CHAPTER -2

PLACE AND PEOPLE

2.1 Location

Uttara-Kannada, which is also known by the name Karwar is one of the coastal districts of Karnataka, located at the mid-western part of the state. It lies between 79° 9' to 75° 10' east longitude and 13°55' to 15°31' north latitude and extends to cover 5.37 percent of the total area of the state.

2.2 Topography

In most of its parts, the district is covered by hilly and thickly wooded regions where, the major part of the highland and lowland is found along the courses of the river. The district has three distinct climatic regions. Those are coast lands, thickly populated region, the Sahyadrian region, which is densely forested and the roads crossing ghats sustain human activity which is famous for the belts of forest spices and areca plantations. The eastern margin of the district is undulated land, partly under forest and partly cleared up for agriculture.

2.3 Rivers

The four important rivers of the district are, the river Kali in the north, Bedti or Gangavali, Tadri or Aghanashini and Sharavati in the south. All along the banks of these rivers, we find coconut and arecanut plantations.
2.4 Forests

The district is known for its dense forests in western ghat region, from north to south. Forest regions have been classified into four types namely, evergreen, moist deciduous and finally scrub and thorny forests. Evergreen forests are found in the western ghat region, where the rainfall is maximum. There are two soil types of these forests, namely laterite and alluvial. Semievergreen forests are found in the places where the rainfall is more or less same as that of evergreen forests. Such forest regions of the district are characterised by soft woods. The deciduous forests of the district are rich in rose wood, teak wood and timber. The rainfall in this region is moderate. The dry deciduous forests are found in such regions where the rainfall vary from moderate to minimum. Similarly, the last forest type, the scrub and thorny forests are found in the minimum rainfall regions, characterised by red, black and trap soil known for the production of sandal wood, spices and firewood.

2.5 Flora

The rich plant coverage of Uttara-Kannada district is due to its climatic condition. Heavy rainfall and suitable soil type stimulate plant to grow soon. Out of the total geographic area, about 8.57 percent of the district is covered by the forest. Apart from this, other areas are also covered by lush green vegetation.

On the sandy beaches, are found typical plants, adapted to scorching sun. The vegetation is called littoral vegetation. Salt laden winds, sand
binders are quite common in this region along with spiny sand binders, beach sword bean and goat foot creepers.

The region between the Arabian sea shore and western ghats is characterised by fuel timbers like Penny nerved laurel, Kotra laurel, Jungle marking nut, Wild peepul and Alexandrine laurel. A wide variety of species of canopy are found in this region are Wild sack, Malbar poon, Indian diptiocarp. Mysore gamboge, Diptiocarp damar. Common trees of the moist deciduous forests are Sand paper fig, Saffron, Teak, White Indian lilac, Water cadamamba, Indian almond and Belleria mysobalum etc.

The river banks and stream beds harbhar plants that are adopted to marshy conditions. Such a plant type is called rheophytic vegetation. Alexandrian laurel, Sacred bama, Pride of india, Indian willow, Arjuna mysobalum, Water peacock's foot, Indian oak and Narrow leaved tree berry are found commonly in this region.

The trees found in the surroundings of the domestic settlements are Mango, Neem, Coconut, Jack fruit, Tamarind and Drumstick trees.

2.6 Fauna

Variety in the faunal pattern is due to the remarkable range of climate, topography and vegetation. Distinct categories of the fauna found in the district are namely, marine, freshwater, coast strip and highland.

Jelly fish, Sea anemones, Portuguese man of war, the Edible Oysters, Cuttle fish are of common occurrence along the coast. The marine fauna includes Starfish and some cartilaginous fishes like Shark and a great variety
of bony fishes like Sardine Mackrel, Tuna etc. Fresh water fauna include a 
variety of single celled animals, freshwater sponges, hydrozoans and flat 
worms like Planaria, Round worms, Leeches and Fairy shrimps.

