1. Introduction
INTRODUCTION

The study of an ethnic group, very close to us, promises an interesting and curious education. This particular ethnic group is the one which has settled in the Western Ghats that pass through North Karnataka, especially Uttar Kannada district and some areas in bordering regions of Belgaum and Dharwad districts. There lives a group of people distinctly different in physical features from the rest of the inhabitants of the region. This ethnic stock has marked similarities with the Negroid race, indicating that they were once African Negroes. These are their descendants. They are called as 'Siddi' (Lobo C H, 1984). In the census of India Bibliography (1961) this tribe has been spelt variously as 'Siddi', 'Sidis', 'Sidhi', 'Siddhi'. The Portuguese and the English refer to them variously as 'Sedee', 'Siddis', 'Sidi', 'Scidee', 'Scidy', 'Seydee', 'Scidee'. Records reveal that they were also known as 'Abexin', 'Abeixm', 'Abyssinians', 'Caffre', 'Caffree', 'Kaphirs', 'Kafra' (Chauhan RSS, 1995). The term 'Siddi' is also spelt as 'Seedy', 'Sidee', 'Siddy', 'Syddies', 'Siddhee', 'Seddee' depending on the varying local pronunciation of the same word. They are also called as 'Habshi', 'Habsshi', 'Hubshi', 'Hubshee', 'Hobsy', the name by which Abyssinians are identified in India (Roy Burman, 1961). Etymologically the word 'Siddi' is derived from the Arbic word 'Saiyidi' meaning 'my lord'. 'Siddi' is an honorific name given in Western India to African Mohammedans, many of whom held high positions in the service of the kings of the Deccan of the past. One of them was Nawab of Janjira. 'Siddi' is a title still applied to holy men in Marocco (Yule H, 1903). The word 'Siddi' is obviously a corruption of the former title Saiyad the designation originally given to the descendants of the holy prophet; but later the same was used as a term of respectful address like 'Shahib' in North Africa. The term 'Hubshi' is referred to the
one who came from El habish, the Arabic name for North East Africa (Trivedi R K, 1961). Enthoven (1922) holds Siddis as synonymous with Habshis which term literally means 'Masters'. It has been said that Habshis have been African and Abyssinian slaves during the pre British rule in India. The term derives from the Arabic word Habashi meaning Abyssinian through its Persian form (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1984). Abyssinia (officially called Ethiopia) is European corruption of 'Habersat' or 'Habashat', the designation of Habesh tribes on the Arabian coast of the Red Sea (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1959). Abyssinia was called Al Habish in Arabia and the slaves from the mainland came to be known in India as Habshis. Their principality of Janjira also became Habshan in the course of time (Chauhan R S S, 1995). We prefer to refer to them as 'Siddi' as they are popularly known by that nomenclature. So as per records and scholars the 'Siddis' are descendants of African Negroes who were brought to India mainly by the voyagers to India, like the Arabs, the Portuguese and the Dutch (Kamath S U, 1985). In the 3rd century AD, the forts in Konkan such as Sopara, Kalyan, Chaul and Pal near Mahad were the centres of trade for those Arab merchants. The trade ties with Gedrosia on the East coast of Africa and Apologos or Obollach near Persian gulf brought in wine, dates, cloth, purple, gold, pearls and also slaves. Similarly exports of corn, rice, butter sesamum, cotton, sugar and iron to Zanzibar and to the East African coasts provided in return in the form of barter slaves, tortoise-shell and cinnamon (Gazetter of Bombay, 1883)

Historial accounts inform us that slavery has existed from time immemorial. For instance, in ancient Europe, especially in Greece and Rome, slavery formed the strong basis of the social, political and economic activity. Even in India slavery can be traced back to the laws of the wars of aborigines and tribals. In Spain and Portugal, slavery did exist right from
the times of the Arabic and the Moorish rule and this phenomenon continued even after the reconquest by the Christian; that occurred in the 15th century when they defeated Muslims themselves were enslaved first! The Portuguese started importing slaves from Africa as well and the first African slaves were transported to Portugal as far back as 1444 by the Captains of Prince Henry the Navigator, after procuring them as ransom in exchange for the Moorish captives. Subsequently the Portuguese were involved in the wide-spread slave trade with vigour and they founded some special centres for trading in slaves in the coastal region of Guinea (The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1984).

