

Children of the Forest

An illustrated documentation on the Halakki tribe

Project by:

Shraddha Vaikunth Prabhu

206450002

Project guide:

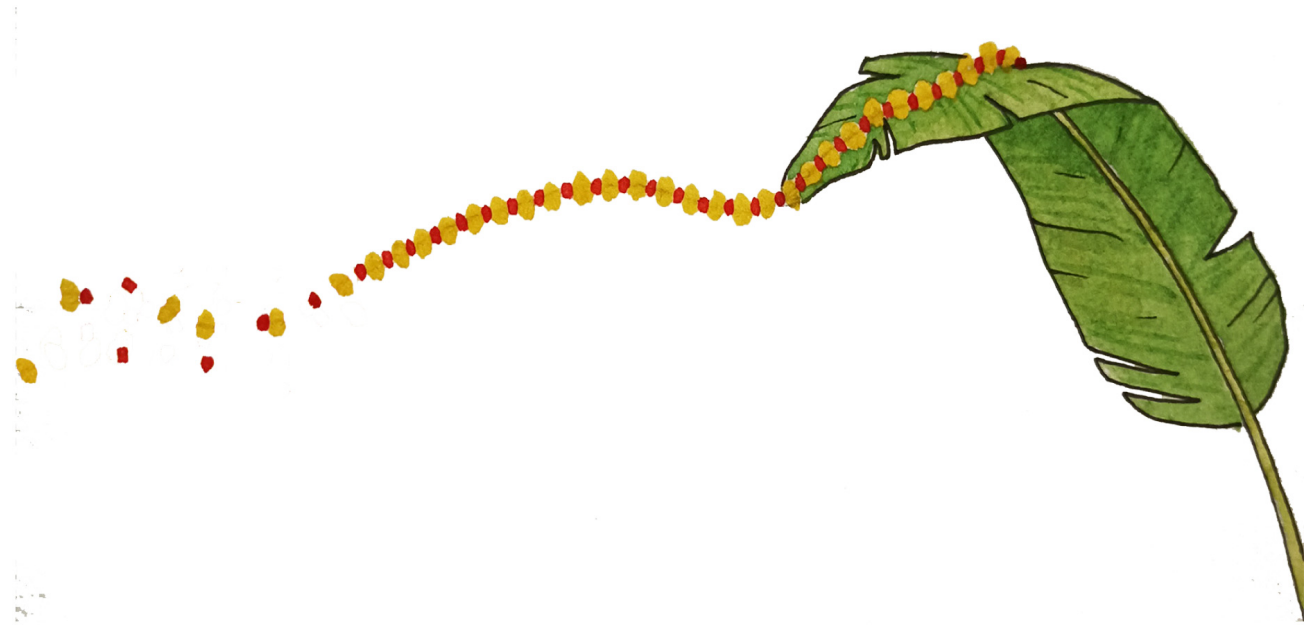
Prof. Arun Mascarenhas

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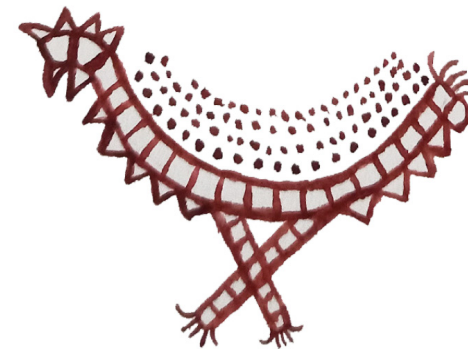
01 INTRODUCTION



OVERVIEW

Uttara Kannada is a coastal district of Karnataka with the Arabian Sea on one side and western ghats on the other. Most of the district is covered with lush green forests and rivers. This scenic location has been home to several tribes throughout history. One among them is the singing tribe of Halakki Vokkaligas.

The Halakki Vokkaligas are known as the earliest settlers of the district. They proudly call themselves 'Children of the forest'. Their way of life, food habits, clothing, occupation, culture and tradition show a very strong inclination towards nature. They follow simple living and grow their own food.



OBJECTIVES

- The rest of the society is still unfamiliar with the treasure trove that this tribe possesses. The project aims to help them in visualizing the culture and traditions of Halakkis.
- Bringing light on their story and culture would provide a different outlook and reinforce our understanding of them.
- The younger generation is ashamed of being identified as part of the tribe. They need to have a greater sense of appreciation towards their heritage from a young age.

An illustrated documentation in the form of a narrative mainly targeted at middle school children would enrich their understanding of the Halakki tribe and its culture by bringing light on their rich heritage so that the younger generation does not shy away from identifying themselves with their roots.

Target audience:

Middle school children and above

Secondary audience:

Anyone interested in indigenous communities and their culture, heritage enthusiasts, etc.

02 ABOUT HALAKKI VOKKALIGAS



THE NAME HALAKKI

The word 'Halakki' has been derived from Kannada words 'halu' which is milk and 'akki' meaning rice, probably because they grow rice as white as the milk.

According to one of their legends, when Shiva was plowing the field, Parvathi was carrying food for him. She tripped and all the rice and milk fell on the ground. Parvathi made one male and one female doll out of that mud and returned home to get food for Shiva again. When hungry Shiva went in search of Parvathi, he saw the dolls. He touched them, and they came to life! The dolls asked you have given us life, now what should we do for a living? Shiva said you were born when I was plowing the field so you can continue my work. Therefore, agriculture became their main occupation. And, since they were born out of a mixture of rice and milk, they got the name Halakki.



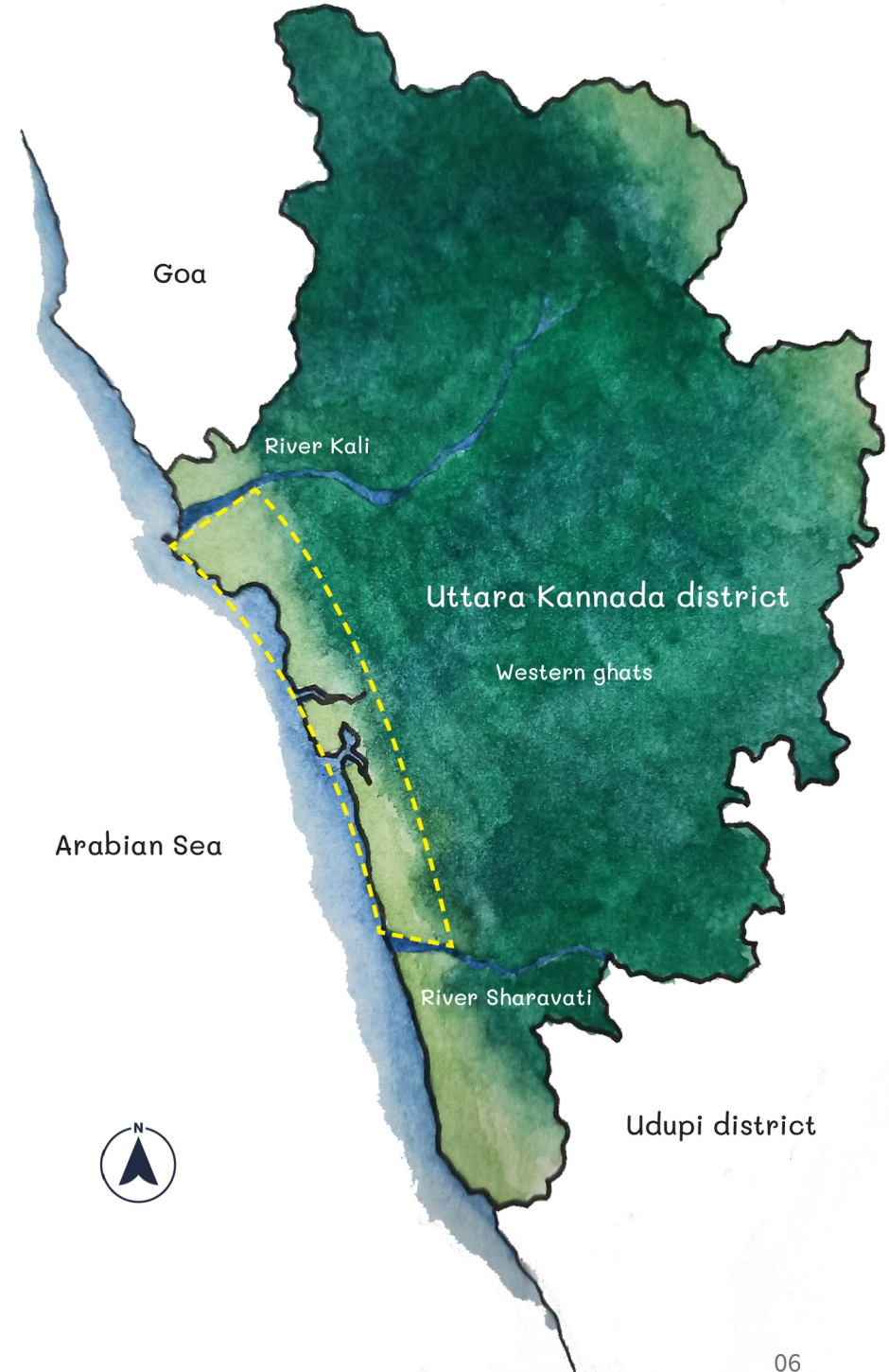
ORIGIN

There is no adequate evidence about the origin of Halakkis. Some assume that they are from Andhra because they worship Tirupathi Timmappa, they often mention an eastern sea in their songs, and some of their pronunciations are similar to Telugu. They lack the knowledge of where they came from.