Between the Arabian sea and western ghats, a narrow coastal strip has 
its own faunal pattern. This area is considered to be an ideal place for insect 
breeding. Other fauna found in this region because of its hot and humid 
climate. Snakes are quite commonly found in this part, which include, 
Cobra, Viper, Pit viper, Russel viper. Apart from this, a variety of birds and 
butterflies rats are also found.

Highland region of the forest is comprised of Tigers, Panthers, Wild 
dogs, Foxes, Spotted deers, Black bear etc. The domestic animals are Cats, 
Dogs, Bullocks, Buffaloes, Oxen, Goats, Sheeps etc.

2.7 Climate

The district consists of coastal strip, western ghat region and plateau 
region. Since the elevation vary from the sea level to about 1800 meters, the 
climate is characterised by humidity, (highly humid) nearly all the year 
around coastal strip and western ghat region, while in the plateau region, the 
climate is dry except in south west monsoon. The rainfall is plentiful, 
particularly in the coastal strip and western ghat region.

2.8 Seasons

The seasons of the year are divided into summer, which starts from the 
March and ends in May, April is reported as the hottest month. South west
monsoon is the second season, which starts from June and lasts in September with heavy rainfall in the coastal region. Thirdly, from October to November is classified as post monsoon season. The period from December to February is usually dry with bright skies and low temperature and low humidity and little rainfall.

2.9 Rainfall

The rainfall of the district is reported as, it varies from 3,854.3mm to 1,155.5mm. The average rainfall of the district is estimated to be 2741.7mm. Heavy rainfall occurs for three months, that is, from June to August and later decreases gradually. July is reported as the heaviest rain falling month.

2.10 People

‘Halakki Vokkalu’ are known as the earliest settlers of the coastal regions of Uttara-Kannada district. Their way of life, adherence to their own traditional customs, social structure and functions reveal that, they are descended from a primitive culture. Today, though they are not totally left with their age-old traditions, to a certain extent, there are changes in their material culture, clothing and day-to-day activities. Halakki Vokkalu say that, they form a community but they are now fighting for tribal status, as they are well aware of the facilities and provisions given by the Government to any tribal people. Despite, it is appropriate to fix them under the category "tribe in transition". Since these people refer themselves as belong to "Halakki
No. 3. Idol of God Venkataramana

No. 4. Halakki Vokkalu old man
No. 5. Halakki Vokkalu old woman

No. 6. Halakki Vokkalu women in their traditional dress
No. 7. Halakki Vokkalu woman taking bath outside

No. 8. Halakki Vokkalu women at work
No. 11. Author with Halakki Vokkalu women and children

No. 12. Key informant of Halakki Vokkalu community
2.11 Geographical distribution

Geographically there are seven chief regions in Uttara-Kannada district, consisting of 169 villages in which the Halakki Vokkalu are found. This regional distribution of villages has been made by themselves. These are namely, Kadwad, Ankola, Kumbaragadde, Gokarna, Nursikote Harite and Chandavar. Their settlements lie between western slope of Sahyadri and the Arabian sea with river Kali in the north and river Sharavati in the south.

2.12 Antiquity

There is no adequate information regarding the origin of these people and the knowledge about their origin is lacking among them. But they have learnt from their forefathers that, they are in the district since long. According to Madras census report (1901) the term 'Okkaliyan' a Tamil synonym of Kannada term 'Vokkaliga' has been described as Canaries cultivators, originally belonged to Mysore and found mainly in Madras and Coimbatore (Thurston 1909). In Bombay Gazetteer (1884), while referring to "Halakki Vokkalu" it has been mentioned that, "In Mysore, a large class of husbandsmen bear the same name and follow the same calling. They seem to be among the earliest settlers on the coast. They have lost all traditional connections with Mysore but a trace perhaps remains in the worship of Venkataramana of Tirupati. And it has been mentioned that, they bear a
### Table - 1: Regionwise distribution of villages, households and total population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number of villages</th>
<th>Number of households</th>
<th>Total population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kadwad</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1076</td>
<td>6845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ankola</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1015</td>
<td>12350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kumbaragadde</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>3012</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gokarna</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>585</td>
<td>3920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nusikote</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>2090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haitte</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>1845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaudavar</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>2287</td>
<td>11822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>169</strong></td>
<td><strong>6242</strong></td>
<td><strong>41884</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: District Office for Backward classes and Minorities Uttara-Kannada District.
strong resemblance and appear to be a branch of Halvokkals of Mysore who rank first among the Vokkalu communities". From the above notions, the origin of Halakki Vokkalu can be traced to the southern region of the Karnataka State.

