CHAPTER III

SOCIAL HISTORY OF SIDDHIS

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter the researcher describes the influence of past on the social conditions of Siddhis in Dharwad and Karwar Districts of Karnataka and presents their current social conditions. The researcher also analyses how Siddhis lost their age old social structure and the social imposition placed on them leading to cultural evaporation. The decay of social status as hard working and independent tribe and then presents how social formation of Siddhis is being shaped in the modern times by presenting the influence of caste system among Hindu Siddhis, their change of names from those of Africans to Portuguese and Indian, their exploitation and various myths people have about Siddhis. The researcher also describes their social set up in which he presents their divine kingship, marital status, food habits, health, medicine, language, sports and religion.

3.2. Social Condition of Siddhis in the Past

The social condition of Siddhis in the past was miserable. They were the target for the European powers as well as Arabs to trade with other nations across the globe. They would have sufficient justifications for the same. There are a number of myths circulated among the Europeans to justify the slave trade as they tell that some came to Africa to spread civilization, some to Christianize the heathens, and some to educate a savage and barbaric people. But the fact is that the Europeans did not enter Africa to bring civilization – no nation ever invaded
another nation for any reason other than to exploit that nation for its own profit.\(^1\) The Siddhis brought as slaves were sold for two reasons one as domestic workers and the next as praedial who worked as nautch girls and prostitutes.\(^2\) Thus slave trade was the beginning of displacement of Siddhis as well as the newness in their social condition. They had to learn unknown languages, get attuned to new social set up, and thus acclimatize themselves to everything new that came their way. So much so, that they seem not remember the type of kinship they had, their descent, affiliation or political system.

3.3. **Social Condition of Siddhis under Portuguese**

Social condition of Siddhis in Goa under Portuguese is another distress story of this tribe who underwent untold miseries under various masters, mistresses and neighbours. While visiting Goa, the Great traveller Careri observed that there were abundance of cafres and blacks (Siddhis) for he found Portuguese that keep thirty or forty and the least six or twelve. To carry their Umbrella, and Andora and other mean employments; nor were they at any other charge to keep them, but a Dish rice at noon, and another at night; for they had no other garments but what they brought out of their mother’s wombs.\(^3\) Taken up by the hard work done by the cafres and loyalty shown the traveller bought a Siddhi to go with him on his return journey towards Malaca.\(^4\)

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3. Sen S.N., *Indian Travels of Thevenot and Careri*, “Indian Travels of Careri,” Published by the National Archives of India, Delhi, 1949, p. 188.

The act of separation while they were sold as slaves was heart-breaking, the master showed no sympathy while separating a husband from his wife and children. In the Medieval times in Goa Siddhis were human beings only in form having no social status under Portuguese. They had to do all sorts of works be it military, domestic, agrarian or any other without any incentives.\(^5\) Payment was not must for those who served in the army besides cases of crippling, maiming, salting the wounds, washing the cuts with vinegar or brine and even killing them which often forced the slaves to flee the house.\(^6\)

3.3.1. Social Structure of Portuguese Goa

In order to understand the social status of Siddhis in Dharwad and Karwar districts we need to know the social structure of Goan society. According to Kiran Larsen, the high position in the Goan society was held by *Reinios* the Portuguese nationals who served a specific term in government office in Goa but were not permanent. Among *Reinios* the higher nobility was called *Fidalgos* and the lower nobility christened as *Nobres*. The second kind was the *Casados* the Portuguese who married the native women and settled in Goa. Casados were further divided into two they were *Casticos*, the pure Portuguese blood and the *Mesticos* who were the offspring of married Portuguese men and native women. The third kind was the *Mulattoes*, the offspring resulting from the Portuguese slave masters and their female African slaves.\(^7\) They were followed by the native Neo-Christians and further down were slaves and tribals and the last were the non-Christians.

\(^5\) Niccolao, V. Manucci, op. cit; I, p.119; III, p. 156.


\(^7\) Larsen, Kiran, *Faces of Goa*, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi, 1998
3.3.2. Siddhi Priests in Goa

Although the Goan Church was instituted and controlled by Portuguese priests, there were a few Siddhi priests among them between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It seems that those Siddhi priests who were able to rise to such a position all served at the Convent of Santa Barbara in Chimbel, a suburb of Goa. Among these priests were Father Miguel, Constantine (also called Prince Mapeze), and his brother Joas. Fathers Constantine and Joas were the sons of the Emperor of Munhumtappa in East Africa. In such token and isolated examples of priests among them, it seems the Siddhis did not have role models in Christianity. Also, the Portuguese Christians discriminated against the Siddhi priests. At present, the only trace of the influence of these African priests is the blank outdoor slab which marks the grave of Father Miguel in front of the new chapel of Santa Barbara.8

3.3.3. Siddhis at Junagarh

In Junagarh district of Gujarat, there are about 8,000 Siddhis of African descent. The last Nawab of Junagarh had many negroes as kennel keepers and hunting assistants, while negro females were employed as maids in the harem. All of them retain their distinctive features. They like their counterparts elsewhere in the country, live in abject poverty, though they have long been accepted as equal to any other tribal community. Siddhis here have African saints and accept both Nagarsha Pir and baba Ghor as their saints, the latter being worshipped in a shrine at Ratanpur village of Jhagadia talukas of the Broach district, where he had settled in his last years of life.9


9 Chauhan R R S., Africans in India: from Slavery to Royalty, pp. 243-244.
3.4. **Social Structure of Siddhis in Karnataka**

While Siddhis came into India they procured various positions in accordance with their abilities and luck. Thus the researcher observes various streams of Siddhis the first one being those employed as soldiers, as bodyguards, as guards for kings’ harem and as generals leading the army at battles. This section of Siddhis did enjoy a better status in the society both in the eyes of the citizens and the royalty as well. They did enjoy security, were treated with respect, better fed in order to keep them fit for the future battles and to preserve law and order in the kingdom. Some of the Siddhis won the hearts of their kings and queens to an extent that they were given gifts both in the form of land grants and gold.\\(^{10}\)

The second stream of Siddhis was those employed in the houses, fields and other domestic sectors. Pinto reveals to us that the prestige of Portuguese in Goa in the 16^{th} – 19^{th} century was measured according to the number of slaves each possessed. Though many slaves served a single household Siddhis must have not had much to converse with each other as they were not of the same tribe and kinship.\\(^{11}\)

The third stream of Siddhis are those bought by the local Bhattas, Muslim land lords and the Christian land owners sold by the Portuguese. These Siddhis lived away from the masters’ residence and were totally secluded from others. Their world was their master as he would take care of their needs. Besides, Siddhis

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were isolated from others for fear of losing cheap labour, and to avoid Siddhi unions but to avail their service and loyalty which the Siddhis were happy to do.

3.4.1. Siddhis’ Cultural Evaporation

Siddhis brought to India for sale belonged to many tribes in Ethiopia, Tanzania, Mozambique or Zanzibar, who had their individual customs, traditions, dances, songs, languages and unique techniques. The beginning of their social and cultural decay was their alienation from their tribe, separation in the merchandise ships and severance at the sale as slaves. Such dismantled family could not afford to pass on all that they knew and were following in their homeland. Besides, the masters never created a platform in order to foster the Siddhi culture. Siddhis’ drum beats had ceased, their singing strangled, their smile forgotten during their slavery in India.

The slaves were kept busy and it was natural that the slaves had to learn the master’s language be it Portuguese, Kannada, Urdu, Marati or Konkani, in order to understand their commands and orders. And to be familiar with the people whom they serve they had to familiarize themselves with the local tongues at the expense of their mother tongue. Pinto points out that some of the women as well as men sold self made pickles and for doing this they had to learn the local language, customs of wishing, and ways of dealing with the customers.\(^\text{12}\)

3.4.2. Social Imposition

In the past 500 years of their stay in research districts the Siddhis in Haliyal, Yellapura and Ankola region observed the master and his kin, be it religious beliefs, dress pattern, style of functioning, pattern of living or means of entertainment and self imposed it on one’s own family. These 500 years and more

have served them for a true social formation. At the same it is evident that these slaves rarely had an opportunity to prepare drums, flutes or any other instruments for entertainment which were part of their culture and society. A heavy labour during day kept their evening entertainments away meaning kept their original skills, entertainment, and freedom away and along with it their basic instinct for their cultural things to be practiced. A real social imposition process was on from the day they began working in these areas.

