

A CULTURAL DRAWBRIDGE: A STUDY OF THE SIDDI TRIBE

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ABSTRACT

Tribals are aboriginals, there are different tribes in India, and they live in different forests India their unique feature, is that the Siddis, a tribe of African-Indian descent, have resided in Uttara Kannada, Karnataka for four centuries. Their migration occurred during the colonial period, and they are predominantly located in the taluks of Haliyal, Yellapura, Sirsi, Mundagoda, and Karwar. Historical records suggest that they were brought to Goa as slaves. Despite this, the Siddis, who have maintained a nomadic way of life characterized by their distinct cultural practices, forest resources, and areca nut, are now endeavoring to integrate into mainstream society by establishing cultural connections. The current research aims to deal with the cultural existence of the Siddis. While their lifestyle may resemble that of a village in Africa, Uttarakannada is geographically distant from the continent. This investigation specifically concentrates on the Siddis residing in the Yellapur and Ankola taluks of Uttarakannada, with a focus on unraveling the cultural elements that define the Siddi tribe in the present day.

KEYWORDS: Siddi tribe, Culture, Integrate, Existence, Migration

INTRODUCTION

India is acclaimed as one of the most culturally and spiritually diverse nations internationally. Indian people take immense pride in their unique attributes and experience a feeling of association with each other as a result of shared physical traits, cultures, languages, and nonverbal gestures. Within this diverse landscape, there is a nomadic group identified as the Siddis. The Siddi tribe, who self-identify as having African ancestry but are Indian citizens, are primarily concentrated in areas like Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Hyderabad in India. They communicate in their native languages as their primary mode of expression. The Siddi tribe, also known as Habshi or Badsha, is a group of Africans who migrated to India many centuries ago. Various theories exist regarding the historical origins of this subcontinent, although most lack substantial evidence. While some Siddis believe they came to India as merchants and protectors in the 16th century, others suggest they were brought as slaves much earlier, in the 14th century. The Siddi tribe is generally perceived as a community of African migrants who arrived in India during different historical periods for diverse reasons.

THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE

The concept of 'culture' refers to the 'ways of life' of individuals or groups within a community. This way of existence is reflected through the group's norms, customs, and values, as well as through language. This is also represented in the clothing code, cooking and eating habits, birth, marriage, and funeral

customs, family life, job patterns, religious ceremonies, festivals, leisure interests, and a variety of other aspects.

According to Sir Edward Tylor, "Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Tylor, 1871, p. 1).

Culture is the customary way of life in a society, encompassing various aspects such as clothing, consumption, marriage, customs, beliefs, language, and more. Society can be defined as a social group, while culture represents the shared heritage of that group. Society refers to the population united by social bonds, influenced by culture, which dictates behavior

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Symbolic interactionism is a sociological perspective that focuses primarily on the interpersonal interactions among members of a society. Proponents of this perspective consider culture to be a result of social interactions and the way individuals interpret each other's behaviors. Advocates of this theoretical framework view human interactions as an ongoing process of assigning significance to both environmental objects and the behaviors of others. The term "symbolic" is pertinent in this context, as every object and action is imbued with symbolic meaning, and language functions as a tool for individuals to express and convey their understanding of these meanings to others. Proponents of symbolic interactionism perceive culture as a dynamic and flexible entity, contingent upon the

interpretation of meaning and how individuals engage in conveying these meanings.

Culture acts as a source of comfort in society, with shared cultural practices forming the essence of societies and enabling the coexistence of nations. Societies are shaped by heritage and language, and civilization relies on mutual agreement on values and social governance systems, while cultural evolution occurs through innovation, exploration, and exchange, and humans can critically evaluate and make intentional choices within cultural norms, embracing diversity to enhance understanding of our own cultural identity through engagement with other cultures.

LITERATURE REVIEWED

The literature about the Siddis is limited. Because of a paucity of research and documentation during African immigration to India, there are speculative theories and limited knowledge of the Siddis.

Lobo C.H. (1984) in his study of Siddis in Karnataka covered aspects laying importance on their proficiency, profession, kinship, religion, and rituals. His review gives exhaustive consciousness of the African travelers of Karnataka who had a particular status and sub-human way of life. He expressed that they had not held anything of their unique culture. Thus, he presented his report to every one of the heads of Government suggesting including Siddis in the category of Scheduled Tribes.

Pavate P.P (1985) focussed on Siddis's Morphogenetic study in Karnataka, in which he collected lots of facts on the anthropometrics, dermatoglyphics, and their blood groups. He found that there is not too much variation in the distribution of ABO and d genes among them. In the study, he found that all the Siddis are descendants of the same ancestors.

