highlighted the commonalities between the content to figure out the existing factors influencing these events, and build upon that.

Secondary Research

I also looked up information on warli culture and their specific festivals. I came across more factors in common with other festivals, added them to the list, and collected more information about that respectively.

Agriculture	Festivals
During January and February, they usually go out for work and help other people in their farms. They earn very little from that (around Rs 100 per day) but they somehow manage their day with that money.	
They divide their land and make decisions as to which part of land has to be burnt or which one has to be ploughed. Hence, they start their preparation for the coming year.	HOLI: Holi is known as the festival of colours but instead, they celebrate it with Mitti. They make differnet knids of sweets and have rice papad after puja.
	RANG PANCHAMI: It is celebrated five days after Holi. This is when everyone in the village play with colours.
They sow paddy in small beds which can be well manured and tended. Farmers collect cowdung and put it on those small beds. These are then stacked with few cut side branches of trees (wood), followed by dry leaves and grass that are spread evenly. Then they are covered with a thin layer of mud and burned slowly. This process is called Rab.	GUDI PADWA It is a spring-time festival that marks the traditional new year for Marathi people. They buy new clothes and do puja early in the morning.
	BOHADA FESTIVAL Bohada is a mask festival of the Warli tribes which is held for three days. Mask owners wear these masks and give several performances during this celebration.
With the first rains, the seeds are sown (Chawal Pherni). The farmer then prepares the main fields, whose soil is too hard to be ploughed when dry. They worship their domestic God Narandev,Hirva & Himaidevi before sowing the seeds	KAULI BHAJI FESTIVAL It is a festival which celebrates the first rain and the first sowing of seeds. Everyone, collectively, look for the Kauli vegetable in the forest. When they find one, they share it with everyone else in the village and have food together.
Once the rice plants have grown a little, they transfer them properly to the main fields. The weeds that have grown during this time are removed.	
Once all the plants are fully grown and ready for reaping, they cut and gather all the crops. They worship Vaghadev and Kaansaari (their Domestic Gods) before reaping their land.	NAG PANCHAMI Naga Panchami is a traditional worship of snakes. The women in Warli tribe undergo fasting during the whole day (other than chai) and have a good meal at night after the puja.
	BAIL POLA Pola is a bull-respecting festival celebrated by the people of warli tribe. They decorate and worship their bulls and make them run in a small race.
They gather all the crops and store them in Makaans (huts that are built right beside their farms)	GANESH CHATURTHI The people of Warli tribe celebrate Ganapati wholeheartedly for 10 days. They decorate their whole village .The kids dance to different songs and everyone does Tarpa dance together.
They finally remove the outer covering of seeds and get them back. They also bring back the dry grass and hay and store them in their house. They worship Goddess Savaribefore harvesting the crops and getting them back home.	
October and November are mostly their celebration months. So they don't really have much work other than storing the dried grass.	DUSSHERA and DIWALI are one of their most prominent festivals. They get Tarpa players from everywhere and people from all the nearby villages come together celebrate, by doing the Tarpa dance. They also have melas' during this festival and they put these hanging objects called Kandill in front of their houses.
They continue storing the dried grass and use the money that they've saved the whole year for their everyday needs.	

Figure: Secluding information from Initial Output

Data Analysis

Initial Output: Visual Analysis

My initial output was a timeline-based approach with a brief description of the agricultural practices throughout the year, the festivals they celebrate, and an indication of water availability (due to relying on rainwater as their main source) which was indicated/implied through the intensity of blue-colored strips. Looking back at it, I would have preferred it to be less text-based with some information being visually conveyed.

From the list of festivals, I chose the following four,
- Gudi Padwa
- Bohada Festival
- Koli Bhaji Festival
- Diwali

For this project, I decided my main focus to be on the festivals rather than creating a continuation (timeline/calendar) hence, focusing on how it's celebrated rather than when it's celebrated.