3.4.3. Reinvention of Siddhi Culture

Siddhis who continued to slog under their masters had no chance to re-invent their forgotten ethos. Rather after their escaped to the forest had to re-invent their own cultures and traditions which their ancestors rarely taught them while in captivity or under slavery. Today we do not find any Siddhi who speaks his or her mother tongue i.e., Swahili (that is spoken either in Ethiopia, Tanzania, Muzambique or Zanzibar etc.). But their contacts with the locals after years of nomadic life have enabled them to pick-up dialects that would keep them in touch with the locals. They copied few things from the aborigine tribes who were living side by side or moved along with them in their nomadic life. Tribes like Lambanis, Kurubas, Jenukurubas etc.

3.4.4. Siddhis and Decay of Social Status

James Watson noticed that conditions more clearly favour caste where aliens are recruited in considerable number for low status positions, which therefore need not be and accordingly are not normally occupied by members of the recruiting group.\textsuperscript{13} Earlier the Siddhis dined with Bandhis, Konarpaiks and practice hypergamy with them. The Vokkals do not dine and serve food to Siddhis

inside the house.\textsuperscript{14} The autonomy of a social system may either increase or decrease in a changing field, and its expression may be modified. Here the subordinate group does not hold authority over dominant group.

Siddhis played important role in various kingdoms such as Bahamani, Bijapur and other kingdoms of the Deccan, initially they attained good reputation in the eyes of locals as people of high rank, caliber, courage and hard work. While Siddhi soldiers served their rulers dutifully the locals were jealous of their loyalty and waited for their downfall.\textsuperscript{15} They were slowly recruited for status positions, but their social status declined as the days pushed ahead and Siddhis proved it by their passivity and submission due to helpless circumstances as labourers due to their expulsion from various kingdoms, some sold as slaves where as others yielded to any sort of labour for survival.

3.5. \textbf{Social Formation of Siddhis in Modern Time}

Social formation of Siddhis today has to do something with their decision to flee from their masters and their social conditions to embrace or self-impose the their own social formation. After their flee from various masters Siddhis’ new home was the secure forest where they erected small thatched huts and lived with available forest products and hunting. Some of them took to agriculture and others later got into daily labour in the surrounding villages. This was the beginning of their social formation as a distinct tribe trying to carve out an identity of their own in the passing of time.


“The Maratha Lingayats, and Brahmins employed them and influenced greatly. They were considered a separate caste. Hence we notice a gradual integration with the Indian society by the Siddhis who have not only adopted the total Hindu culture of the region but have also followed social structure of various religions.”

Social formation of Siddhis began at a later time while they observed their employers, masters, and the local as and when they would come in contact with them. They began to realize that they were far behind the world around them, but were happy and content in their dwellings with their own tribal traditions, customs and myths.

3.5.1. Caste System

Siddhis are considered separate caste by the locals a caste lower than Mahars. The Hindu Siddhis lay claim on the local caste hierarchy. They consider themselves superior to and above the ‘Bandhi’ and ‘Namadris’ on the ranking of caste but below the Havig Brahmins and Okkals. While they dine in Havig Brahmin’s house, the food is served to them outside the house. The Okkaligas also treat them in similar manner. The ‘Bandhis’ and the ‘Namadaris’ are prepared to host the Siddhis indoors the Siddhis feel themselves higher in the caste hierarchy and spurn dining with them. Same suit follows among the Christian and the Muslims.

The Local Christians always place themselves above the Siddhi Christians due to which inter-marriage between Siddhis and local Christians was not

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17 Kiran Kamal Prasad, *In Search of an Identity*, p. 35.

encouraged. But as of now things are changing where in the local Christians have marital alliances with the Christian Siddhis. However this is not the same with the Muslim Siddhis. Both Christian and Muslim Siddhis have separate status within their respective communities. The Muslim Siddhis claim that they were part of Bijapur Kingdom due to which they bare surnames such as Naik, Havaladar, Patel and so on. Where as Christians always show their allegiance to Goa, a hub of Christian presence since 15th century. Their surnames represent a close connection with the Goan names such as Bastian, Minguel, Anthon, and so on.

Being a small community and as an apartheid group all the Siddhis of the area built up society irrespective of religious differences. Today these groups mingle with each other and come together for few occasions like marriage or burial of a Siddhi or some other festive occasions. Surprisingly the Hindu Siddhis are better educated in comparison to their counterpart, the Muslim Siddhis, whereas Christian Siddhis top the list among the educated Siddhis and are economically well placed if not all.

3.5.2. Siddhi Status in Modern Times

Gradual integration with the Indian society siddhis have not only adopted the total Hindu culture of the region but have also followed the social structure of various religions. They are trying to maintain a place for themselves in Indian culture and at the same time are in search of a slot in each religion – Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. It is good to notice that in their own religious communities- be it Christianity that claims equal standing to all, Islam or Hinduism – they are a displaced tribe not par equal to other locals who practice the same religion as them. Earlier they could not have marital relations with the identical religious locals due to their Negroid features that degraded them despite

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being strong built, highly loyal and hardworking.\textsuperscript{20} The Hindu Siddhis are laying claim on the local caste hierarchy. They consider themselves superior to and above the ‘Bandhis’ and ‘Namadaris’ on the ladder of castes but below the Havig Brahmins and Okkals.\textsuperscript{21} They have come to consider themselves as one caste group and refer themselves as a caste group by using the Konkani term for caste, \textit{jat}. But now they prefer to consider themselves more and more as a community (Samuday) when trying to emphasize the unity of the siddhis irrespective of religious distinctions between them.\textsuperscript{22} One of the reasons for the Siddhis to be at the lowest strata of the society is their poverty which has engulfed them due to illiteracy, which is duly misused by the rich landlords for selfish motives. But both Muslim and Christian Siddhis have a separate status within their respective religions.

3.5.3. Status of Backward Class and Schedule Tribe

After a long investigation and thorough research in the early 1980s Cyprian Lobo of Society of Jesus published a document on the living conditions, social as well as economic plight of Siddhis in the thick forest of Dandeli as people suffering and unnoticed by the government. This document was an eye opener to the Government of Karnataka which appointed a special commission under Dr. Kadethotad from the University of Karnataka who with the help of Cyprian Lobo placed a report before the Government of Karnataka. The report clearly qualified the eligibility of Siddhis for the Backward Class status and thus the government of Karnataka granted Siddhis the status of Backward Classes under B.T. Category in

\textsuperscript{20} Kiran Kamal Prasad, pp. 42-45.  
\textsuperscript{21} Chauhan R. R. S., p. 241.  
1986. 23 The Government of Karnataka passed an order on 8 January 1986 including Siddhis in the list of Backward Tribes for the purpose of special treatment under Articles 15(4) and 16(4) of the Constitutions of India. And later the matter was referred to the Central government for their inclusion in the list of Schedule Tribes. The Government of India passed an order on 7 January 2003 providing Siddhis the status of Schedule Tribe with the order (amended) Act, 2002, No. 10 of 2003 and publishing it in the Gazette of India on the following day. 24

But the backward status was granted to those who were in the Karwar district only and but those Siddhi living in the other two districts, namely Dharwad and Belgaum were not included in the list. Hence Cyprian Lobo had to remind the government about the finding. In his letter he writes,

“Siddhis are also found in two more talukas, contiguous with the Haliyala Taluka of U.K. but Located in Belgaum and Dharwad districts – Kalghatgi in Dharwad and Khanapur in Belgaum. The Siddhi population in these talukas respectively are 159 and 58 with 34 and 14 households. (There is a possibility of another 20 Siddi households with 100 people living in Kalghatgi Taluka) thus the total population of Siddhis in Karnataka is 5578 with 1087 households. What Dr. Kadethotad has done is to delete in his report the two non-U.K. Talukas and give the calculated figures as his findings.” 25

23 Order No. SWL 4 BCA 86 Bangalore, 08.01.1986.


25 Lobo Cyprian, Letter to Sri. V. Balasubramanyan, Secretary to the Chief Minister, Vidhana Soudha, Bangalore, Dated 2nd May 1986.
The matter was pursued further with the Government India who studied the matter seriously and granted Siddhis Scheduled Tribe (ST) status in November 2003. After gaining this ST status the lives of Siddhis began to change as they felt their importance in the society. Due their ignorance of the same many Siddhis are still grappling with their poverty stricken settlements without using their privileges.

