

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

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2.1 INTRODUCTION:

This Chapter takes a review of the literature available and further deals with the methodology adopted for the study. The study has been conducted on the basis of the guidelines adopted for conducting sociological studies and is an attempt to know the community of Gabits from the sociological viewpoint.

2.2 A PROFILE OF THE STUDY AREA:

The State of Maharashtra has a coastline of about 800 kilometres. The coastal region comprising four districts, viz. Thane, Raigad, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg, is better known as 'Konkan'. The whole region is dominated by Sahyadri's east-west mountain ranges. A third of the land is hilly and unfit for agricultural activities whatsoever. The eastern part of the Konkan region falls within the area of the Western Ghats and is locally known as 'Valati'. The middle part, which is comparatively plane, is useful for limited agricultural activities and is known as 'Khalati'. The remaining land, which touches on the Arabian Sea, is the coastal region and is made up of white sand with no earthy soil. It is this part of the Konkan region where fishermen families predominate.

As a matter of fact, fishing community constitutes one-third part of the total population of the Konkan region. Hence, social and economic development of the area would be lopsided if proper cognizance of these people is not taken in due perspective.

In recent times, while thinking of rural development plans, greater emphasis is laid on the development of agriculture only. Particularly about Konkan, currently a slogan about 'Turning Konkan into California' is raised repeatedly. Accordingly, some schemes of horticultural development (termed as 'Falodyan') have been launched. The whole geographical area of Sindhudurg district has been notified as 'economically backward' by the Union Government and some attention is now being paid to the development of small scale industries based on the locally available raw materials. Unfortunately, the pace of development through such efforts is minimal. If one takes into consideration the density of the population in Konkan, one finds that there is too much pressure on the meagre land available. Migration of manpower is a chronic problem in the area. Due to the lack of natural resources and infrastructural facilities, full employment of the people within the area itself will remain a dream forever. Of course, this does not mean that all development effort should be given up and formulation of development plans abandoned. Past experiences dictate that a comprehensive view of the situation, as it stands today, should be taken.

2.3 A REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

A study of Gabits, in one or the other form, has been done by renowned scholars like Dr. Irawati Karve. In her study of the Marathas of Poona, she has tried to cast some light on the anthropometric characteristics of Konkani Marathas (which also include the Gabits).

Dr. Bhalchandra A. Kalekar has given information about the traditions and customs of Gabits in his work : 'Agris : An Economic Survey' (1982). D.N. Kale has studied the social and economic characteristics of the coastal communities (including the Gabits). G.N. Kelkar, in his book in Marathi, 'Mumbai Ilakhyatil Jati' has mentioned about the Gabits from the Sindhudurg district. B.B. Prabhu also has written about this community in his book in Marathi, 'Konkanastha Maratha Kshatriya Samajacha Sankshipta Itihas', published in Goa in 1929.

Ramesh Kubal, in his Marathi book on the history of Kshatriya naval families, has given detailed information about the origin and history of the Gabits, their settlement in the coastal area. He has given details about 87 Gabit families and also the history of those families on the points like origin of the family, its Gotra, first settlement, family occupation, present status and condition of those families, etc. For this study, he had used geneological records and historical documents like letters from the Sardars and the written contracts between these families and the King and

6 various Sardars in those days. He has also dealt with the religious, social and economic activities and studied the community by examining their folklore, folktales and religious preachings. His book contains their proverbs and the songs sung at the time of performing a marriage. The present condition of the community, in general, led him to conclude about its backwardness. Ramesh Kubal also deals with various organizations of the Gabits located in Bombay, Goa and Karwar. His is an important work on the Gabits.

However, a detailed sociological study of the Gabits, especially of those who are in the hintermost areas of Konkan and are engaged mainly in fishing as their primary occupation, has not yet been attempted by any scholar.

2.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

The researcher was struck with the idea of studying the fishing community of Gabits sociologically because of his day-to-day interaction with them. After tracing some information about the community, as a whole, it was revealed that no serious effort had so far been made to study this particular community with sociological glasses. The Fisheries Department of the State Government has ample data about the number of the people involved in the fishing industry, the number of fishing boats, the annual output of fish-products, export earnings, etc. But the sociological information was

found to be lacking.