Later in the 16th century, Colonial adventures of Spaniards towards the West (America) and the Portuguese towards the East (Asia and South East Asia) gave a sudden fillip to the trade in Negro slaves. The Portuguese after their discoveries in the coastal regions of Africa beyond the river Senegal started to derive much profits from the newly found lands by selling slaves from there (Shirodkar P P, 1985). By rounding off the Cape Storms (later to be known as the Cape of Good Hope), in 1487 by Bartholomeu Diaz and the arrival of Vasco da Gama in 1498 on 17th May at Calicut the route to the East (which Portugal was so long seeking since the time of Henry the Navigator) was at last discovered and established. The Portuguese then set about trying to reshape this ancient India trade between Western India on one hand and East and South East Africa on the other (Ali SS, 1988).

When the Portuguese entered the Indian ocean, they were in quest of mainly spices and nothing else. Of course Slaves and gold came but later. In Sofala, merchants from Gujarat exchanged cotton goods from Cambay and glassware from Melinda for gold from Monomotapa, ivory and captives (=Slaves) which they took home with them. Following their example the Portuguese entered into slave trading relations with the
Kaffirs (Godinho V M, 1969). The Portuguese traders showed a great desire for the Negroes for their slave trade. Referring to the slaves in South America, the slave trader was often heard to say “One black works better and cheaper than three white men”. The reason was purely economic and not racial. It had nothing to do with the colour of the labourer, but the cheapness of the labour. As compared with the Indian labourer and the white labour, Negro slave labour was certainly superior in work and cheaper in value for the black man was strong and hardy. The Negro, being born black had no choice - he was the ‘chosen man’ of the slave trader. A Mississippi dictum was .... “only black men and mules can face the sun in July” (Winks R W, 1972).

The slave trade between India and Africa throws much light on the origins of these ‘Siddis’. Before embarking on the ships, the Portuguese took the slaves to a near by church and got them baptized by the parish priest in a batch of hundreds at a time. But what the slaves looked for was freedom at the earliest opportunity. Because they preferred to be drowned in the sea on their way rather than being sold and harassed as a slave. After having been brought to India, the slaves who escaped into the territory of the neighbouring Kingdom got themselves converted into Muslims or Christians or Hindus (Hiremath R.S, 1993). Apart from their common ethnic stock and economic condition, we find that there are 3 religious groups among the siddis themselves -viz, Hindus, Muslim and Christian Siddis.
This is a brief historical introduction regarding the origin of the African Negroes who settled in the Western Ghats of Karnataka, by evading their owner-masters* into the neighbouring state of Goa. The present work has been undertaken to study the various facets of these settlers with reference to their biomedical status, health and diseases prevalent among this community.

The main objectives of the present study among the Siddis was focused on following aspects:

- Nutritional status
- Oral Health status
- General Health status
- Blood examination for
  - Blood groups
  - Haemoglobin estimation
  - Types of Anemia
  - Differential Leukocyte Count
  - Sickling Phenomenon
  - Fetal Hb
  - Hb Electrophoresis
- Stool examination for Parasites
- To suggest measures to improve the health status

* Adjective is my insertion to make it more emphatic
1.1 History of Migration

Chittick H N (1974) has opined that in the past the Indian Ocean constituted the largest and the most expansive cultural medium in the world during the first millennium and a half of A.D. There is no doubt that the age-old practice of slave trade must have been taking place spread over all that period. The ship movements were adjusted to the regular seasonal monsoons as far back as the 1st century of the Christian era by the Greek Hippalos. In winter the North East monsoon winds pushed the ships away from India and Arabia towards the East coast of Africa. In Summer the South-West monsoon winds favoured their return journey.

The African slave trade as old as human society itself has been in practice for a very long time in East Africa and the same was developed and systematised by the Arabs at a very early date in the history of mankind's early beginning date. Slaves were brought from the interior areas of Africa by the natives themselves to the coastal towns after an arduous march through bank, bush and bog (Hart H, 1952).

