CHAPTER – II

PEOPLE AND THEIR HABITAT

2.1 LOCATION

Uttara Kannada district is situated in the North Western Sector of Karnataka having an area about 10,291 Square Kilometers. Topographically this district can be divided into three zones namely Coastal Sector, Central belt and transitional belt. The Central belt is the most beautiful belt having hills and Valleys of ‘Sahyadri range’.

The district has been administratively divided into eleven taluks. More than 80 percent of the total geographical area of this district is covered by thick forest and beautiful hillocks. There are four important rivers which flow across the district; namely Kali in the north, Bedti or Gangwali, Tadri or Aghanashini and Sharavathi in the South. Banks of these rivers are lined with coconut and areca nut trees.

2.2 FLORA

The district is known for its dense forest, heavy rainfall and suitable soil type which provide favourable conditions for vegetation growth. Along the coastal belt trees like Penny nerved laurel (Aleodaphne Senecarpifolia), Jungle marking nut (Hiligarna arnotiana), Wild peepal (Ficus arnottiana) are common, which are used for fuel and construction activities. The forest is rich with many wild plants. Teak
(Haldina cardifalia), Mango (Mangifera Indica), Fig (Ficus exasperata), Rosewood (Dulbergia latifolia), Neem (Azadirachta indica), Gulmohara (Delonix regia), Indian almond (Terminalia), Jack fruit (Artocarpus integrifolius), Tamrind (Tamarindus Indica) are the plants chiefly found around the domestic settlements. Tall grass, creepers, runners and lush green vegetation cover the total district. The river banks have plants like Indian Willo (Sahix tetrasperma), Indian Oak (Barringtonia acutangula) and Water Peacock's foot (Vitae levco xy lon).

2.3 FAUNA

The dense forest gives shelter to so many animals and insects. Aquatic animals like Jellyfish (Aurelia), Sea anemones (Anemonia), Edible Oysters (Ostrea), Cuttle fish (Sepa), Star fish (Astropectan) and many other varieties of fish are common in the marine and fresh water ponds. In the moist clay worms like Planeria (Daphnia Sp), Round Worms (asceraus) and leeches (Daphnia Sp) are common. Varieties of snake, including highly poisonous King Cobra (Naja nya), Viper (Echis Carinata) and Russell Viper (Viperia russelli) are found in this area. Many varieties of Birds, Butterflies, varieties of insects, Honeybees and Rats are common. In the deep forest, wild animals like Elephants (Elephas maximus), Tigers (Felio tigris), Panthers (Panthere pardus), Wild Boars (Sus ferus), Wild Dogs (Kunn rulihous), Foxes (Vulus legalensis), Bears (Vrsus labiatus) and Spotted Deers (Axis axis) are
common. In the domestic area animals like Cats (*Felis Olomesticus*), Dogs (*Canis familiaris*), Buffalos (*Bos bubalus*), Oxen, Goats (*Capra hircus*) and Sheeps (*Ovis aries*) are seen.

2.4 CLIMATE

The district consists of Coastal strip, Western ghat and Plateau regions. The climate is highly humid in the Coastal and Western ghat region, while the climate is bit dry in the Plateau region. The rainfall is plentiful in entire district.

2.5 SEASONS

This District experiences three seasons namely summer, monsoon and winter. Summer starts from March and ends in May, followed by monsoon, which continues with heavy rainfall till September. The winter starts from October onwards and over laps with summer.

2.6 RAINFALL

The average rainfall of this district is estimated to be 2741.7 mm. Heavy rainfall occurs between June and August. July experiences down pour.

2.7 PEOPLE

The Kunbi are agricultural peasant groups who originally tilled land of their masters (Russell and Hiralal, 1975). They are also found predominantly in the South Western Maharastra namely Kolhapur, Ratnagiri, Sindhdurg and Satara districts.
'Are' or 'Kunbi' are the descendants of the Marathas who migrated to Uttara Kannada District of Karnataka. They are found in the forest tracts of the Sagar and Hosa Nagar Taluks in the Shimoga District (Nanjundayya, et al. 1928).

The Kunbi are scattered over three States in India namely Maharastra, Goa and Karnataka. There are many prefix to the word Kunbi like Kale Kunbi, Are Kunbi, Maratha Kunbi, Jhari Kunbi, Kohera Kunbi, Desi Kunbi, Dhalwar Kunbi, Reve Kunbi and Tirole Kunbi. They are all basically farmers but they were nomadic earlier. Enthoven (1922) has made the reference of Kunbi in Gujarat. According to him they are Maratha Kunbi.