Folk scholar Dr. N.R. Nayak says that this group entered Uttara Kannada from Goa's direction, stayed in Baithkola of Karavara in the beginning. Haalakki people recognize a hill of this region as their tribe's village.

NATIVE

They are spread over in Karwar, Ankola, Kumta and Honnavar which are the coastal taluks of Uttara Kannada district sandwiched between the Arabian Sea and western ghats. They reside in the land between River Kali in Karwar and River Sharavati in Honnavar. The whole population of the Halakki tribe has been divided into 7 regions which are Chandaavara, Gokarna, Kadavaada, Ankola, Nushi Kote, Kumbaara Gadde and Haritte Seemey.



LANGUAGE

The Halakkis speak a dialect of Kannada known as the 'Vokkalu bhaashe'. Few of their pronunciations are found to be similar to Telugu.

The Phonemic inventory of Ha:lakki Kannaḍa consists of fifteen vowels, nineteen consonants, nasalization and word juncture. They can be tabulated in the following fashion:

Vowels:

i	i:			u	u:
e	e:	ə		o	o:
ɛ	ɛ:	a	a:	ɔ	ɔ:

Consonants:

p	t	ʈ	c	k
b	d	ɖ	j	g
m	n		ɲ	ɳ
	r			
	l			
v			y	
				h

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The tribe is matriarchal by origin. A groom has to pay "Tara" (bride price) to his father-in-law before the wedding. Patriarchy now dominates along with domestic violence against women. Even now, mostly women take care of the house, work and agriculture.

A group of Haalakki houses is called a 'Koppa'. A cluster of Koppas form a 'Seemey'. Each Koppa has a leader called 'Gowda' and a few assistants. 'Arasu' is the leader of a Seemey. It is a hereditary system of power. The judgment given by the Gowda is superseded by the Arasu.

DEITY

Even today, the Halakkis continue to be worshippers of nature. Plants and trees, animals, hills etc. have been the symbol of their tribe. Water, air, rain, sun, moon and stars are the main characters of their stories. They honor plants like tulasi and tumbe, and animals like tigers and cattle. They worship Byate Beera 'God of the hunters' which suggests their connection to the forests. Other common deities are Maasthi, Chowdi and Shakti.



OCCUPATION

The Halakkis were originally hunters. After hunting was declared illegal, they started cultivation. Now they hunt symbolically once a year.

Earlier, when they lived in the forests, on the slopes of the hills of western ghats, they depended on the Kumbri system of agriculture to cultivate Ragi. When the British government banned Kumbri agriculture, they gradually migrated to coastal flatlands and started cultivating rice for their landlords. Some of them now own pieces of land after 'tiller is the owner' legislation was passed.

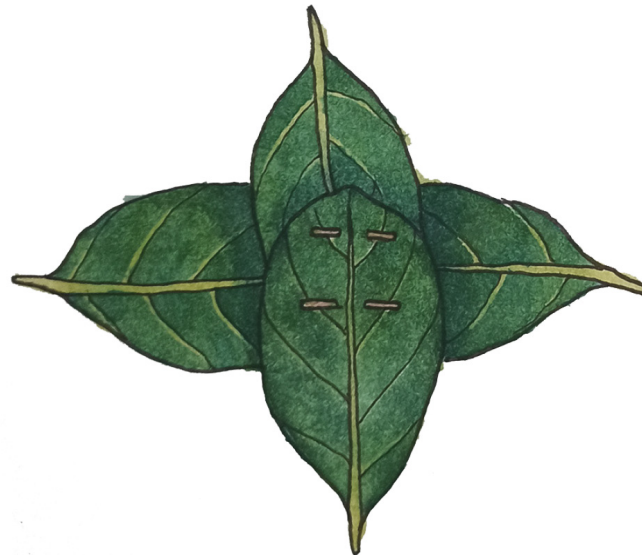
Agriculture is the predominant occupation of the Halakkis. They grow paddy, groundnut and ragi (millet). They also grow watermelon and vegetables. Secondary sources of income include selling garlands, labor works at houses, construction sites, etc. Some of them are indigenous doctors who prepare medicine out of plants and herbs. They have learned to treat liver and lung inflammations, paralysis, etc. from their forefathers. This occupation is hereditary.

Nowadays, youngsters are working in varied fields like teaching, auto driving, in clothing stores, as bus conductors, etc.

KNOWLEDGE OF MEDICINAL PLANTS

The Halakkis have explored the forests for decades enough to possess a vast knowledge of medicinal plants. They have stories and songs for every plant. This knowledge is passed down orally across generations. There is no physical documentation available.

Tulasi Gowda was awarded Padma Shri in 2020 for her encyclopedic knowledge of plants and large-scale tree plantations.



FOOD HABITS

They start their day by drinking the nutritious 'ragi ambli' which helps them with their hard work. Rice and fish curry or dried fish are part of their regular meal. Sometimes, fish is replaced by vegetables. Chicken and mutton are eaten rarely. Kotte idli and payasa are meant for special occasions. Both men and women chew 'kavala' which is an areca nut with betel leaves.

They cook in earthen pots called 'madike'. 'Beesu kallu' is a stone equipment used for grinding grains.

ATTIRE

WOMEN

Halakki women uniquely wear their saree without a blouse. The loads of black, white and yellow beaded necklaces, a bold red bindi, green glass bangles, earrings and a nose ring complete their attire. Some women also wear anklets and armpieces made out of German silver. Their center-parted, oiled, shiny black hair is tightly rolled into a bun, decorated with gajra made out of locally available 'abbalige' and 'mutthu mallige' flowers.

MEN

Traditionally, the men wear only a loin-cloth (langoti) and a short rumal (turban) on their heads. The youngsters wear shirts and pants. Kambli (blanket) is used as rain guards during monsoons.

The younger generation has drifted away from traditional attire to blend in with society.



ART

'Hali' is a form of art drawn by the Halakkis for decorating their front yard, walls, etc. Traditionally, they are white-colored drawings against a black or red background. The drawings are made with locally available natural white clay called 'shedi' mixed with water. Nowadays, they add jasmine leaves, turmeric and crushed clay tiles to the mixture to get a darker red color. Different Hali are drawn for different occasions such as weddings, ear piercing etc. The painting consists of humans and animals as diagrammatic representations of the event and is believed to ward off evil.



ARCHITECTURE

Traditionally they live in earthen huts with thatched roofs called 'hullu mane' amidst areca nut and coconut plantations with walls elaborately decorated with 'Hali'. Every house has a 'jagali' where most of their activities including making garlands and having kavala occur. There is a sacred 'tulasi' in the front yard daubed clean with cow dung. A cowshed and a chicken coop made out of packed earth and areca nut poles can be spotted near the houses. These huts are now being replaced with clay-tiled houses with laterite stones.

FOLK SONGS

Halakkis have a very rich vocal tradition of passing down their stories and experiences across generations through songs. They sing as loud as they can about everything from festivals and rituals to events in day-to-day life. Their songs keep them company while they plow their fields and collect firewood from the forests.

Composed across generations, the Halakki songs resonate with the rhythm of working in the paddy fields. Most of the songs were rendered by members of the community while tilling the fields.

One such song is of Anjugana Hakki, which explains the formation of life - when nothing was there in the universe, there appeared a bird called anjuga. Anjuga laid some eggs and one of them broke. Its contents formed the universe. The water in the egg became the sea, the egg white formed the sky and the remaining solid part formed the earth.

For about 400 years, the Halakkis have kept their songs to themselves. Their struggle with modernization over the years has led to a drastic change in their lifestyle, resulting in fading away of their heritage. The younger generation is shying away from their poetic culture. Today, there are only a handful of older women remaining who still continue to sing. Their songs are not well documented and are on the verge of fading away.