The factors/themes identified helped answer questions related to the activities in the festivals - What is the right level of brief information beginners can know in order to understand the gist of a festival but not get too confused, How do you easily identify/differentiate between them, When, how and why it is celebrated, etc.

The common categories were mainly,
- Season, Duration
- Theme
- Significance
- When is the Puja done
- Deity worshiped
- Description a.k.a rituals
- Celebration

Maintaining uniformity and structure in presenting information on common topics would enable ease in comparison between the different festivals, visually.

Organizing the Info.

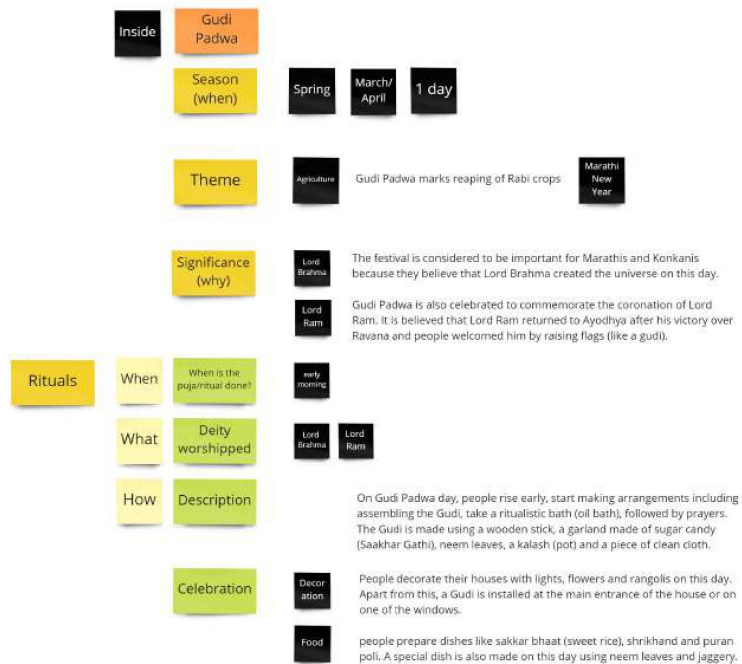The factors, categories for the four festivals and their respective data after research, on miro board.
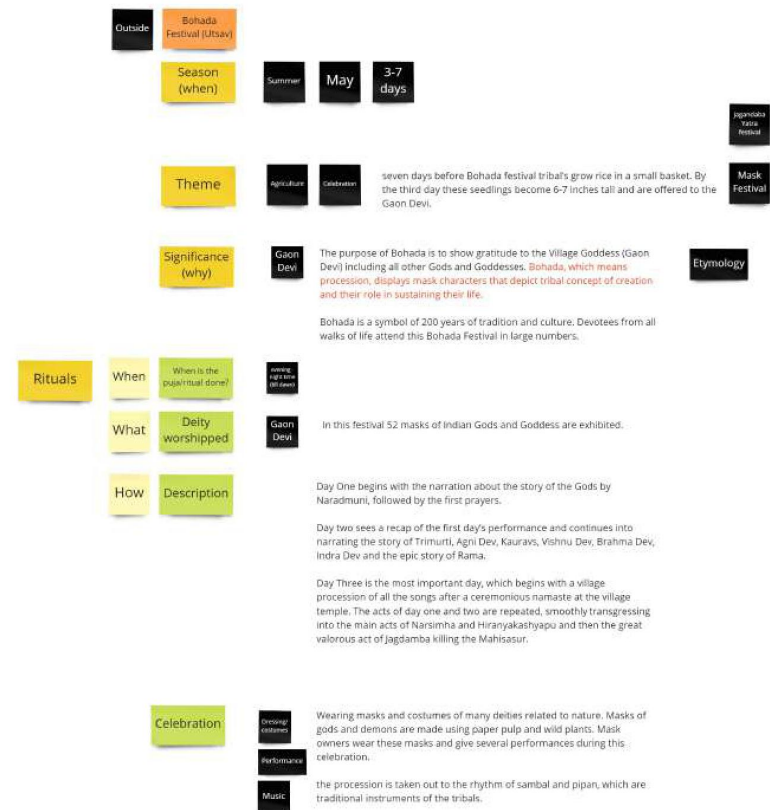