The various struggles undertaken by the Siddhis to get themselves recognized as a Scheduled Tribe has made them to think of themselves as one people. First and foremost, beyond the narrow boundaries of the three religions they profess. As a scheduled Tribe, they now are entitled to many benefits for their social, economic and political advancement. This process also has set in motion many other dynamics that have further strengthened their identity and claim for equality and honour among the people of the region and country.

3.5.4. Siddhi Surnames

Siddhis use the word ‘Siddhi’ as the marker of their identity. Most of the Siddhis be it Christian, Hindu or Muslim bears this title at the end of their name. Most of the people belonging to this tribe are proud to be called Siddhis. To cite some examples we have Krishna Siddhi, Imam Siddhi, Bastianv Siddhi and so on. But it is interesting to note that the Siddhi also affix another name in order to keep their identity as part of a locality. The names that they affix are before their the word ‘siddhi’ as cited in the examples, such as Krishna Mudinasaba Khadir Jimaadir Siddhi, Madhukesha Belganvkar Siddhi, Igenthi Naayka Siddhi, Milagri Naayka Siddhi, Francis Kambrekar Siddhi, Francis Hardabodekar Siddhi etc.


Though some of them do not prefer to have the word ‘siddhi’ affixed in their name due to various reasons. Still neighbours in the locality identify them with ‘Siddhi’. Recently most of the Siddhis have been glad to affix this title in order to get the ST privileges.

3.5.5. Social Justice

Social justice is right of every human being. But Siddhis are not born for it. In his interview Delio de Mendonoca observes that Siddhis were denied of social justice in Portuguese Goa as he opines that

“There is no evidence that a Siddhis was given even a decent burial because Siddhis were considered animals and animals do not deserve a Church burial. Though these Siddhis were attending church ceremonies along with their masters Siddhis, even the converted, were not considered for a descent burial. Most probably one or two slaves were allowed to take the body and bury it in the far off fields.”

Diog Salgatti while speaking about funeral ceremony about few decades ago observes that Christian Siddhis’ corpse was rarely taken to the church for funeral ceremony but the Budwont would go and inform the parish priest who would ring the church bell and the people would take the body in a procession and bury the body without the presence of priest. And on the third day the family members collected cow’s urine, milk, pure water and fill them in a bamboo-cup, fry an egg and place all these at the graveyard.

3.5.6. The role of the Church in Ensuring Social Justice

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As Siddhis lived in the distance, unapproachable pockets of the dense forest, they were isolated which in turn deprived them from the emergent civilization. They remained a neglected entity under the Portuguese term Cafree, people of the dark. But the arrival of Bishop William D’Mello, as the bishop of Karwar Diocese on 24th January 1976 Siddhis began to experience part of their emancipation from poverty and illiteracy. He set up the Karwar Diocese Development council (KDDC) and secured funds for the development of this underprivileged Siddhis.

Many Catholic priests, nuns and NGO workers under this banner are slogging for the development of Siddhis. KDDC has taken up several socio-economic programmes, free educational programmes as well as more concentrated efforts to bring Siddhis to the forefront of the society. One among such persons was Sr. Maria Gorothy SRA, who worked at Bala Pragathi Kendra, Honnavara and has contributed no less in improving the lot of Siddhis.29 She worked for the upliftment of Siddhis under the Direction of Bishop William D’Mello DD, who envisaged the progress of Siddhis in the district of Karwar.

In 1987 D. N. Kadethotead of Dharwad University and Cyprian Lobo SJ made a study on Siddhis and established that many Siddhis were bonded labourers in houses at Ankola and Yellapur Taluks of Karwar District.30 The study continued to depict the pathetic condition of the Siddhis, only 5.3% were able to read and write and out of them just half- a-dozen were Matriculates and hardly 4 stepped into the colleges. Out of 1,101 families 364 were engaged in agriculture but only 86 of them were self sufficient. All the rest owned small pieces of land below 5 acres which was mostly forest encroachment and unyielding land. Bonded labour


30 Ibid.
was found among them though apparently un-noticed and denied by the masters. Minimum or no medical attention was given to these labourers when they fell sick or injured. Hence most of the people suffered in the jungles without even clean drinking water.

3.5.7. Barriers for the Upliftment of Siddhis

Illiteracy, poverty and oppression by the landlords and exploitation of Siddhis as cheap labourers are the focal barriers for their upliftment. Lack of willingness and fear of failure haunts them from getting out of their backwardness. Opposition from the dominant locals is another factor adding to all these woes.

3.5.8. Siddhis and their Exploitation

Siddhis are highly influenced by Havak Brahmins as they have a master and servant association. Siddhis, who were well built, healthy for manual labour, did not hold any land rather always worked under someone else. One of the techniques of making them subservient was to falsely accuse a Siddhi of theft or other crimes which they would accept it in their innocence and fear. Then try them in the village Panchayat. No Siddhi knew the rules and regulations while they were tried at Katte (Village Panchayat System). One who frees him is considered a saviour and the freed Siddhi would be subservient for life.

3.5.9. Myths about Siddhis

The status of Siddhis on one hand is draining down in the society that they live in. Siddhis are branded as Siddhi Baara Buddi which literally means A Siddhi has twelve ways of crookedness. This betrays Siddhis’ past dignity and trust locals had in them, especially in matters of lending money to them observes Alwyn Fernandes of Kesrolli, who had had bad experiences in the past while lending

\[^{31}\text{Ibid.}\]
money. Even others agree to this expression. The researcher observed uncertainty in their work i.e., if a Siddhi comes a day for labour and works hard right from dawn to dusk he would be absent for next two to three days. Some locals directly accuse them of laziness and lethargy. That Siddhis do not prefer to work hard but desire to live a cozy life. Henry John Drewal, a research scholar while explaining the nature of Siddhis mentions that the prevalent negative attitudes of Indians towards the Siddhis as unreliable because they change their minds with every suggestion coming from different people\(^\text{32}\) supports the local expression though expressions could change later.

3.6. **Social set up among Siddhis**

The social set up among Siddhis is not totally different from that of the locality in which they live except for few elements such as divine kingship, village headman and other traditions that they hold close to themselves. In the following paragraphs the researcher gives a picture of their social set up under which the Siddhi community functions.

3.6.1. Divine Kingship

It is clear in the African tradition that the number of heirs to the king was multiplied by the considerable number of wives, concubines and mistresses attributed to him, whose progeny, real or fictitious, was even more numerous. It was the surrounding tribal priests who reduced the powers of the king by crediting him with supernatural and efficient rituals. The Siddhis believe in divine kingship though they do not have any king as of now, the researcher observed that they have a village headman who is assisted by the village council to take appropriate

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decisions that cannot be refuted. And the thought of such authority to the village head man comes from the tradition of kingship.