Sukri Bommu Gowda was awarded Padma Shri in 2017 for her folk singing and social activism to save their fading tunes.

FOLK DANCE

Suggi kunita is a harvest dance performed by the Halakki men during the Holi festival. They practice for two weeks and lavishly spend their hard-earned money on elaborate costumes and musical instruments. On an auspicious day of the harvest season, the dancers gather to offer prayers to their deities and seek the blessings of the elders. The village head is privileged to witness the dance performance first. The men then visit other villages and dance in their houses to bring rain and fulfill the wishes of the people. They spend the nights at temples. After three to four days' tour, they return to their village on the full moon day.

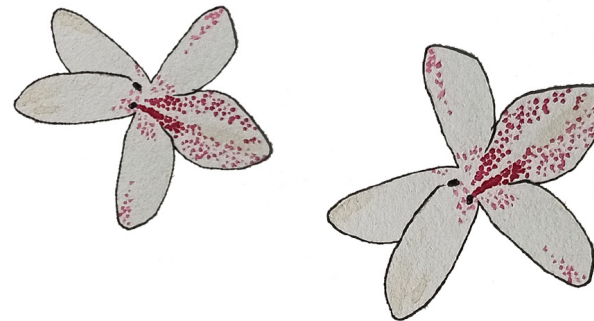
Suggi Kunita is performed by a team of 12 to 14 dancers in distinctive attire and headdress. Their colorful headgear (turayi) is made of softwood, decorated with carved birds and flowers. The group dances with a stick (kolu) in one hand and a brush made of peacock feathers (kuncha) in the other. The dancers move in a circle singing devotional songs enhanced with background music with instruments like jagate (beating disc), gumte (drum) and tala (cymbals). There are other accompanying characters such as bear, Hanuman, thief, policeman etc. The master of the ceremonies controls their rhythmic steps and songs. They perform a great variety of dances including kolata (stick dance).





Illustration of a flower

03 BACKGROUND STUDY



COMMUNITY STUDY

Since childhood, I have interacted with the community at my native place several times which led me to choose this topic for my project. Though I got to click a few pictures of objects and surroundings, most of them did not want me to photograph their faces, but were happy to show me around.



Rice fields with a scarecrow

They were a little hesitant to talk to me and just gave one-word answers when I asked about something. This led me to contact Dr. Shridhar Gouda, a well-educated member of the Halakki community and Dr. Savita Uday, a researcher who has been working closely with the Halakki community.



A fairly new Halakki house



A 98-year-old Halakki women in traditional attire



A Halakki man at work in his welding shop



A newborn calf tied in the yard



Tulasi katte



An overflowing pit of organic manure



A suggi dancer in his distinctive attire



Suggi kunita



Other accompanying characters like Hanuman, Yakshagana, police, thief, etc.



Hali drawn for Gou pooje during Deepavali



Halakki utensils and equipments including a 'gada' shaped first harvest offering for Hanuman



It can be seen that many of the traditional Halakki huts are being replaced with clay-tiled houses. Very few of them live in RCC houses with granite tiling and stainless-steel railings.

HALAKKI WAY OF DRAPING A SAREE



Start by tucking the top edge of the saree into right side of the underskirt, so that the bottom edge aligns with the underskirt. Wrap it around the waist and complete one round from behind and tuck it in.



Start making rough pleats and tuck them in, 4 to 5 pleats at a time. Continue the pleats around the waist to complete one round again, maintaining the ankle length.



Bring the top edge of the pallu under your left arm, to the back and hold it above the right shoulder. In left hand, grab the fabric lying in front of the waist.



Tie a tight knot with them right above the shoulder. Adjust the pleats evenly.

ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

Insights from Dr. Shridhar Gouda

Dr. Shridhar Gouda belongs to the Halakki community and is passionate about their ideologies. Science teacher by profession, he has a keen interest in literature. He actively participates in community events and has been the president of Uttara Kannada District Halakki Association. His book 'Halakki Raku' is a collection of short stories based around their community.

- Halakkis are a group of hardworking individuals.
- He strongly disagrees that Halakkis are originally from Andhra Pradesh.
- Around 1,50,000 Halakkis are spread across Uttara Kannada between river Kali in Karwar and river Sharavati in Honnavar.
- They are geographically divided into 7 seeme, Chandavara, Harite, Nushikote, Gokarna, Kumbaragadde, Ankola, Kadavada.
- New necklaces are added during festivals. In the olden days, relatives used to gift necklaces to girls, on special occasions. They do not throw any of the necklaces. They

are removed only while taking a bath.

- Every koppa has a Tusali katte in the front yard of the Gowda's house, most of which are as tall as humans.
- Kari Devaru is a form of Shiva, worshipped during Suggi. Most of their festivals and events take place during late evenings.
- After the pooja, they set out to perform Suggi kunita. They are not supposed to change clothes, take baths or wear footwear until they return to their house on full moon day.
- They draw Hali on Suggi and other festivals and special occasions.
- Their delicacies are bellada payasa, kotte idli, mogge kayi uppinkayi.
- They possess knowledge of medicinal plants and home remedies. For example, small wounds and scratches are treated by applying crushed touch-me-not leaves, tea powder or the ash-like layer found on the midrib of a coconut fond.

Insights from Dr. Savita Uday

Savita Uday is a researcher, educator, farmer and folklorist who runs a not-for-profit organization called Buda Folklore. Based in Honnavar in the Uttara Kannada district, Buda has, over the years, been deeply engaged in documentation and reinvigoration of folk practices of the district, especially those in the Gokarna-Ankola region. Savita herself runs a space in Angadibail, a village near Gokarna, from where she has been working very closely with the members of the Halakki, Siddi and the Kare Okkalu communities of the region in an attempt to revitalize many of their artistic and culinary practices.

- Distinguishing features of the tribe are their relationship with the forest, knowledge of medicinal plants, a huge repository of folk songs, Suggi Kunita and women's traditional attire with beaded necklaces.
- These necklaces are given to the girl by her mother and other women of the community during the ritual of 'ghetge kattuvudu' when she reaches the age of 12 - 13.
- The younger girls used to tie a piece of their mother's saree around their waist until recently.
- They love to start their day by drinking the nutritious millet drink, 'ragi ambli'. Kotte idli is their favorite delicacy prepared for special occasions like Suggi.

- During Suggi, the first performance is meant for the head of their community. They then visit different villages and perform in their houses where they are offered refreshments, grains, and coins.

- They decorate their front yards with 'Hali' drawings made out of natural white clay called shedi. These drawings differ for different occasions.

- They use stone equipment called 'beesu kallu' as a grinder.

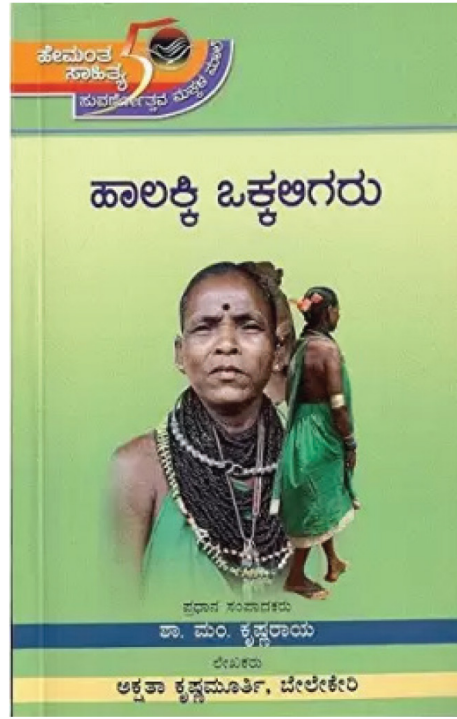
- They believe in a different version of Ramayana called 'Seethekami' in which Seetha's personality is more important than Rama's. It was not Rama but Lakshmana who won Seetha!!

Lakshmana did not break any bow to win Seetha. Instead, he kills a crow (kaa mandala kaage) that hindered king Janaka's meditation. These songs of tribal Ramayana contain wonderful imagery like that of a cobweb in the throat of Lakshmana who does not touch food or water for his elder brother.