Russell (1975) opines that the Kunbi entered Kandesh from Gujarat somewhere in eleventh century. They were forced to leave Gujarat by the strong Rajput tribes. Further, they were driven to south by Muslim invaders of Northern India. They might have reached Berar, Nagpur and Wardha Districts.

2.8 KUNBI OF KARNATAKA

Kunbi and Atte Kunbi are two interesting small groups in Karnataka since they have migrated from the Gujarat to Goa and entered Karnataka State through the coastal region and are settled down in the five taluks of Uttara Kannada district namely Yellapur, Joida, Karwar, Ankola and Haliyal. They are thickly populated in and around Joida and
Yellapur taluks. Chandrasekhariah (1977) mentions that the Kunbi living in Karnataka worship the deity Canacona of Goa. Kuldevata of the Kunbi leads to the inference that their forefathers might have originally belonged to the territory of Goa. Kamat (1985) opines that the Kunbi of Karnataka have been migrated from Goa. A few families are also seen in the neighbouring Belgaum district and in the forest tracks of Sagar and Hosanagar taluks in Shimoga district.

Atte Kunbi and Kunbi are two endogamous groups. Both these groups have migrated from Goa at different times and occupy different places in Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka. There are very few cultural differences between these two groups. Both the groups are basically farmers. The Kunbi have settled in Joida, Karwar, Ankola, Haliyal and in some parts of Yellapur whereas; The Atte Kunbis are seen only in Yellapur region. According to the people ‘Atte’ means eight in Maharati. Eight families have separately migrated from the Goa State and settled in Yellapur region. This was rather forced migration that is; these families were pushed with force (Attisigondu - in Kannada). These Kunbi arrived in groups and settled in Uttara Kannada district.

The Kunbi are mild, sober and economically poor people. In Karnataka they are considered as very backward community and placed in Category-I (Government Order No.SKE 225 BCA 2000, dated 30-3-2002).
In the 2001 census the Kunbi are mixed with the other backward communities. Hence, the exact picture of the Kunbi is not clear.

2.9 DERIVATION OF THE NAME

There are many versions regarding the derivation of the name Kunbi. The term ‘Kunbi’ has various forms namely ‘Kulambi’ in Bombay, ‘Kulwadi’ in the South Konkan, ‘Kanbi’ in Gujarat and ‘Kulbi’ in Belgaum (Russell 1975).

According to Pandit Bhagawanlal the word ‘Kunbi’ is derived from the Sanskrit word ‘Kutumbin’ that is one possessing a family or a home (Enthoven 1922). Singh (1994) opines that the term Kunbi has been derived from the words ‘Kun’ meaning ‘who’ ‘bi’ meaning ‘seed’. Hence, Kunbi are those people who germinate seeds that mean, they are farmers.

2.10 ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

Kunbi and Atte Kunbi are farmers. Most of them own land, and they till land to grow rice. Rice is the staple food of these people. Rice if grown excess for the year will be sold in the market. Paddy is preserved in big Bamboo baskets, which are plastered with cow dung and sealed with lid. Paddy stored in gunny bag is kept for daily use. They also eat the flesh of wild animals but they do not kill the domestic animals for flesh. Those who do not have land work as daily wage labourers in Brahmins house. A few educated men are in the Government and Non-
Government services. A few men are working in the Kiaga as contract labours. Educated women are working as teachers, clerks and peons in the schools. The Kunbi of Joida are expert in knitting bamboo mats and cane baskets. A family of Atte Kunbi manufacture cane chairs and sell them in the near by towns. Ramachandra (Atte Kunbi) runs a grocery shop in Bankolli. A family in Taremani is expert in making caps and flower vase out of a creeper. Now days a tendency has been developed among the educated youths to fit in the jobs like teachers, clerks and soldiers in the military.

2.11 HOUSING

The Kunbi live in the thatched huts. The houses have a hall of a size 10x10 feet usually attached to kitchen walls. The walls are constructed with raw dried clay bricks and mud is used as binder. The walls are plastered with mud either side. Further, palm leaves or grass used for roofing. Floor of the rooms are smeared with cow dung. The houses have wooden doors and windows. Usually, bathrooms are constructed little away from the house.