Figure: Gudi Padwa (Miro Board)

Figure: Bohada Festival (Miro Board)

Koli Bhaji Festival

Inside | Koli Bhaji Festival

Season (when): Monsoon | June | 1 day

Theme: Agriculture | Food | First Rain

Significance (why): Lord Brahma

It is a festival that celebrates the first rain and the first sowing of seeds

"Koli" a local green leafy vegetable, grows well in the forest during the rainy season. The Adivasi communities offer this plant to the gods starting the season's 'avani' or paddy cultivation in the form of a feast

Rituals

When: When is the puja/ritual done? — evening

What: Deity worshipped — Lord Narandev | Lord Hirva | Lord Himaldev | rain gods

How: Description

Everyone, collectively, looks for the Kauli vegetable in the forest. When they find one, they share it with everyone else in the village and have food together.

The Puja then starts when the prayer lamp is lit by the eldest person in the house. The figurines of Gods made with rice are offered abir-gulal and food (Koli vegetables brought from the forest). A coconut is also crushed in front of the deities.

Celebration — Singing

"पाण्या देवा येशी कवा ? नारायणा देवा नवस केला" sing a group of Adivasis, praying to the rain gods to bless them. Their song roughly translated into English goes something like this: "Oh rain gods please shower your blessing on us. Don't be upset we have prayed to Lord Narayan."

Dancing

Since the Koli vegetable is also related to fertility, the Kamadi dance is performed before planting the crops to seek good rains, a good crop and fertile soil, worshipping nature. This dance would be performed in the courtyard of the house and everyone would participate.

Cooking/Food

After the ceremony, the Koli vegetable would be cooked and eaten during the feast. The leaves are cooked into a delicious side dish, and it is also used for medicinal purposes.

Figure: Koli Bhaji Festival (Miro Board)

Diwali

Outside | Diwali

Season (when): Winter | Oct-Nov | 4 day — Waghbarsi, Barki Tiwli, Mothi Tiwli and Balipratipada

Theme: Livestock/Cattle | Agriculture

Significance (why): Waghbarsi | Barki & Mothi Tiwli

Away from the fireworks, Diwali is celebrated differently in the Warli community. Most of these rituals & celebrations cater to the nature and livestock, thanking them for the good yield of crops in that year.

(Worshipping of Tiger as God): They would take the livestock out for grazing in the forest (some still do) and prey to the tiger to not attack then, out of fear came reverence.

(Small & Big Lamp): The light from the tiwli's (lamps) adorn the front walls of the houses, wards off darkness in the cattle shed, stores and even the community wells, as a form of good luck. Everywhere, flames are seen swaying the breeze.

Rituals

When: When is the puja/ritual done? — early morning

What: Deity worshipped — greenery: Lord Hirva | rain gods: Lord Himaldev | Tiger: Vaghaya | Grains: Kansari | Protection: Narandev

How: Description

Day 1: Waghbarsi: Gaodevi Temple. Villagers break coconuts, light incense sticks and a lamp here to worship their god. Vaghaya (tiger) Shrine - Large stone smeared itch red paste.

Day 2&3: Barki & Mothi Tiwli. Wild fruit - Chiroti (small but bitter cucumber) in halves, scoop the insides out to create a bowl to use as a lamp. Then create a lamp boulder called bowala (mix of cow dung and mud). Once dark, these lamps lit up the whole place.

Day 4: Balipratipada. Festivities begin at dawn, front yards are coated in thin layer of cow dung, cattle sheds are cleaned. The livestocks are decorated with palm prints by men in reddish-brown color. The women were engrossed in making special food:

Celebration — Decoration

The light from the Tiwlis' (lamps) adorn the front walls of the houses, wards off darkness in the cattle shed, stores and even the community wells, as a form of good luck. From this time onwards, many Warli women also wear marigold flowers in their hair.