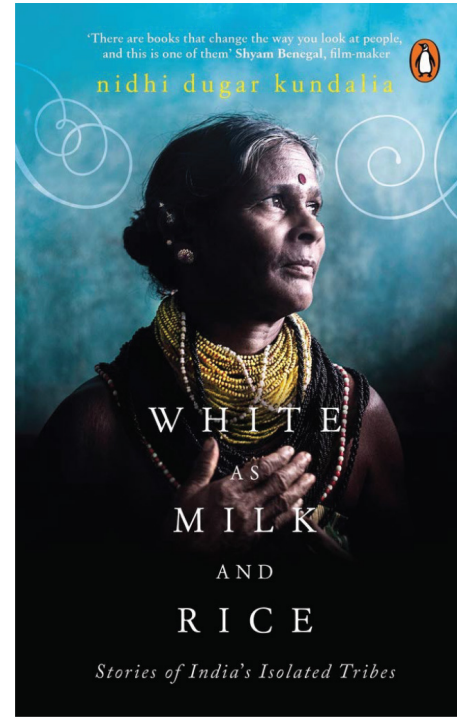
BOOKS



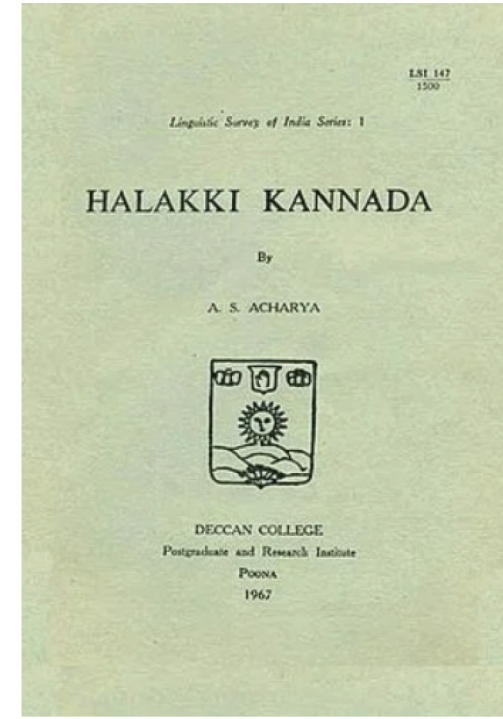
Halakki Okkaligaru
by N. R. Nayak



Halakki Okkaligaru
by Akshata Krishnamurthi



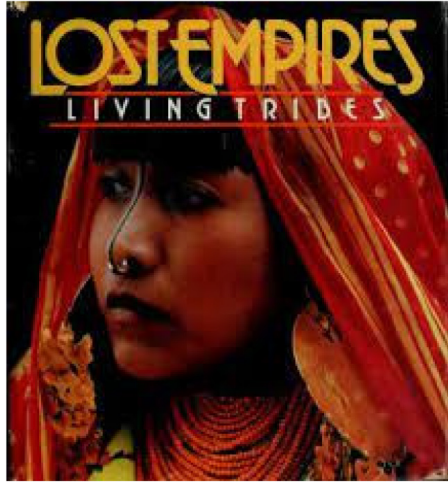
White as milk and rice
by Nidhi Dugar Kundaliya



Halakki Kannada
by A. S. Acharya

These books were referred to collect background data about the Halakki tribe, which is not available on the internet.

BOOKS

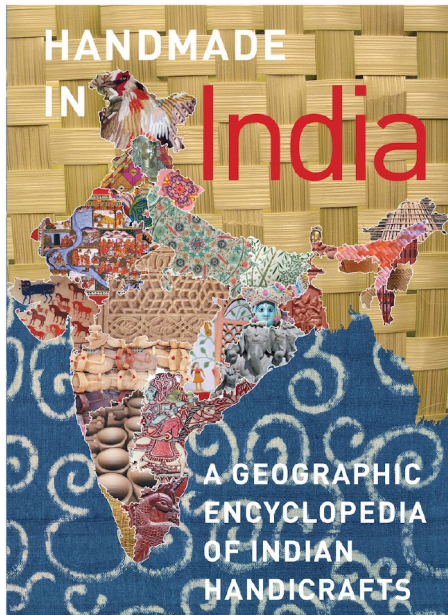


LOST EMPIRES: Living Tribes

by Ross Benett

This book provides information about a number of tribes around the world. It gave me an overall idea of what aspects to be included while documenting a tribe, like location, socio-cultural details, art, architecture, attire, food habits, rituals, etc.

The texts and pictures were well balanced to provide better visualization.



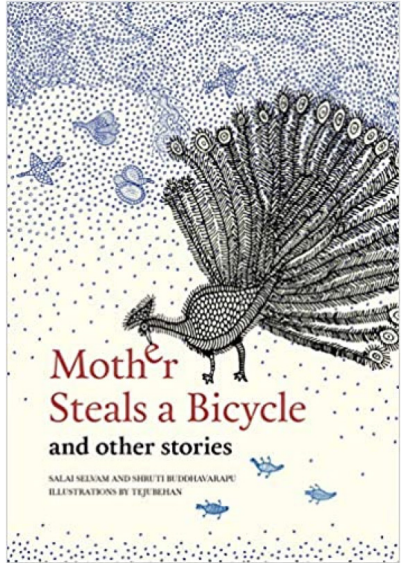
Handmade in India

by M. P. Ranjan and Aditi Ranjan

The informative sourcebook on Indian crafts captures the traditions that have influenced the day-to-day life of the Indian population. It maps out the regional crafts identified across the country and their historical, social, and cultural influences. It also gave me insights into some lesser-known crafts of India.

It also had extensive visuals complementing the textual information, much needed for this kind of documentation.

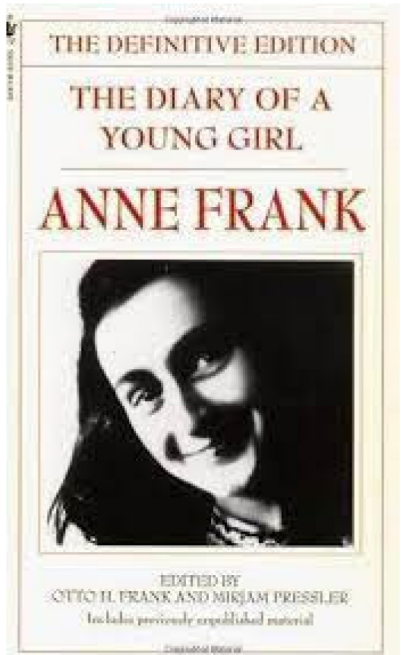
BOOKS



Mother Steals a Bicycle

by Salai Selvam

The narrative style of this illustrated book and the wonder and excitement it captures inspired me to convey the documented information in the form of a story or a narrative to create interest in young readers.



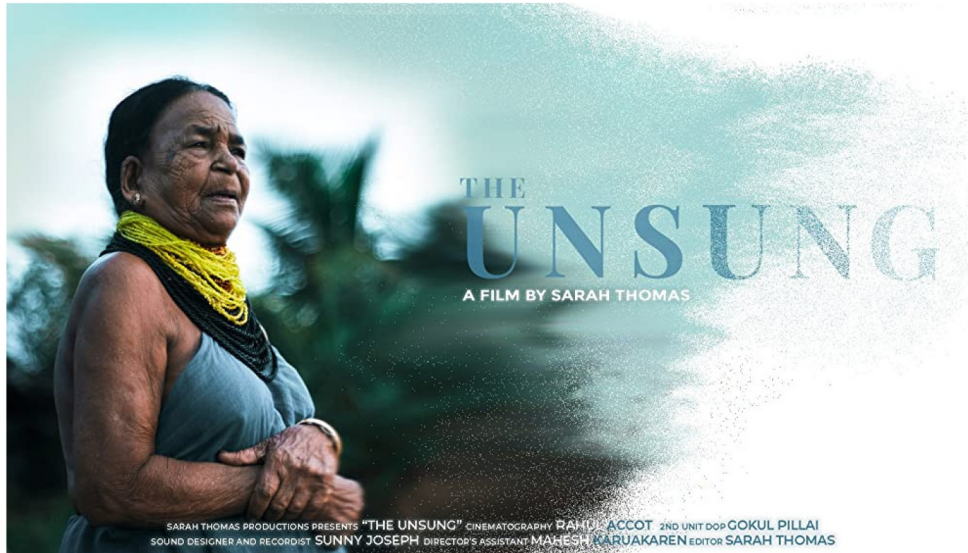
Ann Frank: The diary of a young girl

I decided to write the story in the first person point of view for more originality, much needed for experiencing a tribe through their own eyes. Also, most middle school children will be more enthusiastic about reading someone's diary than an informative book.

Anne Frank's diary was so impactful on the world because it brought to light on her own experience, which is more original and authentic for the readers.

So, I have tried to represent the documentation as a visual diary of the protagonist, as a collection of new experiences each day during her stay at her native place.