2.13 Derivation of the name

There are different versions regarding the derivation of the name. In Bombay Gazetteer, (1884) it has been pointed out that the word 'Halakki' comes from the Canaries 'halu', that is, 'milk' or milk white and 'akki', that is, rice. Probably because, they are the chief growers of the better kind of rice' the people of this community called Halakki Vokkalu. The same notion has been carried by the people about the acquisition of the name.

In this regard, Bhat (1982) highlights the close association of owner-labour relation between Havig Brahmans and Halakki Vokkalu of Uattara-Kannada. Today also there exists the same relation between them. It has been pointed out that, in the past, during the marriage procession of Havigs, the Halakki Vokkalu were allowed to sprinkle milk and rice to make the procession successful from the evil things. Therefore, he is of the opinion that, probably because of the right, which these people had, they might have acquired the name. Similarly it has been opined that, the acquisition of the name may be due to their occupations like agriculture and dairy work, which they might have practiced in the past. There is a legendary tale in this regard which was narrated by these people during his research work. Accordingly, once Goddess Parvati, who was carrying food, consisting of milk and rice, to
God Shiva, slips down and drops the food on the ground. Later, Goddess Parvati prepares two dolls, one male and another female out the fallen food and returns home. Then, God Shiva after waiting for a longer time for Parvati, decides to go back home. On his way, he sees the dolls made by Parvati and gives life to them. Later those two became Halakki man and woman. Thus, their lineage started. That is how they are called as descendants of 'halu' and 'akki' that is 'milk' and 'rice'.

2.14 Physical features and linguistic affinity

The body colour varies from brown to dark brown. Stature is medium. They possess australoid features with small head, slanting forehead, prominent cheek bones, flat nose and projecting jaws. Men are muscular with broad shoulders. Women leave long hair.

Halakki Vokkalu have no language of their own. They speak a corrupt form of Kannada, in their own accent and call it as 'Vokkalu Bhashe'. The noticeable peculiarities are use of 'Sha' for 'sa' as in case of 'Kushu' for 'Kusu' the child. The use of 'n' for 'l' is quite common for instance 'mene' is pronounced for 'mele' that is, 'up or above'. Here are few examples to point out the difference between the Kannada language and 'Vokkalu Bhashe'. Those are, the term 'Kuduke' is used for 'Kudiyuvudakke', for drinking. Similarly 'na nodi' is 'nanu nodiddene', 'I have seen', 'Ava hogya' is 'avanu hogiddane', means 'he has gone'. While speaking, 'Kandya' and 'ambru' are the words, which are used frequently, with the meaning 'did you see' and 'it is said' respectively. The suffix 'ra' at the end of the words means 'sir' for
instance 'houdra', 'Yes sir'. The 'ra' is suffixed and used particularly for the outsiders and for the elderly persons of the community.

2.15 Economic activities

Their traditional occupation is specified as husbandry (Campbell 1883). But, at present very rarely we see them practicing it. Majority of them, now, work as labourers in the fields of higher caste landlords and very few of them have their own land. It has been reported that, the people having their own land, grow three crops annually. The important crops are, paddy, groundnut and millet. They also grow watermelons and vegetables. Groundnut, watermelon and vegetables are the main economic crops.

This forms their primary source of income. Secondary source for men include making bamboo thatch shades for temples, wherein women make bamboo mats, garlands and collect firewood to sell in the nearby towns. Apart from this, women assist men in their fields and also go for labour work in others fields, besides building construction and road construction etc.