Dancing

They get Tarpa players from everywhere and people from all the nearby villages come together to celebrate, by doing the Tarpa dance.

Food

The women are engrossed in making special food: Panmodi, Chawla and karande

Figure: Diwali (Miro Board)

Ideation

Warli paintings have a distinct art style that is associated with their culture. It happens to be so distinct that people have somehow identified "warli culture" with that, when there's so much more they can offer. Warli paintings are descriptive in nature. It always tells us a story about their lifestyle, festivals, and marriages. I wasn't looking forward to having just Warli illustrations as my output (which also coincided with the output of my previous project here).

How do I represent their culture other than warli art? I decided to experiment and explore on what else could be defined as "Warli". Some of them were their homes, the food they eat, their daily attire and their daily activities. I then brainstormed some ideas on how I could include them in my visualization (other than the warli painting).

Based on the visualization aspect, I had two directions in mind,

Large Poster: large visualization with all the elements together, making a whole. It makes sense if I was painting the big picture about warli culture. Small chunks of information but easy to compare and understand the gist. Circular annual calendar approach.

Spiral book: small-scale and more specific to the festivals, rather than the big picture. Infographics on each festival, together making a whole, a spiral book i.e. still maintaining the continuity. Informative in nature as it is more detailed and in-depth but would lose the wholeness that a large poster gives.

Understanding Warli Art

While living at a warli artist's home for a few days, we got to learn warli painting from the masters themselves. It's symbolic and rudimentary in nature and consists mainly of geometric shapes and lines i.e. circles, triangles, and squares. For example, Humans and animal bodies are represented by two triangles joined at the tip, and so on.

In order to create the warli illustration and brush through what I've learnt, I created a mood board for each festival which includes relevant warli drawings and real-life celebratory pictures, mainly for reference.

Figure: Mood Board & Reference for Warli Illustration

Final Idea

I decided to set an infographic layout (in landscape print medium) for the warli festivals, thereby creating a series that could be extended further. In order to show the cultural elements more, I decided to have two main parts: The Warli Painting and Illustration of the event.

Wari Paintings are descriptive in nature and tell their own story, but not a lot of newbies would understand one right away. So I decided to have them take up the most space and provide a warli symbol glossery towards the end.

I also tried to give the paintings a bit more dimention by setting the scene at their home and making the paintings on their walls. Hence, that would give us more context about the festival, with the background, attire, people and their actions changing with it. Even the walls being inside or outside is a tell on how it's celebrated.

There would also be another illustration with the same art style as the wall paintings to maintain visual consistency.

Layout Exploration

Since the visuals will occupy a lot of space, the rest of the information would strictly be text-based. Based on these decisions, here are some layouts I experimented with,
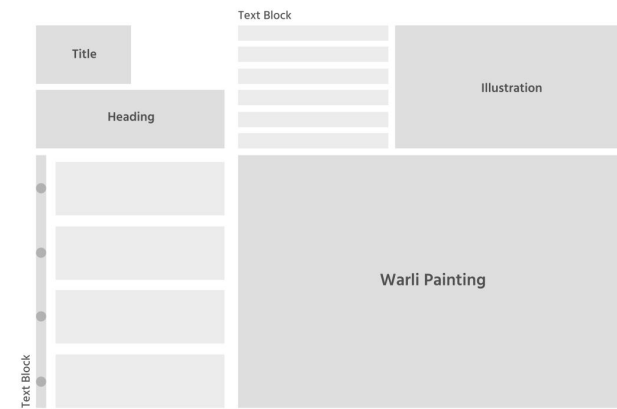
Figure: Layout 1
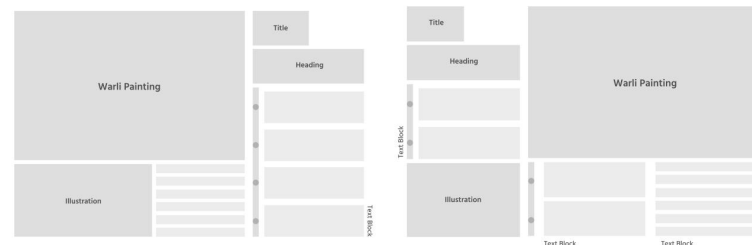
Figure: Layout 2

Figure: Layout 3

The Design

Visual Style: Colors

I decided to go with a monochromatic palette since warli art is usually a composition with dark background color (preferrably reddish-brown) and white colored illustrations.