3.6.1.1. The Clan

The Siddhis of Karwar and Dharwad do not have customs of initiation into a particular clan as practiced by the Siddhis of Gujarat. Most of them do not hold such principle that they belong to different clans rather their only line of division in Karnataka religion is that of their religious one such as Hinduism, Islam or Christianity. While comparing with the Siddhis of Gujarat we observe that clan is an important unit of social organization which is an exogamous as well as patriarchal and is locally called Shakh or Atak.\(^{33}\) One of the important functions of clan is the regulation of marriage and as after marriage girls are initiated into the clans of their respective husbands. A good number of clans were identified among the Siddhis of Gujarat like Mosgul, Mokwana, Chotiyara, Mori, Sirwan, Parmar, Morima, Makava, etc. most of the clans have their own clan per. There is no ranking of clans as such rather all have equal status. We notice here that Siddhis of Gujarat seem to have taken few Gujarati titles such as Parmar or Makava which the Local Gujaratis bear as their sir names.\(^{34}\) Hence they may not be original to their ancestral clan division rather made in due course of time while they assimilated into the local culture as rulers.

3.6.1.2. Kinship

Kinship outlines a significant component in the whole kinship system as it serves as an indicator to accepting of the kinship relation and patterns of behavior

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among various kin groups, where as the family is a social and economic group consisting minimally of one or more parents and their children. Murdock defined the family as a social group characterized by common residence economic cooperation and reproduction.\textsuperscript{35} Siddhi families are either joint family, extended or small families. Earlier Siddhis used to live in joint families but now the researcher observed that most of Siddhis follow either extended or micro family system.

Kinship refers to the social recognition and expression of genealogical relationships, both consanguineal and affinal.\textsuperscript{36} Palakshappa identified four types of kinship among Siddhis. They are

1. \textit{Maneyavaru}: that includes members of a family, which becomes meaningful in the ritual and economic life of these people. All the Maneyavaru belong to a single extended family who trace their relationship to a common ancestor called “\textit{Hiriyaru}”.\textsuperscript{37} This Maneyavaru generally consists of three generations. The deceased parents of the Ego, his children, his brothers and their off-Springs who fall in the heredity. The beauty of this system is that when a Siddhi household before acquiring a particular implement satisfies itself that other families of the hereditary do not posses it. This is because they share the implements with each other whenever need arises.

2. \textit{Bandugalu}: are all the standard paternal kin which is just an expansion of Maneyavaru association. The beauty of this system is, whatever may be the


\textsuperscript{37} Palakshappa T C. p. 25.
distance between one another, marital relationship is impossible. In this regard the elders of the family have right memory of the lineage and relationship. This is very healthy to the Siddhi community as it does not hamper their health which otherwise can create a number of handicapped (physical and mental) members within the community.

3. **Balagadavaru**: covers the maternal kin – the mother’s sisters and their children and the mother’s brothers and their children.\(^{38}\) The importance of maternal kinship is seen in the observance of rituals and ceremonies as many of the ceremonies require the presence of maternal kin, the uncle be it marriage, initiation, tonsure among Hindus. Among Christians during baptism and marriage while among Muslims during the naming ceremony.

4. **Nentaru**: are the newly contracted relations in the course of time, the last kinship will become the third kinship i.e., Balagadavaru.\(^{39}\) Usually the paternal kin are the members of the same settlement except in cases where brothers or sons have migrated to different places in search of jobs. The paternal kin come during cultivation. While no one obtains material or economic aid from maternal kin which demean the family.

Chekki. Observes, “kinship fission i.e., separation from extended family and the establishment of nuclear families, has been gradually on the increase. There has been a lessening over the years in filial piety and in respect and obedience for older relatives.”\(^{40}\) This change is noticed among this tribe though may not be rampant.

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\(^{39}\) Kiran Kamal Prasad, 2005, p. 38.

3.6.2. Family Set up

Family is a place where children establish their first close emotional ties, learn language and begin to internalize cultural norms and values.\(^4\) It is the first unit of socialization. Family among Siddhis is a closer unit than the normal understanding in the locality. The bond is much stronger and the hierarchy in the family much clearer among tribes than outside.

Siddhis lack proper social organization hence the family and the settlement form two important aspects of the social organization.\(^5\) Family has always been the cornerstone and nucleus of any society or community. Family is the foundational unit of collective organization that addresses and meets the needs of every community member. The life in a settlement has its significance to the family unit. Family in Siddhi community was and is more a social grouping; a recognized institution. It is here where the first phase of enculturation happens and where the morals and fundamental values of Siddhis’ life are imparted. Earlier most Siddhi families were characterized by the joint-family system, where by an extended family of parents, grandparents, children and sons’ wives occupied the same living quarters.\(^6\)

The eldest male member of the family manages the finances, religious rituals and attends any functions where family representation is required. Their system permitted sale of children as slaves owing to famine, disobedience. But now the Siddhi families are more inclined towards nuclear families. The son, after marriage, is expected to have his own house and earn his living and make his


family. Nevertheless joint or extended families are still part of Siddhi community. But education, economic stability and migration for a better living have influenced the life style of Siddhis in the settlements in past two decades. Now the kith and kin gather together for common celebrations such as Hiriyara Puje, marriages, festivals, christening or death in the family though living in the same settlement or migrated to another settlement. The respect and honour that is reserved for the eldest member of the family is preserved when they have such occasions.

Siddhis follow Patriarchal system wherein father is the decision maker. At the same mother is given equal footing in the decision making process. Women command respect and are independent in this tribe than any other in south India. When it comes to managing the household it is the woman that has an upper hand as she contributes to the maintenance of the family in all the ways, be it taking care of the children, farming, working in the field as labourer etc. most significantly both boys and girls are received with equal joy and warmth in the community and have no sex preference when it comes to progeny. An individual is very much emotionally involved in the family that to an extent that breaks down the spatial and temporal barriers between the Siddhis. The obligatory vigour within the family is esteem for seniors and a sense of commitment towards others in community. The relationship beyond the community is also reckoned by the family unit.

Siddhi family includes not just the living members but also the dead ancestors. It is commonly believed among Siddhis that spirits are mortal. The life of the deceased remains in the spirit condition until the sins, which one may have


committed are washed away by the good deeds of the descendants.\textsuperscript{47} The dead can function as “disciplinary agents in helping to mould into socially acceptable behaviour.”\textsuperscript{48} The living is obliged to request the supervision of the dead, because the dead have exclusive mission, to conserve the family and divination. It is in this paranormal framework that the Siddhi family operates. Food and lights are offered at least once a year to the ancestors, with rituals in respect and thankfulness to them.

3.6.2.1. Family Hierarchy

The head of the home is the eldest male member of the family. It can be father in a nuclear family, grandfather in an extended family. Kiran Kamal observes that males in Siddhi community dominate as they are considered to have superior status over women.\textsuperscript{49} Ultimate decisions are made by the father or husband that remains final in the family, may it be with regard to betrothal, marriage, education and all other purposes that entail decisions. While in the decision making bodies at the settlements women participate but are not consulted while deciding. The head of the family takes part in meetings of settlements, in which case women who are heads can attend it. But women are highly regarded when it comes to family matters. The headman of the settlement and the eldest son of the family are both given due respect and a position of honour. They are both addressed as ‘jante’ a respectful title in the settlement. Women address their husbands as ‘jante’ in order to show their respect and obedience. The ancestral house is called ‘devghar’ (house of god) and ancestors are revered with respect in


\textsuperscript{49} Kiran Kamal Prasad, p. 37-38.
this house as mentioned before. The property is divided equally between the male
descents either before or after the death of the father. Palakshappa mentions that
the widow of the dead has no right to the property of her husband.\textsuperscript{50} The
researcher found that there were families where the widows took care of the
family and took all the decisions until the eldest son or daughter came of age to do
the same. Besides, the children claim ancestral property after the age of eighteen.

3.6.2.2. Family Democracy

‘Budvont’ is the head of the household or nuclear family. Though he is
absolute, his democratic function invites opinions from other members of the
family. Today, the members influence the decision making process due to
educated members but decision of the head of the family is revered. Palakshapa
observed that in domestic matters the Siddhi father, mother and children act as an
informal family council. While purchasing land or accepting tenancy, he takes the
opinion of the wife and grownup children.\textsuperscript{51} Matters concerning the life of
daughters the consultation of wife is must. It is the same with regard to daughters-
in-law. Though older people are revered by children, the elders take a back seat
when they are no longer able to earn and look after themselves. The authority slips
down to eldest son or mother in the absence of the father.