Some of the men are indigenous doctors, who prepare medicine out of roots and barks of the forest plants and herbs. It has been reported that, they have medicine for ailments such as liver and lung inflammations, fever and body pains. There is a famous hospital at Belambar village of Ankola taluk run by Bomma Gauda, who give medicine for paralysis patients. The medicine is prepared by himself and it is a hereditary job. He said that, the medicine was invented by one of his forefathers. It is a well known hospital and the people from other states also come here for the treatment of
paralysis. Nowadays a tendency has been developed among the educated youth particularly among the college going boys to fit in the jobs like, teachers, conductors (KSRTC) and clerks.

2.16 Housing

Different types of houses are seen in Halakki villages. Those are, mud houses with thatched roof, factory tiled houses and RCC houses. The first and the third house types are of rare occurrence, wherein factory tiled houses are commonly seen in the villages. It has been reported that, people in the past did live in the mud houses which are now, replaced by factory tiled houses and quite a few RCC houses. In some cases, as the pattern of the house is concerned, it is the old pattern which has been incorporated by them, that is a traditional pattern of building the house is seen except in case of RCC houses which are negligible in number. A typical house of a Halakki Vokkalu family consists of a courtyard and the main entrance which leads to a room, serves as a hall. There is a separate room for the kitchen. Apart from these, one or two rooms may be built for storage. Generally, they do not construct the bathrooms inside the house. Usually bath is taken under the tree in the surroundings of the house.

In the middle of the courtyard there is a raised platform covered by wooden or tiled roof, serves as 'Dyavara mane' (place of worship) with a basil plant at the centre. They keep the idol of God Venkataramana at the bottom of the basil plant. It has been observed that, the people of a same lineage share a common 'Dyavaramane'. Usually the houses of the families with
common descendants are present in a circular manner with 'Dyavaramane' at the centre or sometimes the houses are seen side by side with the 'Dyavaramane' at the front of any one of the houses.

2.17 Food habits and dress pattern

The staple food of the people of this community is rice and ragi (millet) 'Ganji', which is prepared by using boiled rice cooked regularly. During fairs and festivals, 'Paysa' is prepared using the ingredients like rice, milk and sugar. It is a favourite dish for them. Their regular meal consists of rice, fish and sometimes vegetables instead of fish. Since they are dwellers of coastal region, sea food is commonly used whereas meat and chicken are used rarely. The meat of the domestic pork is tabooed. Since it is a totemic community they observe another taboo, that is, they neither eat nor cut the totemic plants or animals. The 'rasa' cooked by using the ingredients, meat, coconut and spices is considered as delicious. It is reported that, pulses are used very rarely by them.

As regards beverages, 'ragi ambli' is considered as the nutritious drink. It has been reported that, in the past people used to drink it compulsarily in the morning. But at present, though the 'ambli' has been replaced by 'tea', the people of older generations still prefer to drink 'ambli'. Then, with regard to the liquor, they were very strict in the past. It was considered as sin, even to stand near the tree from which it is being extracted by the people of other communities. But, nowadays they are not so strict about the liquor consumption and it has become a habit for most of the male members of the
community. In village Talagadde, both men and women consume liquor. Similarly, smoking is commonly seen among the men without any traditional prohibitions attached to it. Both men and women chew ‘Kavala’, the raw arecanut along with betel leaves.

The people of this community are hardworking and simple. There are differences in the costumes of the men and women. The traditional dress of men consists of a ‘head scarf’, a loin cloth and a shoulder cloth. The ‘kambli’ (blanket) is used as a rain guard during the rainy season. Majority of them are found commonly in shirts, pants and half pants.

Usually men shave their face and cut their hair on any day except on Saturdays which is forbidden in the community. It is only when an elderly person dies in the family, one of the elderly male members, usually the eldest son will shave off both the face and head.