An anonymous Egyptian Greek writer says that between the 1st century and the beginning of 3rd century AD, slaves were taken from the Horn of Africa i.e. present day Somalia and Ethiopia. From the 6th century onwards the Arabs were masters of the Indian ocean. The same Arabs were the main promoters of African slave trade in India which practice was going on a large scale. Later in the 13th century the Ethiopian slaves known as 'Habshis' or 'Siddis' were much sought after since they served as stubborn soldiers and able sailors. The Arab ships continued to bring African slaves because there was demand for them in the succeeding centuries to India. The slaves sold in India were
usually from Abyssinia as their country is situated near to India. It has been recorded that a large number of slaves from East Africa was brought to India in the 15th century (Gerbeau H, 1979). Harris J Ii (1991) has given a clear and authentic map depicting the general direction of the sea routes of the Arabs and the Europeans meant for African slave trade up to 1873, connecting various continents (Map 1).

De Souza T R (1987) [Priest] refers to the writings of Amir Khusraw, where in Amir Khusraw distinguished between ‘Habashis’ and ‘Zangis’. Habashis were the slaves transported from the horn of Africa, while Zangis were brought from Zanzibar and the adjacent East African littoral. Further Fr. De Souza mentions that under the Sultanates in North India, the Siddis came to occupy important positions. The tenacity and capacity of the Siddis in maritime warfare ensured their employment (in later times) in Janjira, as admirals of the seventeenth century Mughal rulers. It continued till the late nineteenth century. Thereafter they were commonly employed as stokers on the steamships plying in the Indian Ocean (Raychaudhuri T and Habib I, 1984).

The main intention of the Portuguese maritime explorers towards India was in search of spices and not slave trade. After doubling the Cape of Good Hope, Vasco da Gama reached Malindi, where he received help of the famous Arab pilot, Ahmad Ibn Majid to reach the city of Calicut in 1498. Francisco de Almeida’s victory over Egyptian fleet in 1509, brought about Portuguese naval supremacy all over the Indian Ocean. Later Alfonso-de-Albuquerque wrested the land locked island of Goa from Adil Shahi of Bijapur in 1510. Thus the territory under the Portuguese expanded. Then the Portuguese territory in India was known as Estado da India or Estado Portuguese da India i.e. the
Portuguese state of India. So the Portuguese territory stretched from South East Africa to South East Asia (Boxer C R, 1960).

Slave trading went on side by side with the other Portuguese discoveries and it increased substantially during the peak of their regime (1530-1738). The source of slaves for India was East coast of Africa and from Abyssinia in the North to Sofala in the South. Another main source for acquiring slaves for the Portuguese was Mozambique. African slave trade was actively carried on in Madagascar, a point between Mozambique and Goa. Before bringing the slaves for sale, they were converted to Christianity. Several travellers have left behind accounts in which they have narrated clearly how slave trade was conducted in slave markets. There is an interesting instance of a single frigate which came from Mozambique to Goa in 1683; it had brought 207 Negro slaves. They were purchased by different persons in Goa. Linschoten, a Dutch traveller has commented that he has seen many Abyssinians (as slaves) both men and women brought from Aethopia, who were slaves and captives. Pyrard de Laval has recorded that in Goa, slaves were sold like all sorts of merchandise or chattel in slave market. The slaves, men or women were examined from head to toe before the final deal was made. In the hope of getting a better master with the change of owner, the slaves showed their best disposition to increase the desire of a buyer. Goa was considered to be the headquarters for slave trade market in India. Slaves were bought for domestic work, agriculture labour and also to serve as page boys. There are records indicating that sometimes the poor hapless slaves were subjected to ill-treatment (Pinto J, 1992).

Because of this background, the Siddi settlements are found along the West Coast of India that is in Goa, Diu and Daman; in Gujarat at Rajkot; in Maharashtra at Ratnagiri, Savantawadi and also
1. View of Arabian Sea at Goa from where the Arabs and Portuguese did the African Slave trade.

2. Range of Western ghats through which the African Negro Slaves escaped from Goa to Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka State.
Janjira islands (Hiremath R.S, 1993). It was on 25\textsuperscript{th} Feb. 1869 that slavery was abolished throughout the then Portuguese Empire. Much earlier, the British enacted a bill in April 1843 which put an end to the slave trade in the entire British Empire. As a result, the trade and possession of slaves in India became a criminal offence (Banaji, 1933).

In support of this legal step taken by Portugal there are annual records of slaves freed each year in Portuguese Indian. Whether it was annual gesture of good-will on the part of the Portuguese Crown is not yet clear (Pinto J, 1992).