3.6.2.3. Family Affiliation

The researcher observed that Siddhis are slowly losing their family ties
though generally speaking their family bond is very strong. To cite an example,
about 2- 3 decades ago when the cow delivered they had a custom of taking the
first milk and even homemade Ghee and butter to their relatives settled far off.
They would walk all the way to and fro.

\textsuperscript{50} Palakshappa, 1976, p. 27.

The hosts always welcomed the guests with greetings, with sumptuous meal and homemade alcohol. An animal would be killed in a game and was shared by the whole village that would gather round the fire and dance with Dhamaam to share each others’ joy. Siddhis in this circle had the openness to accept corrections or punishments for their faults and no one in the vicinity would get offended, observes Mothesha Pedru Birji of Vada village. As of now this affection is slowly shifting, parents pick up quarrel with anyone who tries to punish or correct their children. Visit to the relatives is only at an invitation on special occasions such as wedding, baptism, naming ceremony, puberty, or death. The researcher from the interviews perceived that earlier Siddhis didn’t need a reason to pay a visit contrary to today’s situation. Though there is no drastic change of attitude with regard to the family affection yet the researcher observed a decline in these relationships.

3.6.3. Marriage System

Monogamy is the most prevalent form of marital union among the Siddhis. However a few Siddhis were found in polygamous wedlock. Marriages are arranged by the parents. Parallel cousins are avoided in marriage negotiation. Cases of junior levirate and junior sororate were found in Siddhi Society but not in an obligatory form. Divorce is not common among Hindu and Christian Siddhis though there are a few instances, but permitted among the Muslim Siddhis. Widow re-marriage is practiced among Siddhis under any religion. Looking back to Siddhis’ original culture of the Siddhis, the chief as well as head of a family had many wives and children. Polygamy is pursued in Africa by very many tribes to this day. Besides Islam religion permits a man to have four wives.

3.6.4. Marital Status

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52 Mothesha Pedru Birji, Personal interview. 25 May 2006.
In an observation the researcher found that earlier the Siddhi community would not intermarry with outsiders for fear of excommunication. Kiran kamal Prasad observes,

“In Karnataka they do not marry, as a rule, outside their community. They also normally do not intermarry between their religious groups though there are no hierarchical relationships among themselves or between the three religious groups.”

But there are instances of Siddhis marrying non-Siddhis due to circumstances in the history of Goa. Santhani Anthoni Gongadekarnne of Gadgera village defends the researcher’s view in an interview that excommunication was practiced among them if any married an outsider. This was done in order to preserve the purity of their race as well as customs, traditions and to prevent provocation. In cases of Siddhis marrying non- Siddhis the locals would be provoked to enter their street or settlement and then interfere or harm the Siddhis in settlements. In recent years Siddhis seem to have married the locals both men and women.

To site few examples we have Diog Bastiav Salgatti Siddhi who has married a local woman named Margaret Mary and has four children named Florin Siddhi who is doing her second year of LLB, Mr. Roshan Salgatti Siddhi doing his 1st P.U.C., followed by Leena Siddhi completing her SSLC (2009) and Master Santhosh Salgatti Siddhi (8th Std) doing his schooling at Carmel School at Haliyala. (see appendix. Fig. 23 and Fig. 24)

To cite another example is the late Indian wrestler Agnel Hanchinamani Siddhi who married a woman from Kholapur of Maharastra and lived at Nagshetti

Koppa in Haliyala Taluk. He has three children Martha Hanchinmane, a social worker at KDDC, Samuel Hanchinmane, and Mingel Hanchinmane (See appendix. Fig. 25, Fig. 26 and Fig. 27). The two above examples and many more indicate that Siddhis are being slowly accepted by the neighbours and non-Siddhis and have sought out their difference to live together by means of marital relationships.

3.6.5. Siddhi Sabha

The organization of Siddhis for justice, punishment as well as for taking important decisions is in line with the typical primitive tribes. The settlement forms the ultimate unit of authority and arbitration \(^{54}\) observes Kiran Kamal Prasad. In every village inhabited by the Siddhi, which is independent in itself, there is a traditional council called *Siddhi Sabha*, who are elected leaders or hold hereditary posts. Palakshappa points out that Sabha which he writes as ‘subha’ is a politico-judicial body within a settlement. \(^{55}\) Siddhi sabha is a settlement body with a domain of its own action and authority. The researcher noticed that the number of leaders for such Sabha varied according to settlements. They are called *jante*, \(^{56}\) which literally would mean the elders. It is a powerful organ of the social structure among them. It is headed by one, designated as *budwont* (the Wiseman) and assisted by *kolkar* (orderly) or *khajandar* (treasurer). \(^{57}\) This body ensures the continuity and has the power to dispatch verdicts and punish the guilty or even to excommunicate a person concerned.

\(^{54}\) Kiran Kamal Prasad, p. 32.


\(^{56}\) Jante is understood as elder or head of the family. Each family has a janto. Jante is also used by the Siddhi women as a mark of respect to their husbands. The usage Jante is a plural form of janto

\(^{57}\) PalakshappaT C. p. 61.
3.6.5.1. Budwont

*Budwont* is understood as the wise man and is always the resident of a settlement so is Kolkar, the orderly man. The *jante* elect the *budwont* for life, where primogeniture is duly considered. Within the deceased *budwont* family the eldest son is the first choice, yet not elected without a debate on the character and capabilities of the person. While this person fails to qualify to occupy the chair another suitable person within the settlement is elected for the office. The office of *budwont* carries prestige who commands obedience and service from the members of his settlements.\(^{58}\)

The researcher noticed that now some capable, literate persons are elected to this office. *Budwont* represents the village or settlement to the outer society and has prominent role inside the village. He symbolizes the unity of the settlement and has both secular and sacred functions. In his secular functions the disputes arising within various Siddhi settlements connected to that of his own are settled by him. Most of the disputes would arise from marital relationships or arrangements. “Within the settlement he mediates between families. In inter-settlement disputes he represents the settlement.”\(^{59}\) Kiran Kamal observes that Siddhis in Ankola area, where group-hunting expeditions are carried out involving all the members of a settlement, the *budwont* takes a prominent role.\(^{60}\) He is the first one to greet and welcome any guest visiting the settlement.

His sacred function is the performance of rites before commencement of the agricultural season. All activities including those of initiation and marriage are


\(^{60}\) Kiran Kamal Prasad, p. 32.
carried only after the *budwont* takes his place as the one assisting the family to complete the required rituals, thus he has to be at the settlement as and when families request his presence at various auspicious occasions as well as grief struck moments such as death or natural calamities. The absence of *budwont* is an offence to those in settlement that could provoke an emergency gathering of Sabha to question the credibility of the *budwont* and to know the valid reasons for his absence at the event. Very often the *budwont* is careful not to offend anyone in such matters rather being invited for the occasion he takes it as an honour given to the ancestral chair and to his family. However, when it comes to honouring ancestral position in the settlement *budwont* leaves no stone unturned to make the families in the settlements aware of the basic respect to ancestors, lest the settlement fall prey to the anger of the ancestors.

Members of a settlement are always under obligation to *budwont*. The researcher observes that the Siddhis express their commitment by sharing in *budwont’s* joys and sorrows and those of his household. If death occurs in his household the entire settlement shares in the grief by observing a period of mourning. No festival or any other happy event would be celebrated during these particular days in the settlement.