The traditional dress of Halakki Vokkalu women consists of saree, which they wear up to knee length and take it to the upper portion to cover the breast region. They do not wear either underskirt or blouse. They apply coconut oil to the hair and tie it into a knot on the back side, slightly on the left, just above the neck. They wear typical ornaments. Their neck wear consists of a large number of strings of glass beads of various colours, chiefly of black, called ‘manisara’ or ‘Karimanisara’ which cover the neck and shoulder portion. This signifies their community. Apart from this, they wear head ornaments, that is, silver clips, wristlets of silver, glass bangles, muguti that is nose ring generally made up of gold, and ‘wale’, the ear studs of either gold or silver.
As regards the traditional dress patterns of the community are concerned, it has been noticed that, the rate of change can be seen more in case of male members when compared with their female counterparts. Majority of the women in the villages are still seen in the traditional dresses except the few who belong to the recent generations. But men are seen very rarely in the traditional dress.

When it was enquired about the neck wear of the women, which, appeared to be most distinguished and significant feature of the women's dress pattern, it was reported that, their forefathers have made their women to wear the 'manisara' with the intention to protect them from the foreign invaders during the preindependence period. They made it clear that, the necklaces of the beads are not used for the purpose of beautification unlike in other castes and tribes, rather they believe that, the large number of bead strings in the neck gives an ugly look to women.

Some elderly and educated persons of the community are asking their women to remove the 'manisara'. But the traditional women are not responding to it. It has been noticed that the girls dislike to wear 'manisara'.

The boys and girls of the community are seen in the common dresses like, shirts, pants, half pants, skirts, blouses etc.
2.18 Life cycle rituals

Halakki Vokkalu people observe, pregnancy, birth, marriage and death ceremonies. As regards ritual pollution and purity, a mensurating women is considered to be impure for five days in a month.

A ritual is performed for the first pregnancy, either in the fifth or in the seventh month by the parents of the pregnant lady at her husband’s place. This ritual is called "Seere shastra". The parents of the pregnant lady present their daughter with saree blouse piece, flowers, bangles and some sweets. In the ceremony, feast is served to their close relatives and friends.

Usually pregnant women go to their natal home for the first delivery either after the completion of fifth month or seventh month of pregnancy.

Nowadays majority of them go to hospitals for the delivery. It has been revealed by the people that, sometimes the childbirths takes place in the villages itself. In such cases, a midwife, an elderly experienced lady of the community is called for the purpose. Propitiated labor is considered as the work of evil spirits. The lady after delivery is not allowed in the kitchen for about ten days. While, on the third day of the childbirth, the house is purified and cleaned. It has been reported from the elderly women of the community that, earlier the purification and cleaning the cloths of the child and mother was the duty of the washerman. But, at present such a system does not exist.

Naming ceremony for the newborn child is usually held on the eleventh day of the child birth. On that day a ritual bath is given to both the mother and the child, later the mother had to complete the rituals like 'Ganga pooja'
for which she has to visit the nearby well and offer the prayers by waving lighted lamp and finally she takes a pot full of water to the home after emptying the pot for two times near the well. This water is used to cook the food on that day. Elderly lady of the family, generally father's sister of the child is given name by putting into the cradle. First, the name of the deceased person of the family is given to the child and finally, the name which the parents wish to call is given. Afterwards, gifts are given by the guests to the baby and finally feast is served to the guests. This ceremony is held either in the afternoon or in the evening. There will be a haircut ceremony, called 'Jawala', when the baby attains the age of one year. Later no other ceremonies are performed for either boy or girl until the marriage.

2.19 Marriage

The marriage proposals are moved from the bridegrooms party to the brides party. When both the parties agree to enter into the marriage alliance, a date is fixed for the marriage. Usually marriage settlements are made in the brides village in the house of either the elderly person or village headman. As a symbol of engagement, they exchange sugar, betel leaves and areca nuts among all who are present there. It has been reported that, in the past, they never used to bother about the horoscope and the auspicious hour for the marriage. But nowadays they ask Ilavig priest to see whether the marriage will be prosperous and also look for the auspicious hour for the marriage. But they do not invite any Brahmin priest to perform the marriage rituals like in other communities.
First cousin marriages are allowed, wherein uncle-niece marriages are not practiced. Clan exogamy is strictly followed by them. Marriage by elopement and intercaste marriages are considered as shame and such individuals are outcasted. Widow marriage is not customarily allowed. If a widow gets married, she is called "Bandi" and she is outcasted along with her husband.