FILMS



The Unsung

by Sarah Thomas

This film on the Halakki Vokkaligas is a reflection of their drastic changes in lifestyle and identity crisis amidst the development in the country. It portrays the fading diversity of India, as the country loses forgotten tribes living on the fringes of society.



Rani Beti

by Dharma Wankhede

The short film depicts the ground reality and practices of the Korku tribe in terms of how the tribe has taken extraordinary leaps and made their mark in several different ways, without losing touch with their knowledge and tradition.



04 DESIGN



DESIGN

VISUALIZING HALAKKI TRIBE THROUGH THEIR OWN EYES

A STORY TOLD BY A GRANDMOTHER:

Documentation is in the form of a story or narrative to grab the attention of children.

Since the tribe was matriarchal by origin and the oral traditions are followed mainly by the female members of the tribe, grandmother and granddaughter are chosen as the main characters.

The story unravels as the experience of Putti when she visits her grandmother after a long time due to the onset of the pandemic.

Since passing on stories and songs across generations is one of the main features of the Halakkis, a visual narrative through short stories told by grandmother capturing the distinct details of the tribe, portrays the essence of the community.

TOPICS TO INCLUDE:

Origin and Native
Occupation
Men and women's attire
Art and Architecture
Food habits
Festivals and rituals
Folk songs/stories
Folk dance
Knowledge of native flora
Padma shri awardees
Values and Life experiences

Throughout her stay, Putti learns about the lifestyle and values of the Halakki tribe:

- Simple living and hard-working nature of the Halakkis
- They grow their own food, due to which they did not encounter a scarcity of food due to the pandemic and lockdown.
- They produce organic manure from cow dung and plant litter.
- They worship nature and live harmoniously with plants and animals.
- They enjoy their day-to-day chores and hard work by singing, which also helps them overcome exhaustion.
- They do not waste food or other resources.
- They have a huge repository of home remedies and treat minor ailments at home.

She also questions the changes that are happening in their lifestyle, for intellectual provocation among the young readers.

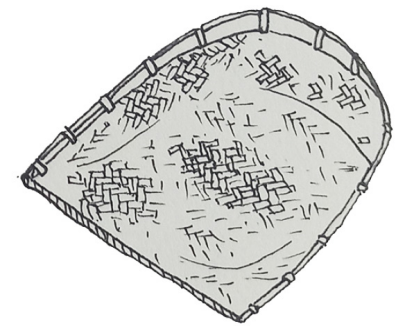
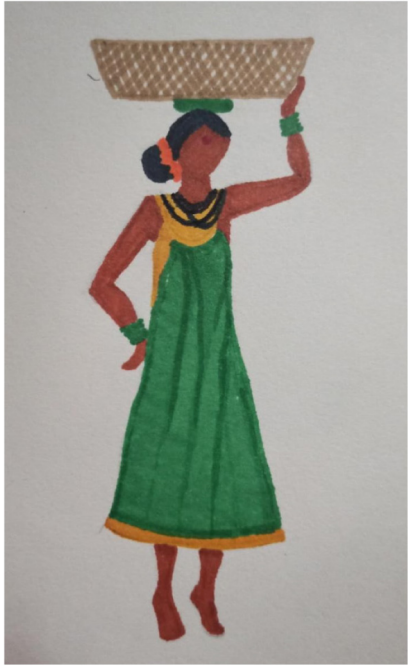


ILLUSTRATION EXPLORATIONS



I decided to do watercolor illustrations with micron pens, to capture the details better.

CHARACTERS

MAIN CHARACTERS



10-year-old girl **Putti**



Grandmother **Aji**

SUPPORTING CHARACTERS

Mother - **Avvi**, Father - **Appa**, Grandfather - **Aja**, Aunt - **Chikki**, Uncle - **Appachchi**

STORY

The story is in first-person point of view, to offer more originality to the readers. It's presented in the form of a visual diary of the protagonist, as a collection of new experiences each day at her native place.

INTRODUCTION

Putti's family suddenly decides to stay at their native place in Kumta, a coastal taluk of Uttara Kannada district for a short period due to the onset of COVID-19 pandemic. Putti who hadn't been to Kumta for a long time is thrilled at the idea.

NATIVE

Amidst areca nut and coconut plantation, an earthen house with a thatched roof and walls decorated with Hali is where her grandmother lives. The Tulasi katte in the front yard freshly daubed with cow dung, the chicken coop made of packed earth on areca nut poles and the cowshed in the background bring back

memories of chasing chickens in the front yard when she was little.

FOOD HABITS

They have a cup of ragi ambali each for breakfast which gives them the strength to work in paddy fields, morning to evening.

On the next day, they have kotte idli and bellada payasa which are the specialties for Suggi. The harvest festival Suggi is the biggest and most expensive festival of Halakki tribe, on account of which they have not eaten fish for 5 days.

Putti also observes how her aunt makes moggekaayi

uppinakaayi, a pickle made from yellow cucumbers, when there is surplus harvest to not waste any food or other resources.

She even learns about how they make organic manure using cow dung and plant litter. Since the Halakkis grow their own food and live harmoniously with nature, Putti's family does not encounter a scarcity of food due to the pandemic and lockdown.

ART

Putti learns about Hali, the traditional art of the Halakkis and draws them with the women in the family. It is drawn with a mixture of locally available white clay and water. Different Hali are drawn on different occasions as diagrammatic representations of the event, believed to ward off evil.

TRADITIONAL ATTIRE AND MANISARA

Grandmother gets ready in her new saree meant for special occasions. She drapes the 7.25 m long cotton fabric in a unique way without a blouse which is only followed by a few older women of the tribe.

Loads of beaded necklaces, a bold red bindi, glass bangles, gold earrings and a nose ring complete her attire, along with german silver armpieces. She rolls her center-parted, oiled, shiny black hair into a bun adorned with a garland made out of locally available flowers.

Putti gets curious as to why her grandmother dresses so differently than her mother, aunt or other women of the society.

Grandmother answers her questions by telling a story on why they wear beaded necklaces and rituals associated with them. In the olden days, when there was no stitching, a large number of beaded necklaces (manisara) were worn in place of a blouse to protect us from perverse eyes. They also help in providing support while they do physical work. Wearing the ankle-length cotton saree with beads from relatives and community members makes her happy and is very comfortable while working in rice fields under the hot sun. Adding to that, she says younger generation has chosen to dress differently for comfort.

Putti's mother explains her that unlike olden days, they now have to interact with the rest of the society on a daily basis. Many of them think going out in public without wearing a blouse is inappropriate. And, sending young girls out in the world without a blouse doesn't seem safe. Sometimes they feel the need to blend in

with the society, rather than to stand out. Her aunt adds that the beaded necklaces require regular cleaning and maintenance which is a timeconsuming and tedious process.

Putti questions them that why don't they wear it during special occasions that they celebrate within the community. All of them are excited by the idea and they decide to dress up in their traditional attire for the coming festival of Ugadi.

This spread also showcases the most important beaded necklaces worn by the Halakki women.

FOLK DANCE

By then, a team of 12 dancers arrives in a distinctive attire and headdress. Their colorful headgear is made of softwood, decorated with carved birds and flowers. The group dances with a stick (kolu) in one hand and a brush made of peacock feathers (kuncha) in the other. The dancers move in a circle singing devotional songs enhanced with background music with instruments like jagate (beating disc), gumte (drum) and tala (cymbals). There are other accompanying characters such as bear, Hanuman, thief, policeman etc. The master of the ceremonies controls their rhythmic steps and songs.

Tired troupes are honored by offering refreshments and coins. The procession then goes to the next house.

Putti learns about why Suggi Kunita is performed from her aunt. Her grandmother tells her stories about how it originated.

ORIGIN

Having heard the adults talk about renovating the house, Putti questions grandmother about their house and where they came from. She learns stories about their origin, migration and how they came to be known as the 'Halakkis'.

KNOWLEDGE OF MEDICINAL PLANTS

Putti goes to a hill with friends to collect fruits. She returns home with a bruised knee and scratched palms. grandmother treats her wound with herbs from the backyard. She also teaches her the alternatives. Putti curiously asks her, how has she learnt so much without going to school. Grandmother explains the relationship of the tribe with nature. Their ancestors have explored the forests for decades and have found

natural remedies for all their ailments using the plants and trees around them. This knowledge is passed orally across generations. Grandmother encourages Putti to learn few of these methods so that she doesn't have to go to the hospital for trivial things.