Further, what happened to the slaves who were freed has not yet been available in any authentic record. In all likelihood they must have escaped into the thick forests of the Western ghats and also into the deep interiors, away from the coast to lead their own lives. As a consequence at present, the Siddis are found inhabiting the forests in Uttara Kannada district since it is situated adjacent to the state of Goa.
1.2 ETHNOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF SIDDIS

1.2.1 Location: According to the Bombay gazetteer the Siddis escaped from Goa from the clutches of their master, infiltrated into the thick evergreen forests on the Indian side and then settled down, mostly in the district of Uttar Kannada (Previously known as North Kanara) in Karnataka. Small pockets of settlement are also seen in Dharwar and Belgaum district (Hiremath R.S 1993). Most of these Siddis are found in Haliyal, Yellapur, Ankola, Mundgod, Sirsi and Supa (presently Joida) talukas of Uttar Kannada district, Kalghatgi taluka in Dharwar district and Khanapur taluka of Belgaum district. Geographically Khanapur and Kalghatgi talukas are adjacent to the other talukas of Uttar Kannada district. The Uttar Kannada district is a coastal district in the state of Karnataka. The Western ghats pass through the middle of this district. The Arabian sea is to the West, state of Goa to the North - West, Belgaum district to the North, Dharwar district to the East, Shimoga district to the South East and South Kanara district to the South. The Uttar Kannada district lies between $13^\circ$ and $15^\circ$ North latitude and between $74^\circ$ and $76^\circ$ East longitude. Most of the Uttar Kannada district is hilly and thickly wooded. The talukas in which Siddis have their settlements are normally found either on the slopes of the Western ghats, having thick forests and valleys crowded with spice and arecanut plantation or on the undulating plateau situated to the East of the ghats (Lobo C H, 1984) (Map 2).

1.2.2 Settlements: Majority of the Siddis have their well settled homes in the forests of the various talukas of Uttar Kannada district. The maximum number of settlements are found in Yellapur taluka.
MAP 2 Location of Uttara Kannada District in Karnataka State within the map of India
followed by Haliyal, Ankola, Sirsi, Mundgod, kalghatgi, Joida (previously Known as Supa) and Khanapur taluka in the descending order. Kalghatgi and Khanapur talukas are situated between the thick woody and undulated Western ghat region. This intervening region opens onto the plateau to the East. The average rainfall per year is approximately 115 inches. The South-West monsoon is the major source of rain, which extends from June to September. During the rest of the year, the weather would be relatively dry (Lobo CH, 1984).

The Siddi settlements are scattered from East to West along the Hubli Karwar road (National Highway no 42) and North to South along the Belgaum Sirsi road, within a walking distance of about 2 to 8 kms. on either side of the road. The settlements are connected to main roads by cartroads or tracks. The houses in the settlement are huts having hay for roofing. A few houses have black country tiles or red managalore tiles. Each house is partitioned into 2 rooms by woven bamboo sticks. The outside room is sitting-cum-bed room and inside room is kitchen-cum-bath room. The outside wall of the house is built of mud and then plastered with cowdung (cowdung is used as a disinfectant). Usually the roof projects outside in front of the house beyond the supporting wall which is like verandha used as a sit-out. The fencing round the tenement and dogs serve as protective guard against the roaming cattles or wild beasts or monkeys (Palakshappa TC, 1976).

The Siddis usually live in separate houses but close by one another. Some of their houses are located in the middle of the fields or at a corner. Each settlement has a minimum of about 5 houses and the maximum number is of about 40 houses, which could be scattered around or methodically arranged on both sides of a street. Eight to ten
of such settlements grouped within a range of 10 kms. form a Village sangha (also known as Grameena sangha) (Grameena = Village, in local language)

Three or four of such Village-sanghas constitute a Cluster sangha. These Cluster sanghas do not correspond to the talukas. But they may have village sanghas from one single taluka or even from 2 or 3 neighbouring talukas put together. Presently there are a total of 28 of such Village-sanghas distributed in 9 Cluster-sanghas (Map 3).

They are:
1. Idagundi cluster in Yellapur taluka.
2. Kotemane cluster in Yellapur taluka
4. Arbail cluster in Yellapur and Mundgod talukas.
5. Arbail cluster in Yellpur, Ankola and Sirsi talukas.
6. Malagaon cluster in Ankola and Sirsi talukas.
7. Bhagvati cluster in Haliyal taluka.
9. Gavegal cluster in Haliyal and Joida talukas.