When the researcher, of his own accord, tried to contact the community as a matter of personal curiosity, it was realised that though the community is a part and parcel of the majority Hindu community in the area, it is a caste, well-bound by tradition and customs of its own. Though poverty prevails all over, the community had not taken advantage of the facilities allowed to it by the British Government, branding it as a 'Backward Caste'.

Poor literacy and economic backwardness have made the community tremendously superstitious. The males spend most of their waking hours out on the sea catching fish, giving full charge of the family affairs to the females. As the menfolk keep themselves away from the practical dealings of the day-to-day life, they have turned out to be simple-minded but equally adamant and not so easy to change over to new ideas. In recent times, spread of education, advent of modern technology in fishing business and instability of the occupation of fishing itself have created substantial aspirations among them also. Some of the intelligent persons in the community have carved themselves a good future.

In general, however, the community is still socially close-knit, economically backward and very much tradition-bound, and hence, on this points alone, needs to be studied closely.

2.5 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

The present research focuses on the sociological study of the **Gabit Community**, concentrated mainly in the **Sindhudurg District** on the coastal region of Konkan area of Maharashtra. The Gabits, though apparently a fishing community now, is in reality a branch of Marathas, a dominant community in Maharashtra and a principal martial caste, declared so by the Britishers. Shivaji, the Great (1627-1680), manned his warships (named 'Grabs') with some Marathas, who came down to Konkan. After Shivaji's navy was abolished, the demobilized men and their families stayed on in Konkan and took to fishing for their livelihood.

2.6 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The major objectives of the study are as follows:

- (1) To study the historical background of the Gabits;
- (2) To locate the major areas of the Gabit's habitation
in the Sindhudurg District;
- (3) To study their social, economic, religious and
political activities;
- (4) To understand the changes that are taking place in
this community.

2.7 SELECTION OF THE STUDY AREA:

As reported in the Census Report of 1911 by Mead and McGregor, in the Bombay Presidency, the Gabits are found on the seacoast, chiefly in the Ratnagiri and Kanara Districts and the Sawantwadi State. Today, the Gabit's population is more concentrated in the present Sindhudurg District of

Maharashtra State. It is also found that their number is especially more in Vengurla, Malwan and Deogad talukas of the district. The main occupation of the Gabits in these areas is fishing. In spite of their poverty, they have tried to maintain a distinct socio-cultural identity.