Obeng P. (2008) studied the Siddis' history in India and gave information about the Siddis' beliefs and practices. His study indicates the peculiarities of Siddi culture, their problems of displacement, and their social and religious suppressions. Further, his study helps to know the extent to which Siddis depend on their beliefs and their cultural practices. He also attempted to study their historical life from a sociological perspective. He thoroughly analyzed their struggle for freedom. This research work acts as a bridge between focused and unfocused aspects of Siddis' life.

Kulkarni S.S. (1999) In his work, he intended to examine Siddi dancing forms. He proposed a legendary explanation for their origin, claiming that the Siddis are Indians who sided with Ravana during the fight between Rama and Ravana. This is a fascinating fresh perspective on the tribe's origins. The author attempted to explore and compare the beliefs of Muslim Siddis

on their mythological roots, which would be valuable in studying the genesis of the African tribe in India while taking religious perspectives into account.

Kumar S. and C.N. Pandey (2015) examined Siddis' unique culture. Their research looks into the relationship between the Siddis of Gujarat and the lions of the Gir forest, as well as how the Siddis lived and populated the Gir forest's edges. The study makes connections between Siddis, lions, and the Gir ecosystem. The primary focus is on the lions' peaceful coexistence with the Siddis, which is made possible by emotional attachment and a sense of duty to the environment and their roots. However, the study did not conduct a thorough analysis of how this association is developed and maintained.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The culture of the Siddi tribe is rooted in preserving their unique heritage and adapting to Indian society. By documenting their cultural practices and history, including music, dance, and ceremonies, we can safeguard this valuable heritage and gain insights into broader trends of migration and cultural exchange, shedding light on their struggles and resilience in merging with mainstream society. Every tribe and community possesses its cultural tradition, art, literature, and beliefs and member of such communities strictly adhere to their own unique culture. The Siddi tribe has its own culture and practices, which are distinct from the common Civilized world. Hence the present paper is an attempt at the cultural practices of the Siddi tribe, so the purpose of this the to find the Siddi tribe unique culture.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- ✓ To examine the dance and music of the Siddi tribe
- ✓ Investigate the unique cultural identity of the Siddi tribe.

METHODOLOGY

In the current work, descriptive qualitative data were utilized to examine, which was an important component of our research. Observing the Siddi tribe in their natural surroundings taught us a lot about the tribe's culture in terms of food habits, dressing style, and so on. Throughout this process, we maintained an observation and group conversation as a group, which allowed us to collect and correlate the various observations made about various things, ultimately allowing us to conclude the various components of our study. The goal of this strategy was to play a passive, non-interfering role without disrupting the social dynamics of the Siddi's regular activities.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The researcher has used a descriptive methodology in this study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Among various societies, there exists a disparity in development across social, economic, demographic, and cultural aspects. While some societal groups are well-developed, others lag far behind.



The Siddi tribe in Karnataka, historically a slave tribe, represents a small population striving to maintain their

cultural identity within the host society. Over time, they have transitioned from a nomadic lifestyle to engaging in a transhumant economy, aiming to establish a settled social structure. This shift has brought about significant cultural changes within the Siddi community in Karnataka. In the main part of the research we are discussing the unique culture of the Siddi tribe which is as follows

Language of the Siddi tribe

Language is a symbolic system of communication. Language acts as a carrier of culture and language style indicates the social status of the speaker. Mainly the Siddi tribes do not have their language, Although Siddis primarily speak Konkani, as some histories have told, the Portuguese brought the Siddis as slaves to Goa port and tortured them, unable to endure this torture, and the Siddi tribes came and settled in forest in the Uttara Kannada district. Siddis speak in Konkani they mix, Kannada, Marathi, and some Hindi. Mixed Konkani and some speak Kannada.

Hariyaru worship

Hariyaru is the family god of the Sidds, According to Siddis cosmology the parents after their death become benevolent 'Spirits' and reside in the house, safeguarding and guiding the members of the family in day-to-day matters. This particular belief of the Siddis is unique amongst the various cultural groups. Among the Hindu Siddis Hariyaru worship manifests the relationship between the living members and spirits of the dead. The day and date of the Hariyaru are decided by the Kartha or head man of the house. On a specific day, all the relatives arrive before noon. The kartha of the house fasts upon that day. New unhusked coconuts are brought and the kartha start performing Pooja around mid-afternoon. In this hariyaru replace the coconuts of the previous year and some. It is held 2 times a year one is the Navaratri time and another is near

the Ugadi festival. It is the faith of the Siddhis that our elders are always with us and bless us as we worship them

Damami and Pugadi Dance of Siddis

The Siddis have fascinating dance and folk traditions. Gamate Nrutya is performed by males clothed in traditional clothing, dancing to the beats of the percussion instrument gamate. It is a clay pot with a leather wrapping around its mouth. The dance forms are performed on Holi, Deepavali, Ramzan, and Christmas. This brings us to the Siddi tribe's religious diversity, which includes Hindus, Muslims, and Christians.