According to the 1987 survey, the total number of Siddi settlements in all the 28 Grameena Sanghas is found to be 117.

**1.2.3 Population**: In the year 1987, as per survey records, the number of Siddi families was 1560 in 177 settlements having a total population of 7585. Of these, males were 3846 (50.7%) and females 3739 (49.29%). Subsequently according to the 1996 survey, the total population is 12,153, the total families are 2405, and total settlements are 189. This authentic information clearly indicates that over a period of 10 years the population has increased by 4518 (59.62%). These
figures are provided by kind courtesy of Siddi Development Project. The Table I indicates that during the last 10 years, Siddi settlements have increased in Haliyal and Yellapur talukas. However the settlements have decreased in Ankola, Mundgod, Joida and Khanapur talukas. Whereas they have remained the same in Sirsi and Kalghatgi talukas. The Siddi population has increased in Haliyal, Yellapur, Ankola and Mundgod talukas, whereas it has decreased in Sirsi, Joida, Kalghatgi and Khanapur talukas. Table II shows Religionwise distribution of Siddi population in various talukas.

1.2.4 Language: All the Siddis are familiar with the regional language, Kannada. The languages spoken in Yellapur and Ankola area are kannada and konkani. In Haliyal area the Muslim Siddis speak Urdu and Kannada while Christian Siddis speak Konkani and Kannada. In brief, they have adopted the language and culture of the local dominant regional group (Lobo C.H, 1984).

The Sidamo tribes of Ethiopia are classified into 7 groups by Murdock. They are:


The Siddis are considered to be a tribe of a major group called Ometo (Murdock GP, 1953). The Ethiopians speak the Swahili dialect. Sadama is one form of the language in Ethiopia. Apart from this, kafe and Habura are the 2 groups of languages spoken in Ethiopia. Accordingly we could conjecture that the Negroes who had to migrate to India spoke the dialect of their orgin. But due to the influence of local cultures for several generations, the Siddis in India today have totally lost touch with their orginal language and culture.
1.2.5 Physical Features : The Siddis are generally well built, sturdy, tall or short with a medium to strong physique. The average height is 165 cms. Their dark black complexion of skin is very striking. Some have black brown and a few others have even brown coloured skin. But a majority of the Siddis have black coloured hair. However a few have black-brown and very occasionally brown coloured hair too. The form of hair among Siddis is very characteristic. Most of them have woolly and frizzly hair which are known as helical hair. Very few have wavy hair. Some of the children born to the parents of whom one is from non Siddi community have wavy or straight hair. A majority of the Siddis have coarse texture of hair. Others have medium or fine texture of hair. Most of the Siddi men have slight beard and moustache and a majority of them have thin body-hair. The Siddis usually have dark brown colour of the eyes. A few have black eyes or light brown eyes.

Features of the nose are a typically characteristic finding. Majority of the Siddis have medium type of nasal depression and a few have prominently depressed nose. Most of the Siddis have concavo-convex nasal bridge.

Thick lips or medium lips are observable among Siddis. A marked type of lip eversion is seen commonly in Hindu Siddis, whereas slight eversion is seen commonly in Christian and Muslim Siddis. Slight forehead slope is most common one among all the Siddis. But medium to high forehead height is commonly seen. Medium type of chin with round or square shape are commonly seen. A marked facial prognathism is not a common feature. On the other hand slight facial and alveolar prognathism is a common feature. Most of the Siddis have slight and free earlobes (Pavate P P, 1985).
1.2.6 Family Structure: The Siddi family constitutes a core unit of their social organisation, from which other relations evolve. The Siddis respect elders. There is a mutual obligation among living members. The siddi family operates in a particular supernatural way. There are a few people in the community who traditionally 'act' as supernatural powers and give guidance. They act as Spirits of the dead parents. In local language they say 'God has entered the body of the person i.e. the medium is said to be possessed by the spirit of the dead or the God. Thus the dead foretell any uncommon event and warn the living of the future consequences. Hence the living seek guidance of the dead whenever such an occasion comes to pass. A strong belief in spirits is common among the Siddis of all the 3 religions- comprising of Hindu, Muslim and Christian. The household consists of husband, wife and unmarried children. Old parents are also part of the family. The elder male member is the main bread earner for the family. The head of the family works on the land owned or rented by him and other members of his family help him in the work. A majority of the families are nuclear families which is a unique feature of Siddis. A son on getting married establishes his own household, as the Siddis feel that it is better to separate when relations are going good rather than separate after a bitter encounter. The house from where a person separates is called a 'Ghar' and the new house is called as 'Bidhar'. The Ghar is considered to be a sacred place where the family 'Hiriyaru' (=elders) resides and is worshipped by the eldest agnate staying in the house. Male superiority persists among the Siddis. The male head of family also known as the 'Budhivanta' (=intelligent or clever) makes all important decisions regarding family matters and settles disputes. The wife is consulted in economic matters within the family. Elders of the family
and leaders of a settlement are called as 'Jante'. The household property is divided equally among the agnates (Lobo C H, 1984).