Through the ages, there have been some changes in the practices and systems of the marriage. It has been reported that, earlier, the marriages were held for five days, but now it is reduced to one day. It has also been reported that, they had the system of paying 'tera' that is, the bride price but, at present the system is said to have disappeared totally and it has been replaced by the dowry which is given to the groom either in the form of gifts or cash by the bride's father.

On the previous day of the marriage, one or two relatives of the bridegroom visit the bride's residence and present the sarees to the bride and return to their home. On the next day, ceremonial bath is given to the bride and the bridegroom and after the completion of the rituals, bridegroom ties 'tali' to the bride's neck. Later feast is served to all the invitees. During the marriage ceremony, they do not use any instrumental music rather the women of the community sing the folk songs.
2.20 Disposal of the dead

According to their custom, dead bodies of the married persons are burned and that of unmarried and pregnant women are burnt. When the death signs appears clearly, 'Das' or an elderly person calls out the name of Govinda Hari, that is, the name of their patron God Venkataramana. Later, the body is given bath and covered with shroud and finally taken to the burial ground.

It has been reported that, on their way, the bier is laid down near the burial ground and a stone is kept near the bier, which is symbolically addressed as the spirit of the dead person, and it is asked to join its ancestors. Then the body is buried, if the person is married and it is burnt in case of unmarried and pregnant women. Later, on their way to home they offer a coconut and rice to the stone which is assumed as the spirit of the dead and the same procedure is repeated on the second and third day.

It has also been said that, on the third day of the death, the ash is collected in the pot and disposed off in the river. On the same day, the head and face of the person who had lit fire to the body will be shaved off. Usually that person will be either the elder son or any other elderly male member of the family. Meanwhile the house is cleaned on that day and in the evening only the neighbours and close relatives are given feast. But on the twelfth day, almost the whole community is feasted. On the same day, the elderly persons of the community and the persons of the same age and sex of the deceased person are honoured with betel leaves and areca nuts.
2.21 Social structure and religion

Generally, the Halakki Vokkalu live in the isolated villages. There are villages wherein we find only the dwellings of these people and in some villages they live along with other caste people. But in such villages, we find the separate localities of Halakki Vokkalu called "Koppa". It has been noticed that, they have a strong community organization and they show tendency towards the preserving their age old traditional values, beliefs, and practices.

The routine of these people starts in the early morning. The people of older generation prefer to drink :"ragi ambli" which is considered to be a nutritious, whereas, the people of younger generation prefer tea. It has been said that the tea is being introduced in their community very recently. Both men and women go to the fields in the early morning and return in the afternoon for lunch. In the afternoon, they take bath and a male member in the family worship their patron God and have their lunch. Later in the evening they again go to the fields if any work is left in the morning, otherwise they go to the nearby forest to collect the firewood. Their routine and the nature of the work depends on the season. When there is no work in the fields, usually they take up the jobs like road and building construction, and other works on daily wages.

Menfolk usually return late in the evening and later they gather at a place in the village and pass the time in discussing village matters, politics, whereas womenfolk engage in the domestic work. They have their dinner soon and go to bed.
The community is being divided into eighteen major clans or bali. The significant feature of their clan system is that, each clan is being represented by a particular plant or animal totem, which are neither cut nor eat by the people of that particular totemic clan or bali. It has also been reported that, some of the bali correspond to the specific deity, for instance, "Manjal devaru" and "Kadabalu" are the respective deities of "Manjal bali" and "Kadan bali". Similarly "Nagen bali" denotes "Nagaraja", that is the Cobra. "Kyadage bali" is an example for the plant totem, that is, "Kyadage" (Pandanunus).

Halakki Vokkalu belong to Hindu religion and their traditions and customs are more or less similar to any Hindu community. They specify their caste by the term "Vokkalu" that is "Vokkalu jati". The Venkataramana of Tirupati is being worshiped by them as their patron God along with the "Hanuman" of Chandavar, which is located near the town Kumta. The basil plant at the centre of the courtyard with an idol of "Venkataramana" has got a special religious significance. They also worship the deities, which are represented by their clans. Saving the money in the name of god is called "Chakrakattuvudu", which is not used by them for any purpose rather it is sent to the Tirupati, if any persons of the community from the village or from the neighbouring village are going. It has been reported that, nowadays they are sending the amount through the money order, if no one is going, to Tirupati.