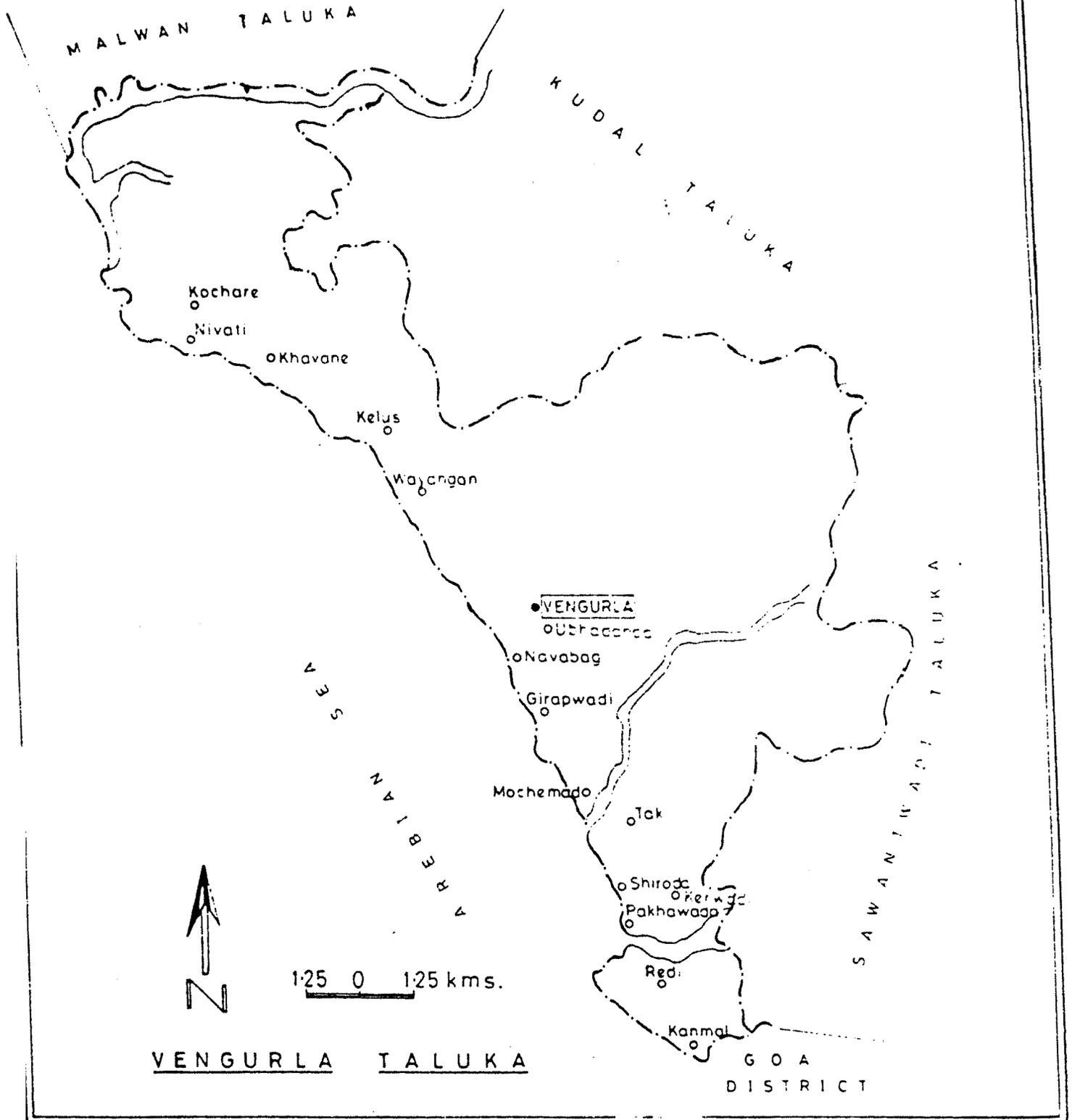
It was thus felt that only **survey method** would do fuller justice to the problem selected for study. For the purpose of conducting such survey, the following four centres: (1) **Vengurla**, (2) **Malwan**, (3) **Deogad**, and (4) **Vijaydurg**, containing the Gabit population of substantial size were selected. The first reason for the selection of these four centres was their comparatively higher population of Gabits. The second reason is that these centres are quite well spaced from each other and also spread over the entire area of the Sindhudurg district. The third reason is that these centres are connected with each other by bus-routes and are easily accessible. Yet another reason is that the Gabit households in these centres are further concentrated in specific areas. These reasons collectively influenced the selection of the study area.

2.8 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION:

