CHAPTER - 2

PLACE AND PEOPLE

Location

Uttara Kannada district is located in the mid-Western part of Karnataka state. It lies between 74° 9' to 75° 10' east longitude and 13° 55' to 15° 31' north latitude and extends over an area of the state. Most of the district is hilly and thickly wooded.

Topography

In most of its parts, the district is covered by hilly and thickly wooded parts. Its major part is essentially highland and lowland is found along the courses of the rivers. The district has three main and distinctive regions, the coastlands and Sahyadrian interior and the eastern margin, 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 coastal lands are the developed areas with a high degree of economic development and a high density of population.

Rivers

There are four leading rivers, the river Kali in the north, Bedti or Gangavali, Tadri or Aghanashini and Sharavati in the south. All the rivers are broad and rocky, showing the force of their monsoon torrents. All along the banks of these rivers, we find coconut and arecanut plantations.
No. 2 - Map showing the places from where data were collected

Siddi settlements from where data were collected:

1. Bidrolli
2. Tatvangi
3. Nagsheetikoppa
4. Gutti
5. Golehalli
6. Vada...
7. Gardollii
8. Gadgera
9. Vasur
10. Jathga
11. Janga
12. Pandarval
13. Adkehosur
14. Aksalkatta
15. Neelvangi
16. Sambrani
17. Bakkinkoppa
18. Kamtioppa
19. Tattigeri
20. Balsheetikoppa
21. Bhagavati
22. Bommannahalli
23. Kegdal
24. Bailandur
25. Gudundur
26. Kirvatti
27. Tavarbotta
28. Dood Bilki
29. Chikk Bilki
30. Keresalli
31. Upleshwar

62. Kaleshwar
63. Kammani
64. Malgoa
65. Halvalli
66. Adrolli
67. Dugganmane
68. Kutkmale
69. Ummachig
70. Kendalgero
71. Mainalli
72. Gunjavati
73. Uggingera
**Forests**

The district is known for its dense forests in the Western Ghat region, from north to south. The types of forests found in the district are evergreen, semi evergreen, moist deciduous and scrubbed and thorny forests. The evergreen forests found in places, where the rainfall is more than 225 cms and form a narrow strip along the Western Ghats. There are two soil types of these forests, namely laterite and alluvial. Semi evergreen forests are found in the places where the rainfall is more. Such forests are rich in Timber trees, Rose wood, Teak wood, Honne, Matti, Nandi, etc. In these forests Sandal and other minor forest products, firewood and timber species are grown.

**Flora**

Uttara Kannada can justly be proud of its rich plant cover, good climatic condition. Heavy rainfall and suitable soil type stimulates plant to grow soon. Out of the total geographical area about 80.57 percent of the district is covered by the forest. Most of the other areas also have lush green vegetation.

The region between the Arabian Sea shore and Western Ghats is characterized by fuel timbers like Penny nerved laurel, Kotra laurel, jungal making nut. The most common trees of the moist deciduous forests are Sand paper, Fig, Saffron, Teak, White indian lilac, Water cadamba, Indian almond, Belleria Mysobalum, etc.

The river banks and stream beds, harbour plants that are adopted to marshy conditions. Such a plant type is called *Rheophytic*
No. 1. SIDDI SETTLEMENT

No. 2. HOUSE OF CHRISTIAN SIDDI
vegetation. Alexandrian laurel, Sacred bama, Pride of Indian, 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.

**Fauna**

The district possesses a remarkable range of climate, topography and vegetation. Distinct categories of the fauna found in the district are namely, marine, freshwater, coast strip and highland. 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 ponds include a variety of single celled animals like Fresh water sponges, Hydrozoans and Flat worms like Planaria, Round worms, Leaches and Fairly shrimps.

Arabian sea and Western ghats area are considered to be an ideal place for insect breeding. Snakes are quite commonly found in this area, which include Rusel viper, Cobra viper and Pit viper. Apart from this a variety of birds, butterflies and rats are 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.

**Climate**

The district consists of the coastal strip, the region of the Western Ghats and the plateau region to the east of the ghats. The elevations vary from sea level to about 1800 meters, the climate is
characterized by humidity, (highly humid) nearly around the year around coastal strip and Western Ghat region. While in the area to the east of the ghats the climate is drier, except in the South-West monsoon season. The rainfall is plentiful particularly in the coastal and Western Ghat regions.

**Seasons**

The year is divided into four seasons, namely, Summer from March to May has rising temperature with the maximum temperature of the year occurring in April or May. The South-West monsoon season, from June to November. October and November constitute retreating monsoon or post-monsoon season, and the winter period from December to February is generally dry with clear bright skies and receives very little rainfall in this season.

**Rainfall**

The average annual rainfall in the district is 2741.7 mm. The rainfall in the district varies from 3854.3 mm to 1155.5 mm. July is the rainiest month. June to September constitute 89 percent of the rainfall.