'Das' is the religious status given to the person who had the pilgrimage to Tirupati, atleast once in his lifetime. He is treated with much respect by all the members of the community and he plays the major role during all the
ceremonial occasions. The major festivals celebrated by them are Deepavali, Holi and Yugadi. Yugadi is celebrated in the name of their patron God *Venkataramana*, which is also called Haridina, that is 'the day of Hari' wherein, "Hari" is another name for Venkataramana.

2.22 Community council

In the past, Halakki Vokkalu had councils both at the village level and regional level for the smooth running of administration and to maintain social and religious discipline in the community. The village council was called "Oora Koota" and the regional council "Chappara Koota" or 'seeme Koota' Disputes in the village either pertaining to the land, house or the partition of the property and also the violation of the social and religious norms were settled in the "Oora Koota" by the village headman, the "Oora gauda" along with the elderly persons of the village. The problems which were not solved in the village council were settled at the "Seeme Koota" by "Seeme gauda" and other members of the council. It was said that, there was no interference of any Government bodies in the village or community matters. And people of those days never used to allow such matters to go beyond the regional council.

2.23 Present status of the council

The traditional "Koota" (council) system of the Halakki Vokkalu community can be seen now also. Though the disputes are settled and the problems are solved, it has been reported that, people nowadays take the
serious cases to the police but rarely to the taluk courts. Even though such a change has occurred in these years, however, the structure of "Koota" has remained as it was in the past.

Each village has a headman called "Oora gauda" or 'Buddavanta' who had a messenger called "Kolkar". Headman of the region is called "Seeme gauda", who works under "Aras gauda". Aras gauda holds highest position in the community administration along with his assistant "Pradhan gauda".

The religious head of the community is called "Guru gauda".

The headman is treated with respect by the villagers. He deals with the disputes which arise in the village and refers serious matters to the "Seeme gauda". "Kolkar" carries message from the village headman or 'Oora gauda' to the villagers and also to the "Seeme gauda". Both "Aras gauda" and "Seeme gauda" do not participate in the village level meetings. Their main function is to summon the intervillage and inter-regional council meetings to discuss the welfare activities for the community and also to solve the unsettled disputes.

For such meetings people are invited through "Kolkar" and asked to gather at a place. People involved in the disputes are given chance to talk. After hearing to both the parties, the "Aras gauda" takes decision to punish the offender and puts some fine. A part of the fine collected is sent to Tirupati in the name of Venkataramana, their patron God and the remaining amount is spent for the welfare activities of the community. It has been reported that, these meetings last for seven to twenty days. During these meetings, all the members who are present are fed. The expenditure to
organise such meetings are met by the contributions made by the people in terms of money or food grains.

2.24 District level organization of the community

At the district level, there is an organization called "Halakki Vokkaligara Sangha", which was started about twenty five years ago with the intention to work for the welfare of the community. The total number of members of this organization as reported is twenty five, consisting three to five members from each region. Among these members, the president, vice-president, secretary are selected. All the members of the organization meet once in three months. The funding for the organization is made by the people of the community. Annually, Rs one per head is collected from them.

2.25 Political awareness

Growing interest in the present day politics is one of the major changes found among the community. This awareness has been developed because of the contacts of the youth with the politicians. During elections moneymaking through canvassing is one of the attractions for the youth.

Since 1984, few prominent persons of Halakki Vokkalu community have contested for Vidansabha elections as an independent candidate and also from different political parties. In the year 1984 and as well in 1989, two candidates were elected for Vidanasabha on Janata party and Congress party tickets. Nowadays considerable number of representatives from this
community are seen in Zilla Parishad, Taluk Parishad and Grampanchayats.
This clearly shows that, nowadays Halakki Vokkalu people have developed considerable political awareness.