2.7.1 Selection of Sample:

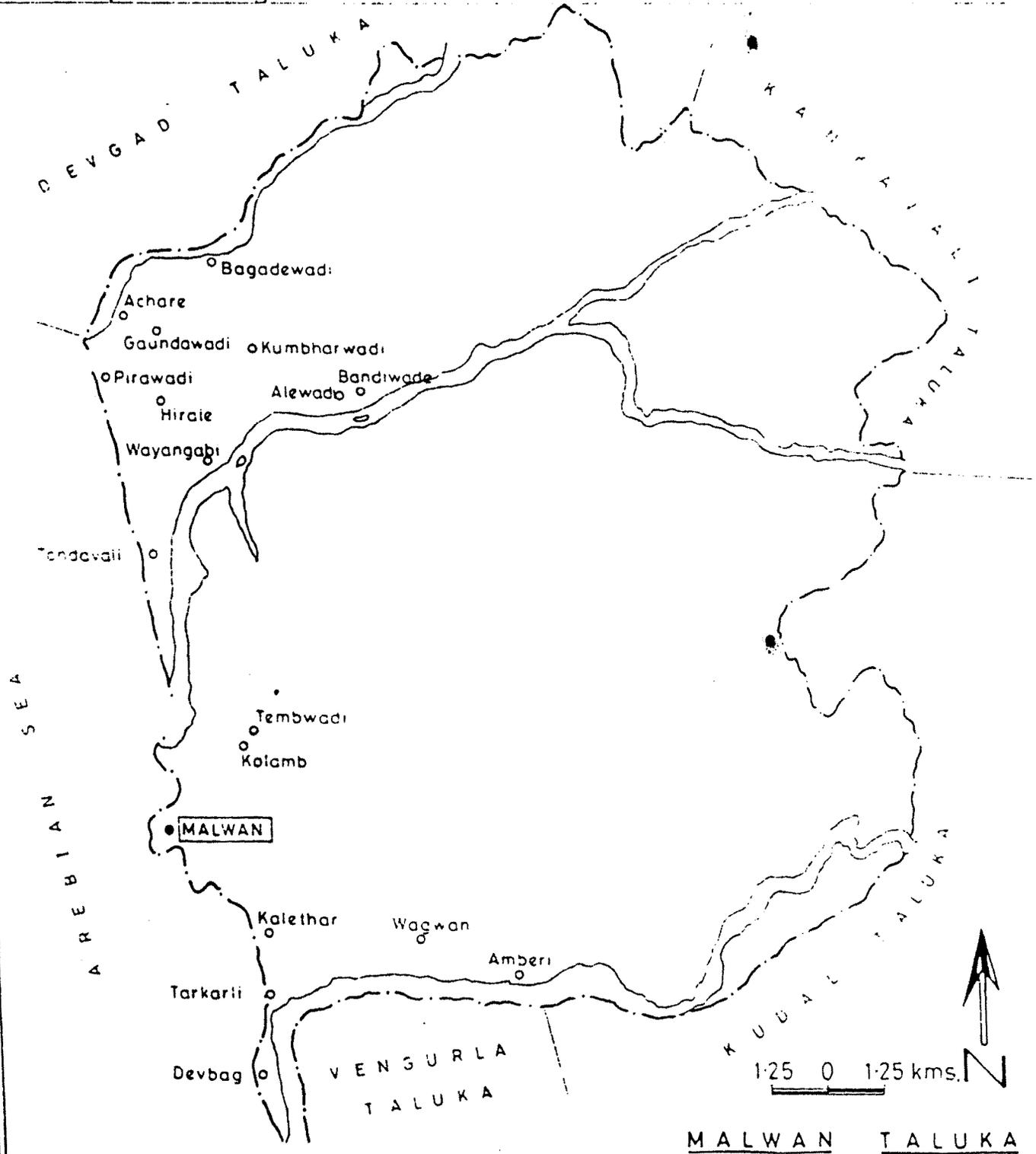
A census was taken in the selected areas to ascertain the approximate number of the Gabit families staying in each when it was found that there are a total of 720 Gabit families,

The map showing the Gabit's settlement in the Vengurla centre.



