CHAPTER II

PLACE AND PEOPLE

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 belt, 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 per cent 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 (*Haligarna arnotiana*) and Wild peepal (*Ficus arnottiana*) are common, which are used for fuel and construction activities. The forest is rich with many wild plants. Teak (*Haldina cardifolia*), 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 riverbanks have plants like Indian Willo (*Sahix tetrasperma*), Indian Oak (*Barringtonia acutangula*) and Water Peacock’s foot (*Vitae levcoxylon*).

### 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*), Starfish (*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 snakes, 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 Deer (*Axis axis*) are common. In the domestic area animals like Cats (*Felis Olomesticus*), Dogs (*Canis familiaris*), Buffalos (*Bos bubalus*), Oxen, Goats (*Capra hircus*) and Sheep (*Ovis aries*) are seen.

### 2.4 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.
2.5 RAINFALL

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

2.6 PEOPLE

'Halakki Vokkalu' is agricultural peasant group in Karnataka. They seem to be among the earliest settlers on the coastal line. According to Thurston (1909) 'Halakki Vokkalu' originally belonged to Mysore, Madras and Coimbatore. There is no adequate information regarding the origin of these people but they bear a strong resemblance and appear to be a branch of 'Halvikkals' of Mysore (Kamat 1985). According to Enthoven (1922) people of Mysore are no way related to 'Halakki Vokkalu' of Uttara Kannada district.

2.7 HALAKKI VOKKALU OF KARNATAKA

'Halakki Vokkalu' is a small group in Karnataka and are settled down in four taluks of Uttara Kannada district namely Karwar, Ankola, Kumta and Honnavar. They are thickly populated in and around Ankola and Kumta taluks.
Halakki Vokkalu are mild, sober and economically poor people. In Karnataka they are considered as very backward community and placed in the category I group (Government Order No. SKE 225 BCA 2000, dated 30-03-2002). In the 2001 census Halakki Vokkalu are mixed with the other backward communities. Hence, the picture of Halakki Vokkalu is not clear.

2.8 DERIVATION OF THE NAME

There are many versions regarding derivation of the name ‘Halakki Vokkalu’. In Kannada, the term ‘Halakki’ denotes milk and rice ($\text{Halu} = \text{Milk}$ and $\text{Akki} = \text{Rice}$). Halakki Vokkalu are white rice growers (Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency 1883).

According to Bhat (1982), the name ‘Halakki’ probably because, these people are asked to sprinkle milk and rice at the marriage procession of Havig Brahmin to prevent evil eye on the newly wed couple.

According to the people, acquisition of the name may be due to their occupations like agriculture and dairy work.
2.9 ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

Around thirty per cent of the Halakki Vokkalu own land and they till land to grow rice, *ragi* (millet) and vegetables. Part of their land is usually used to grow crops like groundnut, watermelon and other vegetables. Their regular food includes cooked rice, millet broth, fish curry and some vegetables. When rice is grown sufficiently excess for the year, will be sold in the nearby market. Food grains are stored in gunny bags. Those who do not own land, work as a daily wage labours in Havig Brahmin’s house. A few men are working as mason in building constructions. Sometimes, they take part in the road constructions also.

A few educated men are in the Government and Non-Government services. Shri Dattu Iru Gouda of Talgodu village of Honnavar is working as clerk in the Konkan railways. Shri Janga Hosabu Gouda of Valagalli village is working as a teacher in Higher Secondary School.

Halakki Vokkalu are expert in knitting bamboo mats and cane baskets.

Women are engaged in child raring and other domestic works. Sometimes, they carry home a head load of dried
wooden sticks from the forest. Some women are working in Cashew nut factories. Women also assist men in their field activities.