1.2.7 Marriage: Siddis consider marriage as an obligation bestowed upon them by the elders. Most of the boys marry by the age of 23 years and the girls by 19 years. Early marriage has been gradually reducing now. Child marriage is not practised among the Siddis. Monogamy is a prevalent type of marriage among Hindu and Christian Siddis. However polygamy is permitted among Muslim Siddis. In selecting a mate greater preference is given to a close relative. First preference is to sister's daughter. Cross cousin marriages are preferred and they believe that such marriages are likely to last permanently. When no appropriate partners are available within the kin circle, then the family background, health, physique and personal qualities of the prospective bride are given due consideration (Palakshappa T C, 1976). There have been instances of intercaste marriage also among Siddis, between Siddis and the local people.

1.2.8 Kinship: Various relationships among the Siddis are identified by a common kinship nomenclature known as 'Sumbandha' which is used mainly amongst the local Hindu Siddis. The kinship terminologies are:

a) Maneyavaru: indicates members of a single lineage which consists of 3 generations including 'Hiriyaru' the dead parents of the Ego, his parents, his brothers, his own and brother's children. The females are totally excluded from this lineage (which is counted along the male generation i.e. Patriarchal)

b) Bandhugalu: are all the recognised paternal kin. It is an extension of the Maneyavaru relationship. The split houses
arising out of death of every head of a household constitutes Bandhugalu.

c) **Balagadavaru**: includes all recognised maternal kin i.e., mother's sisters and their children, mother's brothers and their children too.

d) **Nentaru**: are the newly contracted affinal relations. In course of time they will become balagadavaru (Palakshappa IC, 1976).

1.2.9 **Economic Organisation** : The economic organisation of the Siddis depends chiefly upon agriculture. The primary activity is agriculture and secondary occupations are forest-labour and honey collection. A majority of the Siddis live in rural areas and have to attend to agriculture. A few have non-agricultural pursuits as source of their income. For them 'work' is highly honoured and respectable. They feel that no Siddi should eat without working, except in old age and ill health. Their attachment to land and zeal for cultivation is firm, deep rooted and of a religious fervor. They clear the forest with great effort and render the land fit for cultivation, living within the thick forest, braving the wild beasts and the many crawling reptiles. Now a days the Siddis have been erecting a wire fence along their boundary (instead of bamboo or wood fence) and even pass electric current to keep the wild beasts away. Some have encroached upon the forest land up to 4 acres for cultivation (which act is called in local language as Akraman).

If any agnates crop failed, then the person who had reaped good harvest, shares his produce with the unfortunate one. Sharing of agricultural products constituted the base of their economic system
mutually helpful and this system perpetuated the social relationship among the Siddis in the past. But now this practice is slowly disintegrating.

To add to the main source of income, the Siddis volunteer to work in arecanut gardens, cut trees for forest contractors etc. They accept subcontracts from big contractors who have obtained large scale contract from the Forest department for collecting honey and this is a really hazardous task. They run the risk of getting bitten by the bees and thus suffer allergic reactions too.

The Siddis as a race are known to work vigorously putting all their zeal and enthusiasm in their fields, but they do not like other jobs. Inspite of this, for reasons unknown as yet they are considered to be lazy people. On the whole they are contented and carefree. They only think of the present and hardly worry about the morrow. They have a happy-go-lucky attitude. But of late they have been taking up other jobs like that of a mechanic or of watchmen or cleaner or driver and such others.