Damami Dance of Siddi tribe

The Dhamami dance is one of the traditional dances performed by the Siddi tribe. Dhamami belongs to the single original culture Siddi tribe, a Siddi tribe who usually worked all day long and lived independently in the forest, adopting a special culture called Dhamami. He first learned how to play the tala by making left and right, and then thought about how to sing to that tala. He did not put any kind of song in the form of writing, which may be the reason for this. Instead, he began to sing about nature, about rain, about water, about his interlocutors, about his employer.

That is, the songs were not 10 minutes or 15 minutes, they would sing in 4 lines or 5 lines, repeating the same line and singing in different tunes with different steps. for example, gara vaina vimaana gele bagaleno kayoo, garavaina vimaana gele bagaleno kayo, garavaina vimaana gele, garavaina vimaanagele bagalane kayoo, bagche jalara yevayo garavaina vimaana gele bagalana kayo – loot at this songs Look at" has two lines, which means "I saw a Airoplane go from the house, how did that Airoplane go, what was it, what color was it?" He has mastered the art of dancing and singing a song about it. Even if it's the same song for an hour, he can sing and dance to Damami, the same melody comes but he expresses it in different ways. There is no writing for it. But what they are doing nowadays is to take that song and add the next line and sing and dance.

The art of the Siddi people who have worked hard all day blossoms in the evening, they mostly sing and dance on the day of special worship of their elders, on any special occasion, some Siddhis dance even when their relations are all the same. Such a special art is only for Ruwood Siddis. But in today's day and age, this art can be seen to be on the verge of extinction, it needs to be passed on to the next generation and kept in written form. Otherwise, there is a possibility of destruction.

Costume of the Songs

The Dhamami dance is one of the traditional dances performed by the Siddi tribe. Here mainly the Siddi tribe wears a scarf on

their head and a peacock feather, as they are forest people, a forest leaf is tied around their waist in a very simple way.



Siddi traditional Men and Women

The Pugadi dance is a traditional dance form of the Slave Siddi tribe in Karnataka. The Pugadi dance is often performed during special occasions and festivals. Especially the Ganesha Chaturthi festival reflects the cultural heritage and traditions of the Siddi tribe. Here it is mainly a festival where women sing and dance. Especially on the occasion of the Gauri Ganesha festival, how Gauri is brought, where it is kept, and how it is celebrated is expressed through song and dance. And will remove all the dirt and debris. It like a bit savory, and the ant itself has that sour taste, they added salt only.



**FESTIVAL OF
SIDDI TRIBE
Siddi NASA**

Siddi Celebrated two types of festivals during the month of April and May. Siddi ancestors have installed our god in Ankola taluk in Satunbail Village. Now some of the Siddis are following different religions but during this festival, all three religious people come together and celebrate it. In the morning priest will perform Pooja and will sacrifice Chicken and Sheep for the god and everyone will bring all the ingredients to cook food there will prepare food and eat together one day and they will perform our cultural activities (especially Damami dances) till morning.

Gadi Habba

Gadi habba is also an important festival siddis are celebrated during the of beginning the monsoon season. Every Family will celebrate a festival called Gadi Habba. Every family has marked some boundaries from their home they have marked some tree or river or stone, in that boundary that tree or river or stone the head of the family will perform the Pooja, and later everyone will cook and eat the food together, which they called

Nasadevaru. They only perform Pooja to the tree, the river, or the stone every family will worship different things. Some family worships trees, some worship rivers, and some worship stones.

THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The Siddi Tribe has historically been a slave profession and has its own social life. It is remarkable that even though they have come closer to the civilized world and got caught up in the modern, western, and globalization, they have preserved their unique culture today. They have been celebrating the divine worship of the Siddi tribe as festivals from time to time and today they are attracting a large number of people. It was found in the research that Siddi families who have migrated to other places come and join the mass celebrations.

CONCLUSION

In this era of globalization, Siddis not spared by the rampant progress and modernization. People are getting an education, becoming more conscious of their heritage, and maintaining communication and linkages with other scattered members of their respective communities. Improvement in the economy is enhancing their prosperity and even helping them to further consolidate their identity and good life.

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