Shri. Bomma Shivu Gouda of Belambar village practices indigenous medicine. He extracts medicine from the forest plants and uses it as antipyretic and analgesic. Ailments like paralysis, joint pains and Jaundice are usually treated by Bomma Shivu Gouda in his well known hospital “Late Vaidya Shivu Bomma Gouda Memorial Hospital” at Belambar village which is three kilometers away from Ankola town. People from various places visit this hospital for getting treatment for paralysis. Mr. Gandhi M. K. (Bapuji) borrowed medicine from this hospital for his joints pain.

2.10 HOUSING

‘Halakki Vokkalu’ live in the constructed houses. The house consists of a courtyard with the main entrance, which leads to a hall cum bedroom. This hall is attached to another room where the food is cooked (Kitchen). Bathrooms are constructed little away from the houses with bamboo sticks and bamboo mats. Courtyard is an open
HOUSE TYPES
GROCERY MEASURING CYLINDERS
(KOLAGA & SHIDDI)
place around which many families live in partitioned houses. At the centre of the courtyard a small platform of size (6×6 feet) is constructed with mud bricks. At the centre of the platform ‘tulsi katte’ is constructed. Idol of Shri Venkataramana is kept near the base of ‘tulsi katte’ and worshipped along with tulsi (basil) plant. Most of the time ‘tulsi katte’ have tiled roofs.

Walls of the houses 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 or factory tiles or zinc sheets are used for roofing. The floors are smeared with cow dung. The houses have wooden doors and windows. The electricity has reached these houses. Electric bulbs and tube lights are used for lighting the rooms. A few houses have Reinforced Cement Concrete roofs.

2.11 LINGUISTIC AFFINITY

Halakki Vokkalu speak their own corrupt form of Kannada language, in their own accent and is known as ‘Vokkalu Bhashe’. They use ‘n’ for ‘l’ and ‘ya’ for ‘g’. For instance, ‘mele’ becomes ‘mene’ (above) and ‘hogutte’
becomes ‘hoyte’ (going). Here are few examples to point out the differences between the Kannada language and ‘Vokkalu Bhashe’. The term ‘Koosu’ becomes ‘kooshu’ (child), ‘Kuduke’ is used for ‘Kudiyudakke’ for drinking. Similarly ‘Ava hogya’ is used for ‘avanu hogiddane’ means ‘he has gone’, ‘na nodi’ is used for ‘nanu nodiddene’ means ‘I have seen’, ‘ambru’ is used for ‘andru’ means ‘it is said’. They suffix ‘ra’ at the end of the each sentence as mark of respect to the elders and outsiders.

2.12 PHYSICAL FEATURES AND DRESS PATTERN

Men and women of Halakki Vokkalu exhibit brown to dark skin colour. They have medium stature. They show Australoid features like small heads, slanting foreheads, round cheeks, projecting jaws, flat noses and well-cut lips. Men are muscular with broad shoulders. Women are comparatively shorter than men and possess lean body.

Men at work wear ‘Kachche’ (loin cloth) and they tie towel on the forehead. During rainy season they cover their body with black ‘kambli’ (Woolen Blanket). Most of the men wear trousers and shirts. Both men and women wear Hawaii sandals. Elderly women wear ‘seere’ (5 to 6 meters
cloth) which covers their lower parts and reaches up to knees. Necks and breasts are covered with many circles of black, blue and red beads (Manisara). Girls wear ‘langa’ (petticoat) which covers lower parts of the body and they wear stitched blouse to cover upper parts. Women and girls wear glass or plastic bangles. Ear piercing is common for both men and women. Nose piercing is common among women. They generally wear ‘muguti’ (Nose ring). Women have long dark hair. They apply coconut oil before combing and tie them in knots. They decorate the hair with metal clips. They wear wristlets usually made up of silver. They also wear ‘wale’ (ear studs) of gold or silver. Women apply small circle of kum kum (red decorative powder) at the centre of the forehead.