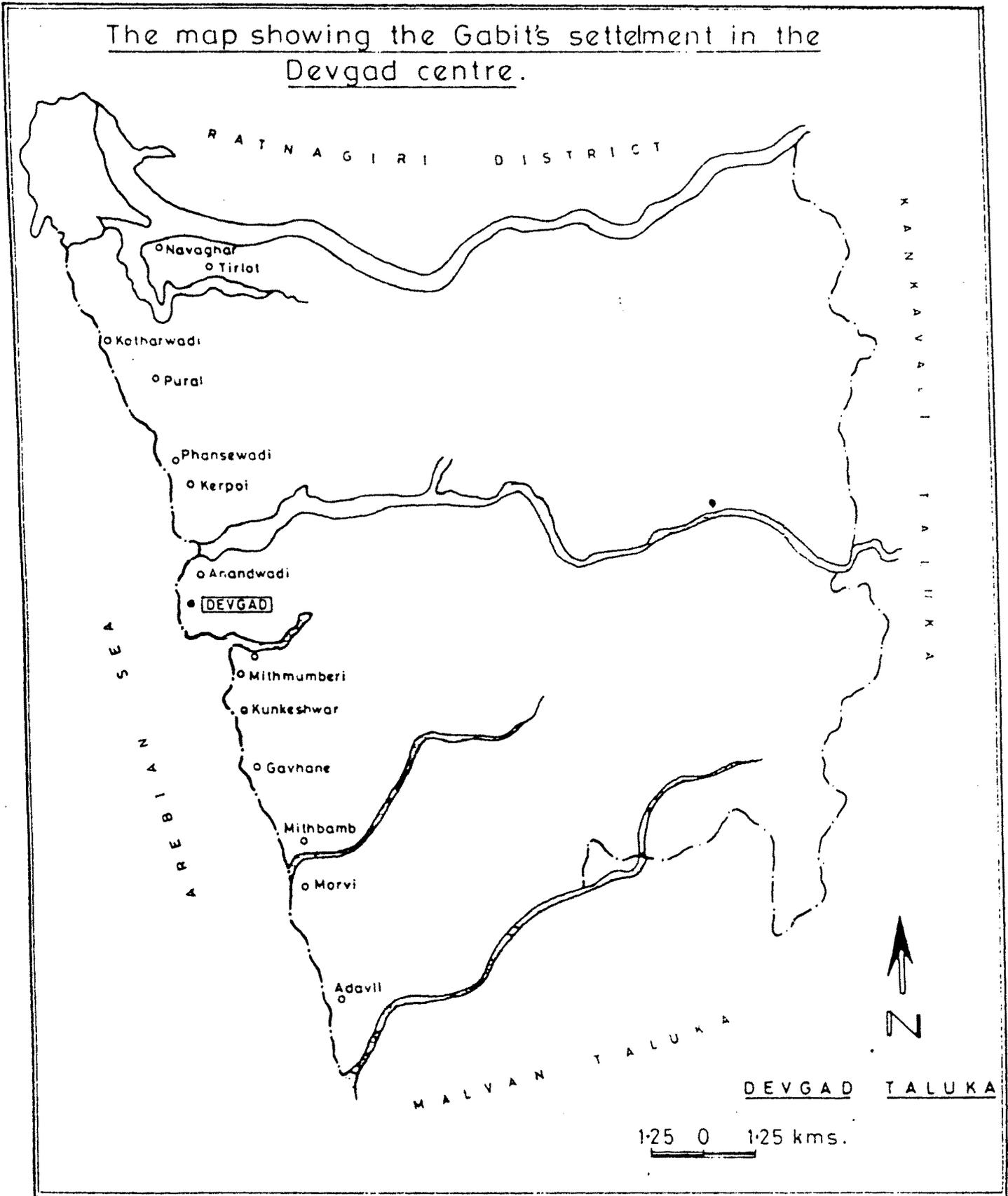
MAP 2.1

The map showing the Gabit's settlement in the Malwan centre.