Monochromatic Colors of #834a48

#522e2d #623736 #73413f #834a48 #935351 #a45d5a #ad6d6a

#834a48 #8f5c5a #9b6e6c #a8807e #b49291 #c1a4a3 #cdb6b5
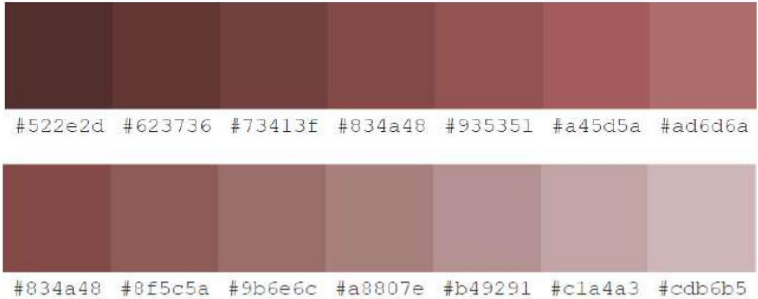
Figure: Color Palette

I made two versions withe the layout (light & dark background) to see which one would work better. I decided to go with dark background as it compliments with the illustrations well.
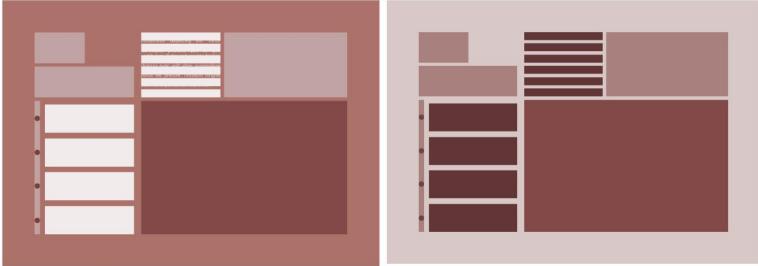
Figure: Dark & Light Background in Rough Layout

Figure: Dark & Light Background in Layout with Content

Typography

The typeface Garamound was used for the Heading and the ITC Franklin Gothic for Body Text.

Illustrations

The illustration style was digitally hand-drawn on procreate with vivid colors, giving it a raw, Indian feel. It also works in contrast with the sharp and geometric nature of warli art, in a way of distinguishing the two styles.

The house layout for the wall paintings will mostly be in reference from the Nakhre's and surrounding houses in Kalamvihira, Palghar as we have stayed and observed their surroundings. Here's a rough preview.

Figure: FInal Illustration for Gudi Padwa

Figure: Rough illustraton of the Idea

Final Visualization

It is a static visualization about four warli festivals and how they celebrate them,
- Gudi Padwa
- Bohada Utsav
- Koli Bhaji Festival
- Diwali

The output consists of two visualizations, the warli painting on the walls of their houses and an illustration of a distiguishable element or ritual. The content is descriptive and in textual format. The necessary information about the festival (season, duration and theme) is specified in the beginning itself.

Gudi Padwa

Season   *Spring*
Duration *One day*
Theme   *Agriculture*
              Marathi New Year

Significance: The festival is considered to be important because they believe *Lord Brahma* created the universe on this day. It also marks reaping season of Rabi crops. Gudi Padwa is also celebrated as the coronation of Lord Ram. It is believed that Lord Ram returned to Ayodhya after his victory over Ravana and people welcomed him by raising flags (like a gudi).
Puja: *Early Morning*
Deities: *Lord Brahma, Lord Ram*

Rituals: On Gudi Padwa day, people wake up early, start making arrangements including the assembling of Gudi, take a ritualistic bath, followed by prayers. The Gudi is made using a wooden stick, a garland made of sugar candy (Saakhar Gathi), neem leaves, a kalash (pot) and a piece of clean cloth.