FOLK SONGS

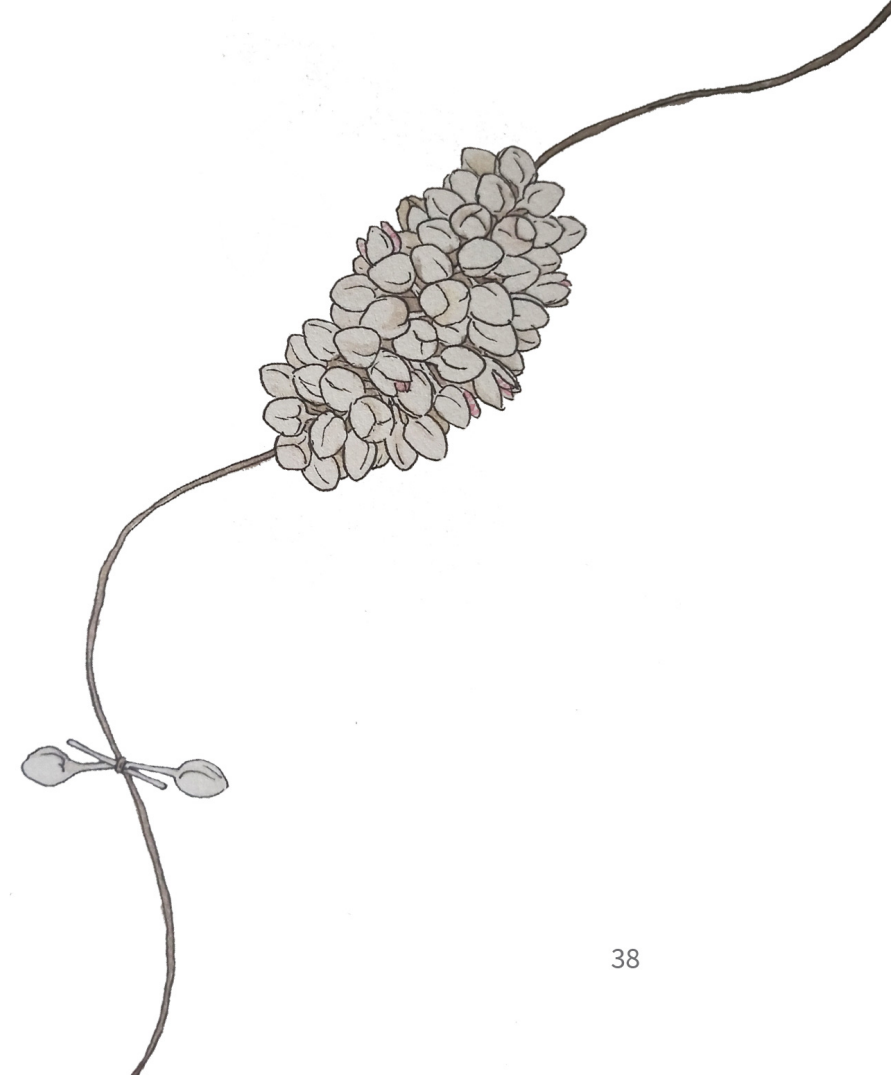
Putti, curious about why her grandmother sings all the time, gets to know about their folk songs and rain dance called tarle kunita from her mother and grandmother. A sample folk song is also included in the diary with English translation.

She also encounters a group of women carrying fire wood from forests singing rhythmically to overcome exhaustion and enjoy their chores.

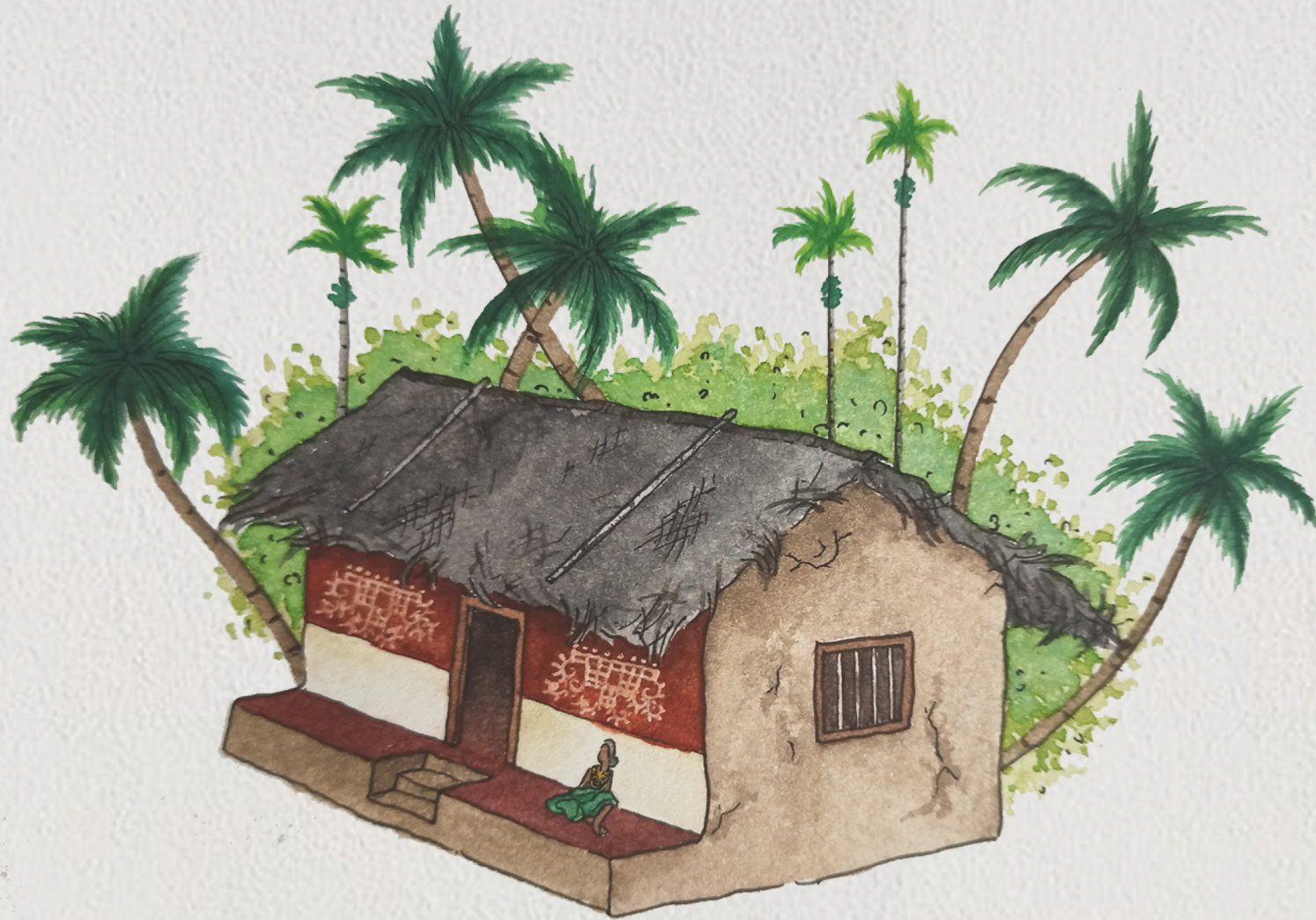
PADMA SHRI AWARDEES

Putti finds an article on the Padma Shri awardees of the tribe. This has been included at the end of the book so that interested readers are encouraged to find out more about them.

The story ends with the announcement of complete lockdown across the nation. It makes Putti happy that she'll get to spend a few more days with her grandmother.