**Geographical Distribution**

Geographically there are seven chief regions in Uttar Kannada district, consisting of 149 villages in which the Siddi are found. This regional distribution of villages has been made by themselves. The Siddi villages are spread in Haliyal, Yallapur, Ankola, Mundgod and Joida taluks.
No. 5. MUSLIM SIDDY FAMILY (ADMIJXTURED)

No. 6. CHRISTIAN SIDDY MID-WIFE
History of the Siddi

Siddi a Negro population brought from Africa long ago and have settled in the Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka. Syed Kaphre or Habsi are other synonyms of the community. According to Herbert Risley (1915) Siddi or Kaphre means daily wage labourers.

The Gazzetter of North Kanara mentions that Siddi have been brought from Africa by early maritime powers. According to another version Siddi were brought to India mainly by Arabs, the pioneers in the forced migration of Negroes to India. It is said that the expansion of trade by the Arabs in the 16th century A.D. to Africa and other continents was responsible for the widespread migration of African Negroes in different parts of the world including India. Because the slave trade was carried on by them on a large scale.

Local conception of the history of the Siddi shows that each religious group has a different history. The Siddi and others in the local area trace the history of Siddi Muslims to the Bijapuri kingdom in the 16th century. In order to substantiate this fact they quote the Siddi Muslims surnames as Naik, Halvaldar, Patel, etc. The Siddi Christians trace their origin from Goa. They say that they were brought by Portuguese from Africa to Goa and from there they moved to North Kanara an adjoining district. Ancestors of Siddi who have embraced Hinduism are believed to have been brought by the Arab merchants and sold to Havig Brahmins in exchange for local products. According to another story the king of ‘Haina’ in North Kanara bought
No. 7. MUSLIM SIDDY WOMEN

No. 8. HINDU SIDDY CHILDREN WITH THEIR MOTHER
several Siddi from the Arab merchants and when kingdom was conquered by Hyder Ali, they fled from the kingdom and became free.

**Distribution of Siddi**

The Siddi are mainly found in the few states of India, namely, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa and Karnataka. In Karnataka Siddi are mainly found in Haliyal, Yallapur, Joida, Ankola and Mundagod taluks of Uttara Kannada district and a small number is also found in Dharwad and Belgaum districts. Konkani and Kannada are the languages they speak. The Muslim Siddi speak Urdu among themselves. They use the Kannada script. The Siddi Christians are Catholics. They belong to Haliyal, Yallapur and Mundgod taluks.

**Physical Features**

The Siddi are generally well built sturdy, short to tall with a medium to strong physique. The average height is 165 cms. Their dark black complexion of skin is very striking. Some have black brown and few others have even brown coloured skin. Majority of the Siddi have black coloured hair. However, a few have black brown and very occasionally brown coloured hair too. Most of them have wolly and frizzly hair, which are known as helical hair, very few have wavy hair. Few Siddi have married non-Siddi and whose children show admixedtured features like wavy and straight hair. Siddi have large nose and thick lips.
No. 9. MUSLIM SIDDI CHILDREN

No. 10. CHRISTIAN SIDDI CHILDREN
Family Structure

The Siddi family constitutes a core unit of their social organization, from which other relations evolve. The Siddi respect elders. There is a mutual obligation among living members.

The household is the core structure of the family. It normally consists of husband, wife and unmarried children. In a few cases an old father and mother form the members of the family. The household is essentially an economic unit. Elderly male is a leader of a household looking after the tasks of the community.

The head of the family works on the land owned or rented by him and other members of the family help him in the work. A majority of the families are nuclear families which is a unique feature of Siddi. A son on getting married establishes his own household, as the Siddi feel that it is better to separate when relations are going good rather than separate after a bitter encounter.

Every Siddi household is linked in one manner or another to a Havig Brahmin household. They are linked as tenants or simply household servants, even to this day the relationship between such household is fairly strong with servant role. Siddi gain money and food from Havig Brahmins.

Religion

Siddi are unaware of their original religion and language because Portuguese rulers kept them isolated and never allowed them to mix with other groups. Thus, they forgot their language. Siddi were also sold to other kings as slaves. In course of time different groups
No. 11. THE KITCHEN OF SIDDHI

No. 12. KITCHEN UTENSILS OF SIDDHI
came under the influence of different religions. The slaves thus embraced Hinduism, Islam and Christianity and served under different rulers with their respective languages.

**Food Habits**

Siddi are living in the forest area. They not only use the food available in the forest like sweet potato, honey, fruits, meat, fish but also use Rice, Jowar, Ragi, Dhal, etc. They use Rice Roti Potato in their daily food. Siddi are both vegetarian and non-vegetarian. They eat both pork and beef. They also eat flesh of wild animals such as hare, deer and boar. Now-a-days they prepare non-vegetarian food occasionally because of non availability of animals. Thus, consumption of meat is relatively reduced.

**Dress Pattern**

Siddi’s dress pattern is simple. They dress according to their village style. Men wear lungi, longshirt rumal or towel around their head. Now-a-days males wear pants, shorts and shirts. Women wear saree and blouse. Children wear pants, trousers, shirts. Girls wear chudidar and frocks.