3.6.5.2. Kolkar

Kolkar, the orderly, is drawn from the same settlement who reports to the *budwont* of all that is happening and imperative for the peaceful living in the settlement. If the *budwont* has a decisive role to play in deciding common issues and settling them, the kolkar acts as an orderly. He sends announcements to families within the settlement for Sabha as and when disputes that affect life in the settlements arise. The Sabha is in-fact helped by the kolkar at the request of
budwont when he finds difficult to solve problem. The researcher found that the responsibility of presenting the persons involved in a case belonged to him besides narrating the cases involved. Then the parties are given chance to cross examine or challenge the ‘kolkar’s’ interpretation or narration. After due discussion the budwont, with the consultation of jante gives his verdict which is undisputed. The decision or verdict is noted down by kolkar.

3.6.5.3. Khajandar

Khajandar, the finance officer, is the one who collects all the fines imposed during the Siddhi Sabha as well as contributions to the common fund. The collected amount is spent on various occasions such as celebration of feasts and entertainments as well as for common infrastructure such as purchase of things needed for musical instruments, a common hall or a prayer room and so on.

The researcher discovered that none of the office bearers are paid or given any remuneration. Yet their dedication to control the emotionally charged crowd which sometimes turns out to be violent and unacceptable is noteworthy. The budwont, kolkar and khajandar are honorary functionaries who accomplish a thankless job. Kiran Kamal observes that the leaders of a settlement do not carry out their offices by issuing commands. Their roles are accepted as those who animate and safeguard the interests of those in the settlement.

3.6.5.4. Justice among Siddhis

Siddhi Sabha being a politico-judicial body with the budwont and the jante or elders as authorities punish the guilty. Punishment is ordered by the

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61 Palakshappa T C. p. 65.
62 Kiran Kamal Prasad, p. 33.
63 Palakshappa T C. p. 68.
which differs from person to person as one deserves for his/her faults or crimes. Earlier whipping of the person was done but now such practices are not witnessed rather a fine is imposed on the guilty and then set free. Earlier excommunication was also in practice but now rarely inflicted upon anyone in the community regardless of offence. Punishments are always given to witness a change of attitude in the person concerned and to a certain extent it is achieved.

3.6.5.5. Impacts of Siddhi Sabha

Siddhi Sabha and the powers of all the office bearers are slowly losing ground due to various reasons. The researcher observes few elements that affect the system. In the absence of due support from the larger system the Siddhi Sabha will slowly lose its power and importance. Education, interference by the neighbourhood, religion and the laws of the land has already played a caustic role in damaging their age old system. The interference from the landlords is another stumbling block for the free, democratic functioning of the Siddhi Sabha. Another factor affecting their system is the reality of inevitable migration in search of livelihood and enhanced earning. Besides, the towns and cities have turned out to be haven for Siddhis who are guilty of an offence and flee the settlement. The researcher observes that self-alienation in order to preserve the sanctity of their culture and rich traditions would not last long. Siddhis should be allowed by the larger system to exercise justice in their settlements so as to strengthen their effective functioning.

The researcher rightly notes internally the office bearers weaken the system while they lose their moral authority if one of the family members is guilty of an offence. Secondly families that have shifted to the nearby towns affect the system as they regularly visit and corrupt the minds of people in the settlements which

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64 Ibid.
indirectly put the authority of the Siddhi Sabha under scrutiny and stake. The early fear of Siddhis of losing their identity can soon take place with such break up of internal organization.

The researcher observes that Siddhis do not have a community council compared to the locals. Siddhis have only the council of the settlement but this council or siddhi Sabha does not have powers over other settlements. Whereas Vokkals and other agricultural castes, in the locality, have a council for the settlement as well as for the whole community that controls the whereabouts of Vokkals in the locality. For the settlement Vokkals have ‘Uru Gowda’ and for the community ‘Arasu Gowda’. While Uru Gowda presides over the Vokkal Sabha, the Arasu Gowda presides over the community council that comprises of various settlements.

3.6.6. Settlements

In many villages in and around Haliyala, Yellapura and Ankola Talukas, it appears that they were the original settlers. They braved the wild beasts and deadly malaria and made headway into the dense forests, selected a convenient spot to erect a house, cleared a patch of land and began cultivation. Only when there was some habitation did some other Indians appear on the scene and thrived better and have become dominant over the Siddhis.65

Palakshappa divides the area where the Siddhis live into two. The first one is the Haliyala area and the second one is the Yellapura-Ankola area. The houses in the settlements that are found in the former area were arranged in rows lying opposite each other on an elevated place at the centre of the agricultural land,

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whereas in Yellapura-Ankola area the houses are spread along homesteads. The reason for such difference in settlements is due to the hills in which the Yellapura-Ankola Siddhis are situated. Whereas, those in Haliyala region live in plain forest areas where their agricultural lands are large as well as around their settlements. When it comes to settlements in Ankola area the Gazetteer of Bombay speaks that the men are dark, of middle height and thick-lipped and the women do not differ from their men except being fairer. They lived in single storied houses with large land properties in which they employed lots of laborers. They were vegetarians and drank no liquor and dressed in local attire. Another specialty of their settlements is the name which indicates whether it is a village or just a settlement with group of few houses. When it comes to village concept they name is as Halli and those settlements which are made up of few houses is called Koppa. For example- Nagshetti Koppa, Bukin Koppa, Vada-Gardolli, Mainahalli etc.

3.6.6.1. Influence of modernization

The researcher noticed that there is a gradual change in the type of settlement they are living in and this could be due to modernization, urbanization, and industrialization. The modernization has influenced them when it comes to housing and organizing the settlements. There has been drainages layed while the houses are rebuilt in symmetrical rows or streets. The settlements seem to have minimum of two streets which is divided by a 8-10 feet road. The houses are built using cement and burnt bricks or at least plastered with cement outside in order to prevent the house from falling due to heavy and incessant rains. The thatched roofs in some settlements are replaced with tiles under which most of the old


generation is not happy nevertheless live in fear of damage that could cause if it collapses.

When it comes to the living style the influence of industrialization is noticed. Most of the siddhi youth work outside their settlements and when they come home they bring materials that are not seen before by the residents of settlements. The youth influenced by the industrialization insist on usage of machinery for agriculture though most of them cannot afford. But for sure the youth are aware of the use of machinery which eases their work load.

3.6.6.2. Housing

In an interview Delio de Mendonoca observed:

“The Siddhis in Portuguese India did not have any houses to stay in. They stayed in the quarters underground or the places where the cattle was tied.”

But the Siddhis in the Bijapur kingdom and Hyderabad regions had rather good shelter since they were soldiers and necessary things were provided to them by the royalty. Compact type of settlement is found among Siddhis. The houses are along both sides of the settlement paths and are constructed in a row along the contours. In some settlements houses are constructed with earthen wall and the inclined roof of which are shaded with reed that is available or grass supported with bamboos. Some houses are constructed by earthen wall and the wall made of bamboo planks or tree bunches plastered with earth. The huts are shaded with two side inclined thatching instead of four among some Siddhis.

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Early the houses were built in circles giving room to only a small division within the house and the rest of the large area left for other activities like eating, sleeping and recreation. Everyone slept on the ground together. During summer the family, specially the male members slept outside the house, preferably over a self made wooden coat carved out of jungle wood and thin ropes weaved over blocks connecting ends. This coat was light and easily moveable to nearby places like the farm, or paddy field etc. most difficult time for the Siddhi would be during the rainy months where the house would leak at unknown places. “Sometimes we used to shift ourselves from one corner to another where the water would not drip down. Thus spend sleepless nights in those months,” says Antony Siddhi.

In the research schedule carried out the researcher found that 90.66% of the respondents i.e., 272 respondents were living in thatched houses. Around 4.66% of the respondents i.e., 14 Siddhis had tiled houses. And about 4.00% of the respondents i.e., 12 respondents had concrete houses while a small number of respondents i.e., 0.66% had other type of houses like two storied buildings (See table 16 of Chapter VI).