Decoration: They decorate their houses with diya lights, flowers and rangolis on this day. Apart from this, a *Gudi* is installed at the main entrance of the house or on one of the windows.

Food: The People prepare dishes like *sakkar bhaat* (sweet rice), *shrikhand* and *puran poli*. A special dish is also made on this day using neem leaves and jaggery.

Bohada Utsav

Season *Summer*
Duration *Three days*
Theme *Performance*
The Mask Festival

Significance: The purpose of Bohada festival is to show gratitude to the *Village Goddess (Gaon Devi)* including all other Gods and Goddesses. "*Bohada*", which means procession, displays mask characters that depict tribal concept of creation and their role in sustaining their life. *Bohada Utsav* is a symbol of 200 years of tradition and culture. Devotees from all localities attend this festival in large numbers.

Rituals: *Day-one* begins with narration about the story of the Gods by Naradmuni, followed by their first prayers. *Day-two* sees a recap of the first day's performance and continues into narrating the story of Trimurti, Agni Dev, Kauravas, Vishnu Dev, Brahma Dev, Indra Dev and the epic story of Rama. Day Three is the most important day, which begins with a procession of all the songs i.e. after a ceremonious namaste at the village temple. The acts of day-one and day two are repeated smoothly,

transgressing into the main acts of Lord Narsimha and Hiranyakashyapu and then Jagdamba killing Mahisasur.

Dressing: It involves wearing masks and costumes of many dieties related to nature (Gods and demons) and is made using paper pulp and wild plants. Mask owners wear these masks and give several performances during this celebration.

Music: The procession is taken out to the rhythm of sambal and pipan, which are traditional instruments of the tribals.

Koli Bhaji Festival

Season   *Monsoon*
Duration   *One day*
Theme   *Agriculture, Food*
                First Rain

Significance: It is a festival that celebrates the first rain and the first sowing of seeds. *"Koli"* a local green leafy vegetable, grows well in the forest during rainy season. The Warli community offers this plant to the gods a.k.a starting the season's 'avani' or paddy cultivation in the form of a feast.

Rituals: Everyone looks for the Kauli vegetable in the forest collectively. When they find one, they share it with everyone else in the village and have food together. The Puja is started when the prayer lamp is lit by the eldest person in the house. The figurines of Gods made with rice are offered *abir-gulal* and *food (Koli sabji)*. A coconut is crushed in front of the deities.

Music: They sing, "Oh rain gods *(Lord Hirva & Himai Devi)* please shower your blessing on us. Don't be upset we have prayed to *Lord Narayan*."

Dancing: The *Kamadi dance* is performed by the people before planting the crops, to seek good rains, a good crop and fertile soil, worshipping nature. This dance would be performed in the courtyard of the house and everyone would participate.

Food: After the ceremony, the Koli vegetable would be cooked and eaten during the feast. The leaves are cooked into a delicious side dish, and it is used for medicinal purposes.

Final Thoughts

I enjoy visualization/ infographic related projects because of how relevant information can be conveyed to viewers in a simple/concise, yet interesting manner for them to familiarise themselves with a certain culture. There are multiple ways this output could've been different but I wanted to make sure the visualization wasn't just Warli Art, becuase of it's extremely distinct style. I struggled quite a bit with brainstorming on how I can visually include other warli aspects in this, and decided to go with my output.

This layout could be done for all of the warli festivals in my documentation, hence being an introduction to the festival & celebratory aspect of warli culture (esp. the lesser know festivals) or it could be a part of something more extensive, like how minority tribal groups in India celebrate their festivals, something not a lot of Indians are familiar with.

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