**Festivals**

Siddi celebrate all festivals according to their religion. They perform cultural programmes related to their traditions. Women sing folk songs in groups with pots in their hands. Both men and women perform Jakai dance and drama by beating drums.
No. 13. SIDDI'S PLACE OF WORSHIP

No. 14. PLOUGHING THE FIELD BY SIDDI MAN
Education

Siddi are basically poor. Most of the Siddi boys and girls drop out from the school after primary education due to economic and social reasons. Earlier Siddi used to move from one place to another place in search of the jobs. But now most of the Siddi people have settled in one place. At present Siddi have understood the importance of education. As such today we see few of them have become graduates and post-graduates.

Marriage

Monogamy is practiced among Hindu and Christian Siddi groups. But Muslim Siddi practice polygamy. Among Muslims when a wife is unable to bear a child or has an non-cooperative behaviour, husband is forced to bring a second wife without divorcing the first wife. Sometimes love-affair too may lead to a second marriage.

Widow re-marriage is quite common. Siddi allow levirate. Muslim Siddi preferably arrange cross-cousin marriages, but it is rare among Hindu and Christian groups. Normally Siddi prefer life partners from their own village. They go outside the village circle only when no suitable match is found in their village.

Siddis marriages are arranged within their community. The Khazi is the sacred specialist for performing marriage rituals among the Muslim Siddi. The Pastor of a Church is the sacred specialist for Christian Siddi, and a Havig Brahmin for the Hindus. Dowry system is found among all Siddi groups.
No. 15. SIDDIS WORKING IN THE SUGARCANE FIELD

No. 16. PREPARATION OF JAGGARY BY SIDDI YOUTH
No. 18. RESEARCHER WITH THE CHIEF INFORMANT
Now-a-days Siddi also prefer to marry with non-Siddi groups, and other life cycle rituals practiced by Siddis are influenced by non-Siddi neighbour groups.

Among Hindu Siddi dead body is either buried or cremated. Muslim and Christian Siddi bury the dead body and follow the rituals of their religions respectively.

**Economic Condition**

The Siddi live in the midst of their Hindu neighbours like Kunbi, Havig Brahman, Maratha, Harijan and other Backward Castes. Their economy is based on agriculture and agricultural pursuits as well as exploitation of forest resources bring them close to their Hindu neighbours.

Majority of the Siddi live in forest area and attend to agriculture, in encroached land in the forest. A few have non-agricultural pursuits as sources of their income. For them work is highly honoured and respectable. In addition to above said occupations they also work as mechanics, cleaners, drivers and watchman in nearby towns.

Siddi have encroached the government forest land and it is being cultivated for taking one crop in a year. Majority of the Siddi are poor. Sometimes it becomes very difficult for them to get even a day's bread. Most of them are illiterate and face the difficulties in getting daily labour. However, in Yallapur taluk Siddi's condition is slightly better as throughout the year they work in the fields of Havig Brahmins. In addition to this they also collect forest products.
No. 17. BASKETRY BY SIDDI WOMEN
**Political Organization**

The political system of Siddi serves as an important and smooth running politico-judicial function. The basic unit operates within the settlements itself. Each settlement is independent and the local unit is known as ‘Siddi Subha’ which consists of heads of all the households in a settlement. Out of them five are selected to the ‘Pancha’ (Group of five). Of these five, one is selected to be the ‘Budhivant’ who heads the ‘Subha’ and the ‘Pancha’ by tradition. The post of the Budhivant has evolved itself as hereditary one.

Budhivant is considered to be the guardian of the settlement as a whole and also protector of the community traditions. After judicious and separate consultations with the elders of the Subha, the Budhivant pronounces his judgement and that is compulsorily binding on the parties concerned.

In present scenario the elected post of Budhivant exists only among Christian Siddi groups, and his election depends upon his leadership qualities. The post is no longer a hereditary one now. The other contemporary Siddi are interested in the present day politics. The national trend has entered this remote enclave. Today, three Siddi men and two women have been elected in Gram Panchayats elections. All Karnataka Siddi Development Association (AKSDA) was formed in 1984 to bring all the Siddi of Karnataka of different religions on a common platform to fuse them all towards their integral and coherent development. Now, the same association has been renamed as ‘Siddi
Development Project', which also works for the welfare of the Siddi residing in Goa.

Cyperian Lobo (1984) conducted survey among Siddi and submitted a report to the Government of Karnataka and India, wherein he has stated that the general backwardness of Siddi and their low standard of living in terms of health education, shelter and their distinct ethnic identity of African Negros and also because they do not form any part of a larger society in social and political organization.

After a long struggle by Siddi, Government of India has recognized Siddi of Uttara Kannada district as scheduled tribe. Only after that their living conditions have been gradually improved. Now, slowly they are entering the political field. Now, we find fifteen elected members of Siddi community in Gram Panchayat and one in Taluk Panchayat.