Houses today have walls built of mud and are like barns being constructed of nothing but reeds, covered with cow-dung mixed with clay to fill the interstices, and to prevent those outside from seeing between the reeds. The doors are low and any outsider has to bend low letting one’s head first. Most of the houses are also built with bamboo sticks. Some of the houses are surrounded with a compound built with bamboo. Most of the Siddhi houses as of now are either thatched or tiled houses with minimum two rooms – one is Mojgar and the second one is Kon. Mojgar will have bathing place, and a fire place called Dhummi (See appendix. Fig.22). Dhummi is the place where everyone sits and eats. In recent years the structure of houses has been modified as Siddhis have begun to learn from the

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70 Anthon, Siddhi Balgundkar. Personal interview. 17 Apr. 2007.
neighbours or learn from the cities or towns where they work as maids, drivers etc. Hence migration to cities and towns in search of work has slowly influenced their living style. Majority of Siddhis living in the forest have not changed the structure of their house. Dhummi, among Siddhis’ houses is an important place that serves many purposes such as light to the house, warmth at night, fire ready for cooking, for drying clothes and dry people who get wet in the rainy season. Any family gathering is done there. Meals are taken here as kitchen is used solely for cooking. Though Fish and meat were cooked in the kitchen they are dried at Dhummi for preservation. Earlier all Siddhis were eating from one plate, a custom that we find in Africa even to this day in Chad, Camaroon, Tanzania and in other east African countries. A large wooden plate called Maand was used for the purpose. But as of now Siddhis have stopped eating from a Maand (See appendix. Fig. 21) due to modern influence and socialization but everyone sits together for meals.

Though other cooking vessels were made of mud the utensils were of wood. The glasses were cut out of bamboo the ladle was made out of a stick pierced into a hard coconut shell. But these vessels and utensils have been replaced by either steel or aluminum vessels. The healthy, traditional and natural vessels are vanishing from their houses.

3.6.7. Food Habits

As vagabonds in the forest Siddhis certainly consumed meat that was easily available for their hunting ability. The researcher has personally observed that all Siddhis consume meat at “Siddhi Nyasa” a religious gathering specific to Siddhis alone. The researcher observed that there is a change in their diet. As of now Siddhis diet consists of rice, ragi, maze and other serials. Christian Siddhis occasionally eat meat where as pork is avoided by Muslim Siddhis. Those Siddhis still residing in the forest depend on the roots and fruits collected from the forest besides fish that is available from the rivers and streams. Until strict forest rules
were under effect, Siddhis hunted wild boars, wild rabbits, bison, porcupine, birds, wild goat, wild cock and wild buffalos for their diet. They also lived on crabs, tortoise and honey that were easily accessible. “Christian Siddhis use rice for most of the food items because it was their staple food in Africa and other food items such as black millet and wheat are not used much and cereals like horsegram are used to feed the horses and therefore not meant for humans”\textsuperscript{71} is their thought.

In an interview with Rozai Francis Siddhi of Tatvanigi the researcher learnt that Siddhis of Karwar and Dharwad both have vegetarian and non-vegetarian diet.\textsuperscript{72} Hunting has become impossible for Siddhis due to the Wild Life Protection Act. The vegetarian staple food- Jawar, rice and dhal are common to all Siddhi families.

While Siddhis preserve food grains in “\textit{thatto}” a huge jar made out of bamboo sticks and smeared around with cow dung can contain two to six quintals of food grains. Diog Bastav Salgatti mensions about various types of vegetables used by Siddhis such as \textit{Kuddiche Baaji} found in farms, \textit{Nainchi Baaji} found in rivers or streams of water which is identified with small leaves, \textit{Darchi Baajj or Kobri Baaji} which tastes like coconut while eating. \textit{Katyaachi Baaji} is another type of greens that is often eaten by Siddhis, \textit{Belyaachi Baaji and Puthunichi Baaji} which are available in the tank or farms, \textit{Daal Baaji and Guna Gunichi Baaji} \textsuperscript{73} are various greens enjoyed by the Siddhis in their meals. As of now their food habits are changing due to local influence (See table Nos. 28 and 29 of Chapter VI).

\textsuperscript{71} Chinnappa Thomas, Karnataka Kannada Mathu Kraistha Budakattugala Samskruthi Adyayana, Budakattu Adyayana Vibhaaga, Department of Social Studies, Kannada University, Hampi, 2009, p. 44.

\textsuperscript{72} Rozai Francis Siddhi, Personal interview. 30 March 2007.

\textsuperscript{73} Bastian Siddhi, Personal interview. June 2. 2007
3.6.7.1. Nutrition

The unprecedented depletion of forests, restrictions from the government and scarcity of forest wealth have deprived the Siddhis of their traditional sources of nutrition and medication. Traditionally they were able to medicate themselves from the wealth of herbs, leaves, roots and plant juices available to them in the forest. Though some of them continue the same to an extent, the tradition is fading as the younger generation does not pay attention to the richness of herbal cure due to education, English medicine (Allopathic drugs). The educated youth dispense off the herbal medicine as superstitious and un-scientific. Deforestation has resulted in a paucity of traditional medication. Official aforestation programmes have industrial and commercial requirements in mind. Hence Siddhis fall victim to various ailments unknown to them and the medication is impossible as the health centers are out of reach and drugs unaffordable. Krishna Siddhi while attending a seminar in Goa shares that Siddhis had medicine for all the diseases but now they are unable to detect some of the diseases. He also claimed that they have medicine for AIDS. And that is one of the reasons why none of them have died of AIDS.\(^\text{74}\) The researcher observes that this claim seems to be unscientific as none of their dead have undergone any examination for the said disease.

The forest used to offer adequate nutrition in the way of protein and vitamin rich nuts, berries, fruits wild honey and plant nectar. Their economy was need based, be it producing, killing, and gathering. Sufficient supply of rice, maize, lentils and green vegetables provided them nutrition. Natural fauna provided animal protein. But today Siddhis are forced to purchase food materials

\(^{74}\) Krishna Siddhi. Personal interview. 22 Jan.2007.
and other edible things. Siddhis therefore switch on to cash crops in order to make cash for other purposes.

The Siddhis always felt that they were aliens due to their self-isolation. Today they are below poverty line due to self isolation and illiteracy. Wood cutting, hunting, fishing, honey harvest occupied their traditional occupation for longer periods of history. Today these landless Siddhis have turned to be mere coolie workers under merciless proprietors that use them to the maximum with minimum remuneration. The basic value of subsistence – the level of income, which will purchase minimum necessities of life – constitutes the core of their economic ethnicity. It is due to this economic core that Siddhis have taken to different sources of earning.

3.6.7.2. Siddhi Delicacies

The delicacy of Siddhis is the savali, (Red ant)\textsuperscript{75} umble or kempu iruve chatni, a special dish made out of red ants that are found in mango trees. These ants are red in color, sharp in their bite and locals keep them afar as their bites are painful. The art of seizing red ants is special to Siddhis normally done by the ladies. They gather the red ants in haste and drop the red ants into boiling water, add coconut, garlic along with little potatoes. Then they grind it to be served in small quantity to the members of the house. This is not only tasty but medicinal in its effect observes Mary Gabrekar Siddhi aged 72 from Gardolli.\textsuperscript{76} Umble is given specially for pregnant women in order to strengthen her immune system during the rainy season. It is given to the sick who suffer from immune deficiency adds Roju B. Naamna Siddhi aged 45 from Gardolli. Eating dishes made out of red ants has been reduced due to reactions from the neighborhood as they consider Siddhis low

\textsuperscript{75} Pashington Obeng, 2007, p. 40.

\textsuperscript{76} Mary Gabrekar Siddhi, Personal interview. 23 April 2006.
caste due to such food habits. Besides the new generation, influenced by the education and media is slowly looking beyond their traditional food habits to a modern, sophisticated food at the cost of their rich, nourishing and naturally available foodstuff. This has greater repercussion on Siddhis’ health.

3.6.8. Hobbies

Siddhis are fond of tobacco as most of them consume it. Eating betel leaves (pan) has become common among Siddhi men and women. The youth consume pan but not below the age of 16. Very few Siddhi smoke but pan-suparee (minted arucknut) and betel leaves are more consumed. The old people grind them in a small iron vessel as they are unable to chew. Some Siddhis would smoke with a pipe made of wood or mud. Drinking alcohol is common among the elders, men as well as women drink during special occasions. They do not make any alcohol rather some of them tap toddy for their drink or prepare rice beer. Among other hobbies hunting, playing indoor games, dance and singing are common to all.