ILLUSTRATIONS







BOOK DESIGN

SIZE:

A5 portrait
The most common size of diary available
Number of pages: 35-40

TYPEFACE:

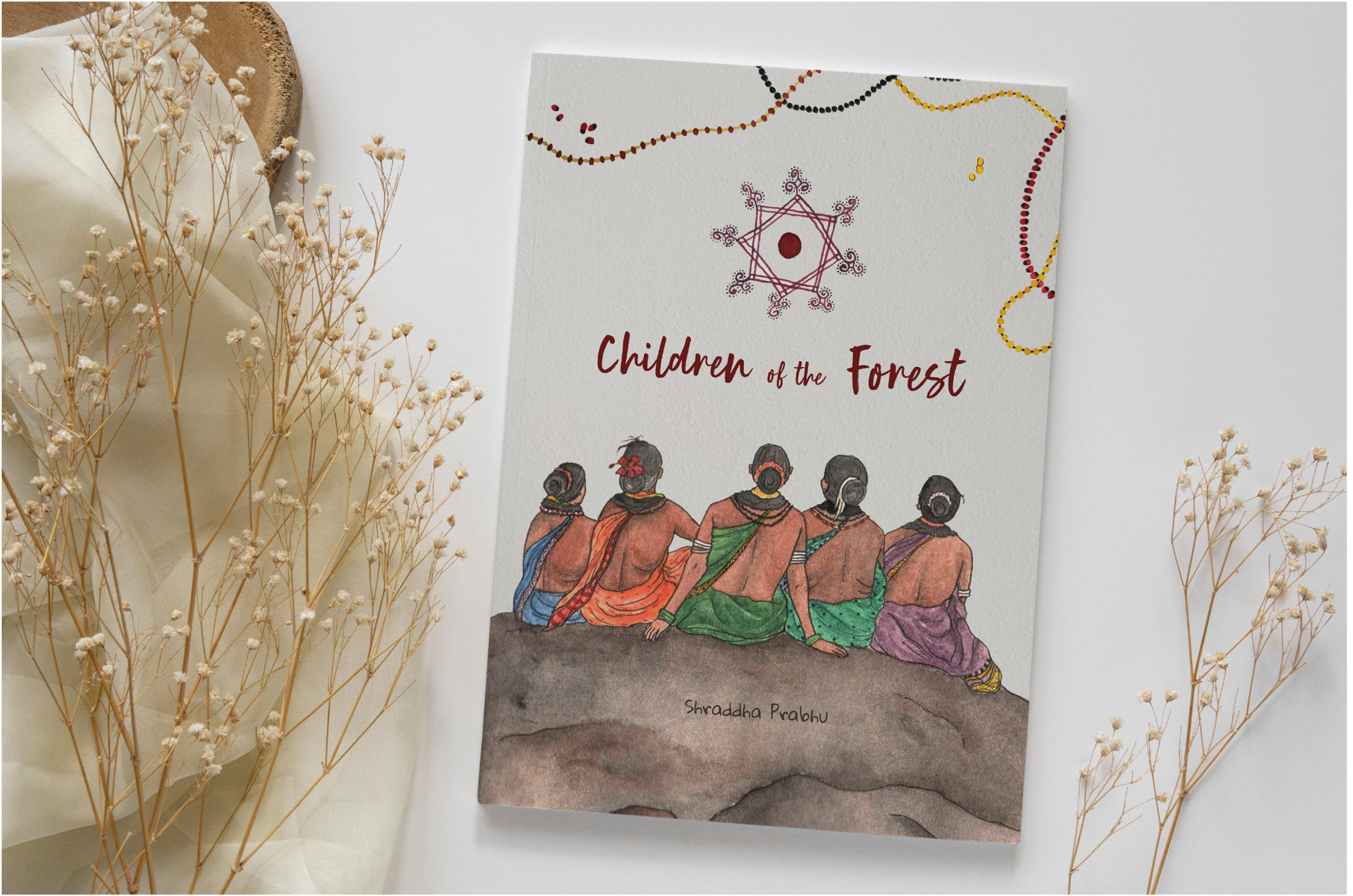
Mali
Handwritten yet legible font with playful and friendly typographic voice, well suited for the body text of the diary

COLOR PALETTE:

Shades of Green and brown - representing nature
Background - textured paper with brownish tinge



MOCK UPS



SPREADS

10th March

While having lunch I asked, “Why are we having kotte idli and bellada payasa today?”

“Did you forget that today is Suggi? These are the specialties for this auspicious day. That’s why we have not eaten fish for five days,” said Aiji which reminded me that I would learn how to draw Hali today. I ate my lunch quickly and ran to the front yard.

Suggi

“Okay, let me make the shedi mixture,” Chikki said while she mixed the locally available white clay with water. Aiji and Avvi started drawing diagrammatic figures against our blackish-brown front yard. After watching them for some time, I made a few drawings too!!

“Wow Putti! You got the hang of it so quickly. Now, let’s try something different,” said Chikki. She crushed a few clay tiles and added them to the mixture along with turmeric and jasmine leaves, which created a deep maroon color. We drew a few more drawings and decorated the front yard, listening to Aiji sing songs about it.

Aiji said, “Do you know why do we draw Hali? It’ll help us ward off evil during auspicious events. We draw different Hali for different occasions like festivals, weddings, etc. Let’s go in and get ready before the Suggi dancers arrive.”



Kotte idli ಕೊಟ್ಟೆ ಇಡ್ಲಿ rice cake steamed in jackfruit leaves
Bellada payasa ಬೆಲ್ಲದ ಪಾಯಸು a pudding made of jaggery

Ajji got ready in her new saree meant for special occasions. She draped the 7.25 m long cotton fabric in a unique way without a blouse. I have not seen my mother or aunt drape their saree this way.



Loads of beaded necklaces, a bold red bindi, glass bangles, gold earrings and a nose ring completed her attire, along with german silver armpieces. She rolled her center-parted, oiled, shiny black hair into a bun and adorned it with a garland made out of abbalige.



Abbalige ಅಬ್ಬಲಿಗಿ locally available orange colored flower



By then, a team of 12 people arrived, 8 of them in distinctive attire and turayi.

Turayi ಪುರಾಯಿ colorful headgear made of softwood, decorated with carved birds and flowers

19th March

Since I was always curious to know, I asked, “Why do you dress differently than Avvi and Chikki? Why do you wear so many necklaces Ajji?”

“When I was a little girl, I used to drape my Avvi’s saree around my waist as a skirt. When a girl reaches 12-13 years of age, we perform a ritual called ghetge kattuvudu. On that day my Atti draped this special type of saree on me, which is unique to our Halakki community. My Avvi gave me one of her manisara. Then, all the women in our koppa also gave me one necklace each. This is how we bless a girl when she stands at the threshold of womanhood.

We don’t wear these beads for beautification. In the olden days, when there was no stitching, a large number of manisara were worn in place of a blouse to protect us from perverse eyes. They also help in providing support while we do physical work. Wearing the ankle-length cotton saree with beads from our relatives and community members makes me happy and is very comfortable while working in fields in the hot sun,” her eyes turned moist with nostalgia.

Manisara ಮಣಿಸರ beaded necklace



20th March

I wonder, why does Ajji always sing? She sings as loud as she can, about everything from festivals and rituals to events in day-to-day life. She sings even without realizing that she's doing it. The other day, I heard her sing about the Anjugana hakki, explaining how life was formed -

When there was nothing in the universe, a bird appeared, named Anjuga. Anjuga laid a few eggs and one of them broke. Its contents formed the universe. The water in the egg became the sea, the egg white formed the sky and the remaining solid part formed the earth.



I asked her, "Ajji, since you like singing so much, can you sing me a special song? I want to write it down in my diary."

She replied, "Oh, I know many many songs. Which one should I sing? Let's see.."

Ajji thought for a minute and said, "You know... after we have sown the seeds, if monsoon doesn't arrive on time, all the women from our koppa gather at dusk and sing this song together to persuade the skies."

ಚಣ್ಣಮೊಳೆ ಹೊಯ್ಯಲೆ ಚಣ್ಣ ಕೆರೆ ತುಂಬಲೆ

ಕಯಡಿಗಳೆಲ್ಲ ಹಯನಾಗಲೆ

ದೊಡ್ಡ ಮೊಳೆ ಹೊಯ್ಯಲೆ ದೊಡ್ಡ ಕೆರೆ ತುಂಬಲೆ

ಗವಿಯಗಳೆಲ್ಲ ಹಯನಾಗಲೆ

ಹೊಯ್ಯೆಹೊಯ್ಯೆ ಮೊಳೆಯೆ ನಮ್ಮೂರಿಗೆ

ನಮ್ಮೂರ ಮಕ್ಕಳೆ ಕತ್ತಿ ಹೊದೊ

ನಮ್ಮೂರ ಗದ್ದೆ ಸುಟ್ಟಿ ಹೊದೊ

ಹೊಯ್ಯೆ ಹೊಯ್ಯೆ

Let it drizzle, let the small lake fill

Let the fields prosper

Let it rain heavily, let the big lake fill

Let the habitats of birds and animals cool

Pour, pour oh rain, in our town

The dams of our town are dried

The fields of our town are burnt

Pour pour



“The Halakkis in Ankola do tarle kunita too while singing this song together as a group,” Avvi added since she belongs to Ankola seeme.

Tarle kunita ತರ್ಲೆ ಕುನಿತಾ a rain dance
Seeme ಸೀಮೆ geographical divisions within the tribe (Chandavara, Harita, Nushikote, Gokarna, Kumbaragadde, Ankola, Kadavada)

21st March



I played the whole day with neighbors. Though I have made new friends here including an adorable rooster, I am missing my friends from school.