1.2.10 Political Organization: The political system of Siddis serves as an important and smooth running politico-judicial function. The basic unit operates within the settlement itself. This type of an organisation is said to be typical of primitive tribes eg. Nuer and Dinka tribes of Sudan (Lobo C H, 1984). Each settlement is independent and the local unit is known as “Siddi Subha” (Settlement Council) which consists of all the heads of all the households in a settlement. Out of them 5 are selected to form the ‘Pancha’ (Group of Five). Of these 5, one is selected to be the ‘Budhivanta’, who heads the ‘Subha’ and the ‘Pancha’. By tradition the post of the Budhivanta has evolved itself as a
The Budhivanta is assisted by a 'Kolkar' (=son of constable), in his day-to-day duties. Budhivanta is considered to be the guardian of the settlement as a whole and also protector of the community traditions. After judicious and separate consultations with the elders of the Subha, the Budhivanta pronounces his judgement and that is compulsorily binding on the parties concerned.

The village panchayat takes care of civil administration, whereas Siddi Subha maintains Community norms. It has been observed that a marvellous harmony exists between the Siddi Subha and the village panchayat. In the present days, the Siddis are slowly and gradually being influenced by regional politics, village officials, landlords and police, obviously because they have to be dependent upon the local landlords since they are their tenants or labourers. (Palakshappa TC, 1976).

In today's scenario, the elected post of Budhivanta exists only among Christian Siddis. And his election depends upon his leadership qualities. This post is no longer a hereditary one now. The contemporary Siddis are interested in the present day politics. The national trend has entered this remote enclave. eg., of the 5 Siddis elected in Gram panchayat elections, 2 are women. All Karnataka Siddi Development Association (AKSDA) was formed in 1984 to bring all the Siddis of Karnataka of different religions on a common platform to fuse them all towards their integral and coherent development. Now the same association has been renamed as "Siddi Development Project" which also works for the welfare of the Siddis residing in Goa.

The general backwardness of the Siddis and their low standard of living in terms of health, education, shelter, their poverty, and their
distinct ethnic identity of African Negroes and also because they do not form any part of a larger society in social and political organisation, a study was conducted by Cyprian H. Lobo* in 1984. He submitted his report to the Government of Karnataka and India. Based on this recommendation, the Siddis of Karnataka have now been included in the category of Backward Tribe since 1986.

1.2.11 Religion: The Siddis practice three major religions of the world-Christianity (catholic), Islam (Sunni) and Hinduism. Accordingly they are identified as Christian Siddis, Muslim or Musalman Siddis and Hindu Siddis. Muslim Siddis claim that they are originally Musalman and Siddi later. Further they argue that they are not ‘converts’ like the others, but have been muslims right from the beginning itself from the birth of Islam and also claim that Musalman Siddi is a small section within the Islamic faith.

It appears that Christian Siddis and Hindu Siddis had a common past originating in Goa. To have a continuous account we have to go back to the renaissance: It was a normal practice of the Portuguese during those days to baptize the Negro slaves in African Coast just before embarking them on ships to bring them to India.

After their arrival in Karnataka some of these Siddis having worked for Hindus and having lived with them for generations together under their cultural background consider themselves as Hindus. They isolate themselves from the other Indian Siddis. There is not much recognisable social interaction between the Siddis and the non Siddis (local people other than the Siddis) of the same religion. Hence belonging to different religious groups in no way hampers the Siddi identity. It has been noticed that all Siddis of those 3 different

* Now Cyprian H. Lobo is known by the name of Kishore Kishore
practices have a common animistic belief in spirits and also in their ancestors, similar to those of the primitive caste and tribal groups, yet to join the main stream of the so called civilisation.

The Hindu Siddis worship 'Hiriyaru' considered to be Family God with all Brahminic rituals, whereas the Muslim Siddis and Christian Siddis observe this worship only briefly mostly out of fear to their religious heads because he takes exceptions to these animistic beliefs. The Siddis have also borrowed a lot of rituals from the dominant groups to which they have developed a strong affinity. In Haliyal area there are Muslim Siddis and Christian Siddis, which can be confirmed by their names and claims. Hindu Siddis are found mainly in the ghat areas of Yellapur and Ankola amidst the local Hindus. (Palakshappa T C, 1976).