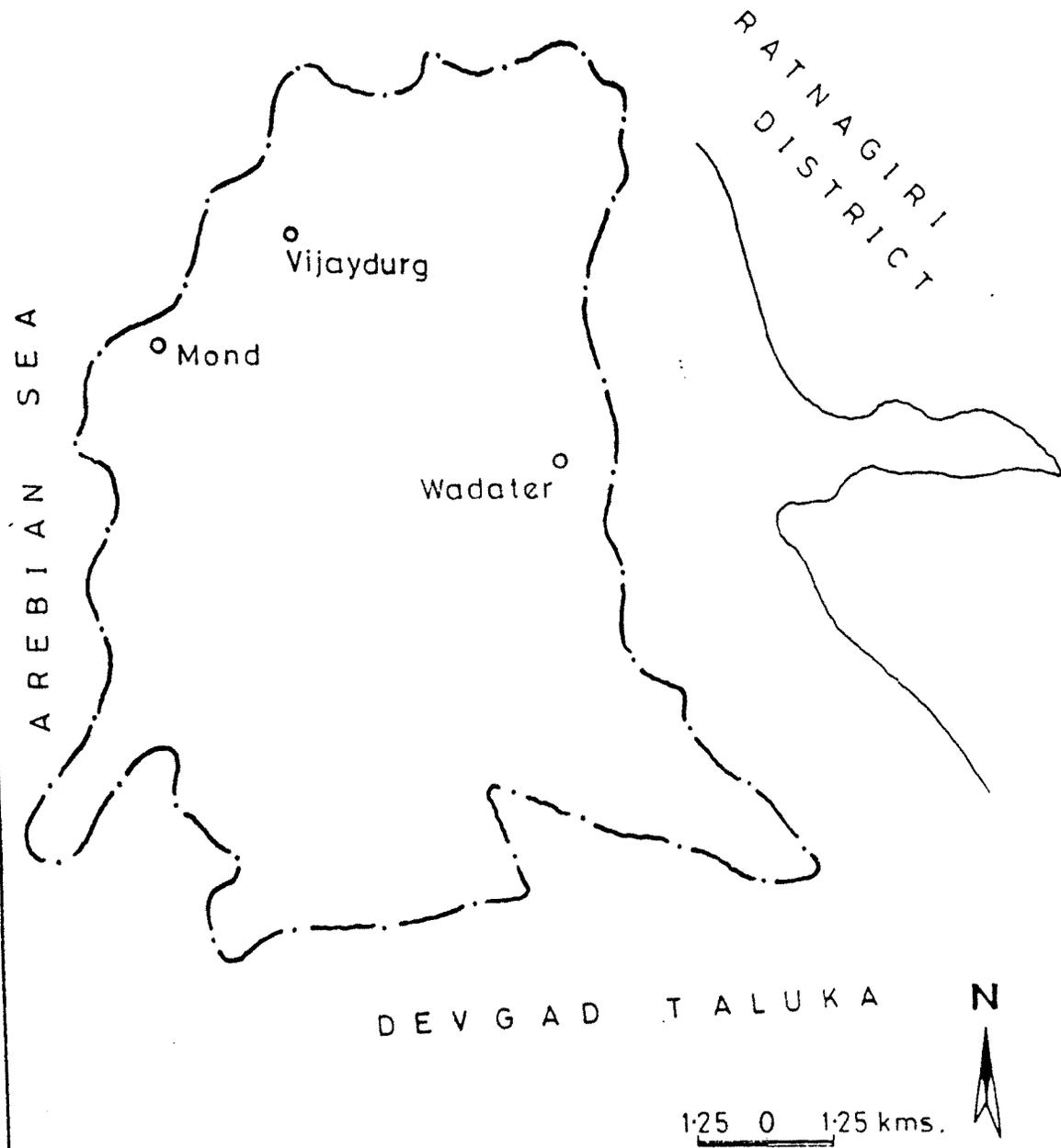
MAP 2.2

The map showing the Gabit's settlement in the Devgad centre.



MAP 2.3

The map showing the Gabit's settlement in the
Vijaydurg centre.



MAP 2.4

i.e. 195 families in Vengurla, 185 in Malwan, 180 in Deogad and 160 in Vijaydurg.

Although it was decided to study the Gabit community in detail sociologically, it was beyond the resources of the researcher to cover all the 720 families. It was also noticed that establishing a contact with the family heads would not always be possible as the men go out for fishing at odd hours. In view of these handicaps, **quota sampling** was thought to be an appropriate method because of the following reasons:

- (1) Quota sampling represents the total universe of the study;
- (2) It is possible to contact the respondents individually and study them in greater detail;
- (3) It saves time and money.

It was further felt appropriate to conduct an intensive study of 60 families per centre, making a **total of 240 families**, which is 1/3rd (or 33.33 per cent) of the total families in the study area. This sample of 240 families out of the total universe represents all the characteristics of the Gabits from the Sindhudurg district.

2.7.2 Primary Data:

All the selected 240 families were personally interviewed by the researcher with the help of an interview schedule. (Appendix-A).

Non-participative observation of the Gabits' social and religious ceremonies and functions was also undertaken during the course of one calendar year so as to identify and study all their religious and social activities that take place in one year.

Information was also collected from conversations with the elder members of the community and from such other local persons who are in close contact with the Gabits.

2.7.2 Secondary Data:

The official records from the revenue offices and the municipal offices at Vengurla, Panchayat offices at Malwan and Deogad talukas (which includes Vijaydurg also) were collected and used for the purpose of the present study.

2.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

While collecting the primary data, some respondents were afraid to tender information because of their preconceived notions about government officials, village-level workers, etc., and thought that the information being collected would be used against them. However, after convincing such apprehensive respondents about the academic nature of the study, rapport was established and the interviews progressed. Nevertheless, the primary data carries an element of intentional or inadvertent falsification on the part of the respondents.

2.10 CHAPTER SCHEME:

The Dissertation is divided into Four Chapters. **Chapter One** deals with the introduction of the research topic and briefly gives a profile of fishing at sea, with which the Gabit Community is associated. **Chapter Two** takes a review of literature available (meagre as it is) and also deals with the framework aspects such as profile of the study area, significance of the study, statement of the problem, objectives, sample selection, methods of data collection and limitations of the study. **Chapter Three** presents the data collected in appropriately tabulated form together with its interpretation. **Chapter Four** presents a summary of the data interpreted as the inferences and conclusions drawn therefrom. **Appendices** include the interview schedule used for the collection of the primary data from the respondents as also a pictorial presentation of the Gabit communities fishing activities. A **Bibliography** of the library sources used in the study concludes the Dissertation.

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