I overheard Appa discussing with Ajja and Appachchi about how and where they should build the new house. He said, "This hullu mane is too old. It will not withstand more than two or three monsoons. I will convince Avvi. You make arrangements for building a new home." Ajja and Appachchi seemed to agree with him. I wonder what Ajji will say..

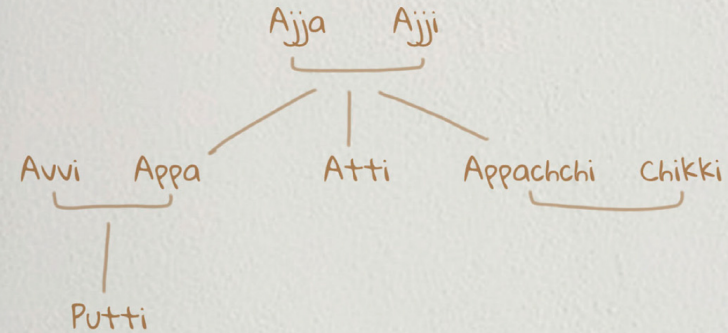
Hullu Mane ಹುಲ್ಲು ಮನೆ thatched house

22nd March

Sunday



Awakened by the rooster crowing, I got ready early to help Chikki make moggekayi uppinakayi. Since she has harvested a lot of moggekayi, she said this way we can share it in our koppa during Ugadi, which is in 3 days. We should never waste food, she always says.



Moggekayi ಮೊಗ್ಗಕಾಯಿ yellow cucumber
Uppinakayi ಉಪ್ಪಿನಕಾಯಿ pickle



This work is an illustrated documentation of the Halakki tribe of Uttara Kannada district, intended to help young readers visualize the culture and traditions of Halakki Vokkaligas by bringing light on their rich heritage.

Uttara Kannada is a coastal district of Karnataka with the Arabian Sea on one side and western ghats on the other. Most of the district is covered with lush green forests and rivers. Halakki Vokkaligas are one of the indigenous communities residing in many parts of the district. Their way of life, food habits, clothing, occupation, culture and tradition show a very strong inclination towards nature.

Since childhood, I have interacted with this community on several occasions, which sparked an interest in me to undertake this documentation. The information collected through background study and ethnographic research is presented in the form of a visual diary of the protagonist Putti, as a collection of new experiences each day at her native place. Throughout her stay, Putti learns about the lifestyle, culture and values of the Halakki tribe and writes her experiences in her diary.

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05 CONCLUSION



READERS' FEEDBACK

I sent the book to a group of varied audience. And, the time taken to read the book ranged from 15 minutes to about an hour.

Veena Gouda, 13

A young member of Halakki community, Kumta

“I didn't know the story about our origin.”
“I have learnt to draw little bit of Hali. Now I am interested in learning more.”

Nagendra Gouda, 11

A young member of Halakki community, Kumta

“When we get hurt, we apply the touch me not plant ourselves without telling anyone, because grandmother will scold us if she gets to know that we got hurt.”
“After I grow up, even if I am in some other city, I'll come back here during Suggi to take part in the dance and continue our tradition.”

Avani Bhat, 12

A non-Halakki girl, Kumta

“I especially liked the Suggi day showcasing their food, art and dance form. Even though I have a few friends belonging to the tribe, I didn't know many things about them. I am kind of jealous that their lifestyle is so close to nature.”

Deepti, 21

A non-Halakki girl, Hanehalli

“Growing up in a village, I could relate to many aspects of the story. Especially from the page where Putti goes to the beach, collects seashells and writes her name on the sand, I became Putti and got lost in the story. I was unaware of the origin of Halakkis. I gained valuable insights from this book”

Abha Bhujle

Karwar

“Very beautifully written, reminded me of all things we have seen from our childhood but in bits and pieces. Here all those bits have come together as concise information. I simply loved the pictorial illustrations... They are so true to life”

Dr. Padma Prabhu, 66

An Ayurvedic doctor, Kumta

“It’s a well researched article on the Day to day life of Halakki Goudas written in the form of a story. Though I grew up in Uttara Kannada and have interacted with them in my childhood, I didn’t know much about their lifestyles or their backgrounds! I never knew few things that’s mentioned in the book, like the origin of the Halakkis. I learnt many herbal medicines from old Halakki women but today’s generation does not like to use these methods. An orthopaedic surgeon mentioned that in olden days the Halakkis never got neck pain because the beaded necklaces were providing them support while carrying heavy loads on their head.

Dr. Shridhar Gouda

A Halakki member from Kumta

“The title of the book itself creates a lot of suspense for the readers. This story about the People of Halakki, speaks about the reality of our lives. Capturing the traces of architecture, art, occupation and other details of any community with the brush of reality is only possible if they are studied in their own habitat. This book has been successful in compactly explaining about the background of Halakkis and our life history with detailed research and supporting illustrations which would help even the uneducated members of Halakki tribe to grasp the essence of the book and feel proud.”

Dr. Lata Bhandari, 73

Retired doctor from London

“Very well written!! Pictures brought the whole story to life! Translation of selected words will help those people that are unfamiliar with the Halakki vocabulary, understand the tribe. I totally got absorbed in the story and when story ended, I felt nostalgic!! Particularly the illustration of the old man brought my childhood right in front of my eyes. The context of Pandemic made it a story of today and not a history.”

Dr. Savita Uday

A researcher working closely with the Halakkis, Angadibail

“Studying the Halakki tribe is a work of a life time. Including various aspects from their treasure trove of oral heritage, art, craft, local wisdom on medicinal plants, their attire, ornaments, festivals, food, livelihood, and legends in a story form is not an easy task. Having the advantage of spending childhood in their surroundings, her memories have brought certain authenticity to the book.”

“However, I felt there are some disconnects with the roots. For instance, decorating the floor to welcome the Suggi dancers is the focus and dressing up for the occasion is secondary. The illustrations paint a clear picture of the Halakki culture in an interesting way. Using local vocabulary is a good idea when the language is on the verge of dying. The book is a good way to introduce the tribe to the children. I would like to know how the girl felt after going back to the city and what is that she took back.”

LEARNINGS

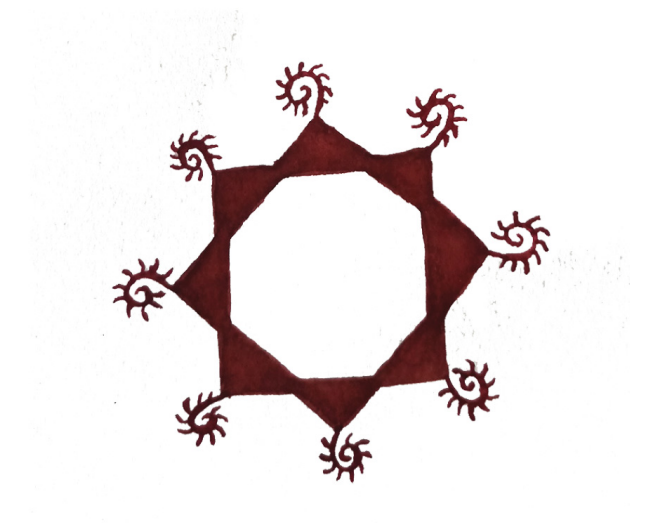
From this first-time experience of documenting a tribe, I got an overall idea of what kind of details are to be included while documenting a community, like their location, socio-cultural details, rituals, art and architecture, attire, food habits, etc. Since their traditions are fading away, probing the reasons for their letting go of certain traditions and questioning whether those changes are justified, was challenging.

During the project, I got to interact with other researchers and learn from them. Through background study and ethnographic research, I gained exposure to many aspects of the tribe which was surprisingly unknown to me and those around me, though I have interacted with the tribe on several occasions throughout my childhood. I also uncovered many of their life values like simple living, growing their own food, living harmoniously with nature, etc. which are powerful messages that this community can give to the society, especially during the pandemic and lockdown.

After several ideations, I decided to present the collected information in the form of a visual narrative from the first-person point of view, to provide more originality for the young readers. Visualizing the Halakki tribe through their own eyes has made me gain a better understanding and a greater sense of appreciation for the community.

FUTURE SCOPE

- The story can be continued for the entire year to provide a holistic idea of the tribe to the readers. This would cover all other festivals, rituals and the months of paddy cultivation.
- Making the book for a younger audience (children below the age 10), with an emphasis on visuals to familiarise them with the tribe.
- Documenting their vast repository of fading folk songs in written as well as audio/video format.
- Visual documentation of their knowledge of medicinal plants and love for nature.



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