2.12 PHYSICAL FEATURES

Men and women exhibit light brown skin colour. Dark skin colour is less frequent in the Kunbi. Men and women have moderate stature and possess lean body build. Men at work wear ‘lungi’ (about two meter cotton cloth wrapped around the waist) to cover lower parts of the body.
and they wear banyan on the top. Cotton towel is commonly seen on the shoulder. A small bag containing betel nut, betel leaves and tobacco is often seen hanging across the chest. The Kunbi call this bag as ‘dheullo’ and the Atte Kunbi call it as ‘Kalu Sanchi’. Men when they go out of the village for some work, wear full trouser and a shirt on it. Most of them wear leather sandals and a few wear shoes also. Women wear a ‘seere’ (five to six meter cloth which is wrapped around waist) that covers lower parts of the body, on top they wear stitched blouse. Elderly women among the Atte Kunbi cover their chest with a peace of cloth and they wear seere, which reaches up to knees, but they do not wear blouse. Necks are covered with ‘karimani sara’ (many circles of black beads). Women and girls wear glass or plastic bangles. Ear piercing is common for both men and women. Girls wear golden ring or artificial gold rings. Nose piercing is common among women. Women generally wear ‘Nattu’ (a golden ornament) on nose. The Kunbi women have long dark hair and they apply coconut oil before combing. They tie them in knots and decorate with flowers. Women commonly tie a necklace of black beads and gold pendent at the center.

2.13 LANGUAGES

The Kunbi speak Marathi, which is a mixture of Konkani. They speak Kannada also.
2.14 LIFECYCLE

The Kunbi are divided into many ‘kuls’ that is each kula of people worship different God and Goddesses. Persons with the same kuls do not intermarry. People prefer arranged marriages; marriages between the Kunbi and other local non-Kunbi are prohibited. Uncle-niece and cross-cousin marriages are common in both the groups of Kunbi. Clothes and ornaments are exchanged during marriages between parents of the bride and bridegrooms. During marriage the bridegroom ties golden ‘thali’ around the neck of the bride. There are two small golden cups in the ‘thali’; the parents of the couple bring each one. ‘Thali’ around the neck indicates that a woman is married. Both the parties share marriage expenditures. ‘Shobana’ (first night) is usually arranged in the bridegroom’s residence after the fifth day of the bride’s menstrual cycle. Widow marriages are entertained. Men may have many wives but a woman should not have more than one husband.

During the sixth month of her pregnancy ‘Kubsa’ ceremony is performed in the husband’s house. A special dinner is arranged for the invitees. Pregnant lady is given oil bath and decorated with green seere, blouse and green bangles (Green colour is the sign of fertility). ‘Kubsa’ ceremony is celebrated to disclose that she is pregnant. Then she is sent to her parent’s house for the first delivery. The delivery takes place at home with the assistance of local nurse. In emergency, she is taken to
nearby hospitals. If she delivers a boy, entire family rejoices and beat plates. They distribute sweets too. No such celebration is seen when she delivers a female child. After delivery mother is considered as polluted and kept in isolation. She is given ‘meer pudi’ that is a mixture of pepper powder and ghee. This mixture acts as a painkiller. On the 12th day after the delivery the naming ceremony will be arranged. The Brahmin priest performs ‘Homa’ (spiritual fire pot). Naming of the child is by the priest himself. Mono, Puna Koiru, munno, Piso, Chimbdo, Bingi, Chimmo, Tambdo, Phonda and Bhiko are a few names common for male child. Devi, Shevtu, Janki, Yesu, Pondia, Giddi, Hakai, Rami and Santai are a few names common for female child. When the baby is three months’ old, ear piercing ceremony is performed by maternal uncle. The parents of the child present a shirt piece to him. Guests are treated with special dinner.

Among the Atte Kunbi, before the girl experiences her first menstrual cycle ‘Seere Udaso Karyakrama’ that is the first seere, which is green in colour and green bangles are presented to the girl by her parents. The girl is taught to wear seere. After each menstrual cycle a woman is considered as polluted for five days. They celebrate all the Hindu festivals.
When the person is dead he is given bath and his body will be covered with white cloth. Four people carry the dead body to burial ground. All the relatives and friends follow the procession. Dead are buried by the Kunbi whereas; the Atte Kunbi cremate.
SETTLEMENT OF THE KUNBI

FAMILY OF THE KUNBI
SETTLEMENT OF THE ATTE KUNBI

RESEARCHER WITH THE PEOPLE