2.13 LIFE CYCLE RITUALS

Halakki Vokkalu are divided into eight major ‘ballis’ namely Manjalballi, Kadanballi, Nagarballi, Kyadageballi, Manalballi, Davanballi, Baleballi, Guruvinballi, Kodkalballi and Muskinballi. Each ‘balli’ (clan) is represented by ‘totem’, which is protected, respected and worshipped by the
members of the balli. Along with the 'totem' in some ballis, people worship deities like Manjaldevaru, Kadbalu.

They also worship a coconut, which is kept near the 'tulsi katte'. Their patron deity is Venkataramana of Tirupati. 'Das' is a religious status given to the person who pilgrimages to Tirupati. Das plays the major role during all the ceremonies. They also worship the village gods and goddesses.

Clan exogamy is practiced; marriages between Halakki Vokkalu and other locals are not entertained. Uncle-niece and cross-cousin marriage are common. The practice of 'tera' (bride price) is depleting. A few cases of dowry are reported. Marriages are usually celebrated in the bride's residence. On the marriage day both spouses are given bath after applying turmeric paste on their body. The water is poured from two new earthen pots known as 'kumbhas'. Five married women of the family pour a 'gadige' (small earthen pot) of water on the couple independently. After taking bath the bride and bridegroom put on new dresses. One day before marriage, clothes and ornaments are exchanged between parents of the bride and bridegroom.
During marriage, bridegroom ties golden ‘thali’ around the neck of the bride, then they exchange garlands. 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. A Hivig Brahmin acts as priest at the time of marriage. Women of the community sing folk songs. The marriage ceremony ends with dinner to all the invitees. Dinner consists of rice, dhal and ‘payasa’ (Boiled rice + jaggery + Grinded coconut). ‘Shobana’ (first night) is usually arranged in the bridegroom’s residence after the fifth day of the bride’s menstrual cycle. Widow marriages are not entertained. If a widow gets married, she is called as ‘bandi’ and she is not much respected. Men may have many wives but women should not have more than one husband.

Between fifth and seventh month of her pregnancy ‘seere shastra’ is performed in the husband’s house. A special dinner is arranged for the invitees. Pregnant lady is given oil bath and decorate with green ‘seere’ and green bangles (green colour is the sign of fertility). The ‘seere shastra’ 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. After delivery mother is considered as polluted for three months.

On the fifth day of delivery the 'Tottitu Karryakrama' (Naming Ceremony) is arranged in bride's residence. Naming of the child is by the paternal aunty. Names like Bira, Naga, Goli, Timma, Kuppa, Govinda, Tulsu, Vasu, Hanmanta, Bomma, Pursu, Huli, Bella, Dema, Deva, Janga, Badia and Jetti are few names common for male child. Tulsi, Karijadevi, Somi, Shivi, Gangi, Nagi, Timmi and Putti are few names common for female child.

When baby is one-year-old 'Javala' (Hair cut ceremony) and 'Kivi chuchuva Karryakrama' (Ear piercing ceremony) are performed simultaneously. Maternal uncle plays an important role during these functions. The parents of the child present a shirt piece to him. Guests are treated with special dinner.

Among Halakki Vokkalu, on the day when girl experiences her first menstrual cycle 'seere udaso
*karryakrama* that is the first ‘seere’, which is green in colour and green bangles, are presented to the girl by her maternal aunty. The girl is taught to wear ‘seere’. The maternal aunty and other invited women make ‘arati’ to the matured girl. After each menstrual cycle a women is considered as polluted for five days in a month. Halakki Vokkalu celebrate all Hindu festivals.

When the person is dead, he is given bath and his body will be covered with white cloth. Flowers are showered on the dead body. Four people carry the dead body to the burial ground. All the relatives and friends follow the procession by chanting ‘govinda.... ‘govinda’. Dead are buried by the Halakki Vokkalu. They place considerably a big stone on top of the burial to commemorate the dead. On the third day closest relatives offer ‘payasa’ to the stone. Unmarried or pregnant women, when they die they are cremated. On the fifth day of cremation, the ash is collected by closest relatives in the earthen pot and disposed it off in the river.
RESEARCHER WITH THE PEOPLE