3.6.9. Dress and Ornaments

Siddhis, both male and female imitate the non-Siddhi community in their attire and ornamentation. Though the Siddhi women bare curly hair they prefer to look like the local women who bare long hair. Hence the Siddhi women use hair-bun to look similar to local women. Many girls do pleat their hair with multiple pleating on their head as shown below.

The married women wear a black-bead (Karimani) necklace to which their Tali is attached. Hindu women call it Mangalasutra, where as the Christian women term it Piddule and the Muslim women Lachcha. The young girls do use modern ornaments that are easily and cheaply available in the market such as bangles of various colors, hair pins, anklets and some beautiful chains. The Siddhi
women wear sari and blouse, where as the young wear chudidar or salvar kameez, skirt and blouse.

Siddhi men use clothes commonly used in the locality like shirt, pants, lungi, shorts and dhotis. While farming most of the men use loin-cloth as it is very convenient to use their limbs freely while complying with weather conditions. They dress themselves colorfully on special festive occasions, marriage ceremonies and while going to towns.

Referring to the young Siddhis, they seem influenced by modernization or westernization which can be noticed in their change of dressing. This is very clearly seen in those young boys and girls that work outside settlements especially in the cities such as Mumbai, Bangalore, Hubli, Dharwad, Mangalore and Goa. Though the women and men in the settlements are unmoved by the modern dressing pattern of the young still there are elders who have changed from lungi to pants and shirts while they go to towns and cities.

3.6.10. Health

The researcher observed that Most Siddhis enjoyed good health, having good immune system. They are physically tough and rarely fall sick. Their food habits and the herbal medicine keep them far from the doctors and medical practitioners. Siddhis believe that disease comes when they forget their ancestors or when their ancestors are angry with a particular person. Hence the cure is by the ancestors themselves. When a Siddhi in the vicinity gets possessed with the spirit these things are revealed and when appropriate measures are taken to calm the angry ancestors the disease automatically gets cured. The researcher found that such cases seem to be unscientific as there is no proof provided either of the disease or of cure. Dr. Prakash V. Patil in his research on the Biomedical Study of

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Palakshappa T C. pp. 73-76.
Siddhis of Karnataka found that Siddhi Children showed better nutritional status than the non-Siddhi children where as there was not much significant difference among the adults. He found that lice infection was very less among Siddhis. Scabies, Tinea, Eczema and leprosy were slightly more among the non-Siddhis due to poor personal hygiene.

3.6.10.1. Medicine

Department of Applied Botany, Mangalore University, Mangalagangothri conducted a research into the medical knowledge of the Siddhis and a total of 98 medicinal preparations, involving 69 species of plants, used by the Siddhis of Uttara Kannada in the state of Karnataka were described in this paper based on an ethno medical field study. The finding included 40 hitherto unknown medicinal uses of known medicinal plants. Among these, the use of the stem sap of Calamus thwaitesii as an anti-fertility drug, and the use of the flowers of Ichnocarpus frutescens and the rhizome of Hedychium coronarium in the treatment of diabetes were noteworthy. The knowledge of medicinal plants of the Siddhis is distinct from that of any other tribes living in the vicinity. The researcher observed that Chatrangi Beru, Kumpal, Nasari beru, Aupathe Chekke, Sandal wood ( paste), Kudi leaves, Bamboo shoots, shoots of few other herbal plants, oil made out of important birds and animals like peacock, Owl, wild boar, deer, bison and few snakes were used by Siddhis for various cures. Some of the medicinal plants are used in their daily diet keeping them fit.

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79 Bhandari M.J., Candrashekar K R, Kaveriappa K M., Meidcal Ethno-botony of the Sidhis of Uttara Kannada District, Karnataka (University of Mangalore, Mangalagangotri).
Vica Rosea, Rauwolfia, Cauescens and Discoria floribunda are medicinal plants found in the Dandeli forest and around. Nearly 16 species of medicinal value have been introduced in Dandeli forest. The knowledge of these medicinal plants is known to the Siddhis who use them for treatment. The researcher found that not all Siddhis had the knowledge of it rather it would be passed on to worthy personnel that were carefully selected by the men who administered them. Minguel Siddhi opines in an interview:

“They fear that the knowledge of administering the herbal medicine would be used for wrong reasons. Besides, to use these precious plants or roots for a particular purpose requires proper disposition of both mind and heart. Everyone could not administer the medicine; it required spiritual intuition and selfless motivation. One who administers the medicine has certain amount of faith in his/her medicine. At the same Siddhi healers have only one motivation ‘the cure of the patient’ and nothing much of monitory gain.”

The researcher found that these men of knowledge administered medicine to the sick, and demanded no money rather it was left to the discretion of the healed. The researcher also noticed it was not the same with regard to medical practitioners outside Siddhis tribe.

The older Siddhis, rarely visited clinics or hospitals in the towns and cities. At the same Siddhis are apprehensive about the future. Daamna, which is rarely available and difficult for the present generation to identify, is an effective medicinal root. Other herbal plants are Jaamna and Churna which are equally as

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80 Gazetteer of India, Uttar Kannada, 1985, p. 51.

81 Minguel Siddhi, Personal interview. 25 April 2006.
rare as the former one. The Imam Krishna Siddhi reveals about the healthy practices he had been taught,

“To drink cold water at all times and especially early in the morning and before going to bed. A fruit called ‘gele’ was mixed in the water to be used to wash the clothes; this fruit gives good foam besides keeping the clothes fresh. And if the fish eat these fruits they would die gradually in few minutes and the fish could be eaten without any harm to health. Girls use neem leaves (bitter leaves) to preserve their clothes fresh.”

The researcher observed that leaves of Matti tree are pressed in the water and used to wash one’s head to clear dandruff, to have bath and to reduce the heat of the head. In olden days these leaves were often used for bathing as of now people have reduced using it as it has no fragrance like the latest detergents.

3.6.10.2. Siddhi Healers

Siddhi healers in Siddhi communities come from Hinduism and Islam. There are several of them as enumerated below. Subba Putta Siddi living in Manchiker using a handful of grains of rice, throwing them on a wooden board gives people information according to the position of the grains fallen. Laxmi Siddi in Gullapur and Katerina Anton Siddi of Mainalli are Ellama devotees. They draw on Ellama’s powers to heal and ward off evil forces for people.

Rahman Sab, a Muslim Siddhi from Yellapur practices healing and divination which he does in a separate room in his house. Placing a lemon in their hand and helping them to concentrate by closing their eyes, directs them to talk to

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82 Diog Bastav Salgatti, Personal interview. 31 March 2007.
83 Krishna Siddhi, Personal interview. 25 April 2006.
the spirit mentally, regarding the problem and find solutions themselves. This practice is an important ideological point to legitimize spirituality among Siddhis. Appu Subba Siddi, a Hindu resident of Sevakar near Gullapur, helps people solve unemployment problems, disputes between groups and individuals and find life-partners.

3.6.11. Language

Siddhis of Karnataka, Maharashtra, Goa, or Gujarat have not retained their ancestral language, Swahili, a language spoken today in Eastern Coast of Africa. The original language of the Siddhis died out.  

84 The language which the Siddhis speak is neither Kannada, nor Hindi or Konkani but totally different, a mixture of everything which is very difficult to pick up.  

85 For example words like, Kaaibe, Kithbe, Bagaaabe, Themi (they), Kaundi (bedsheet), Jaabe, Yebe, Keshak Zaavli Thia, Laggon Aye (come soon). Their language is highly influenced by all the local languages such as Konkani, Kannada, Urdu or Marathi.

“The traditional African habits of bilingualism characterized by the use of a regional vehicular language for interethnic communication at the same time as the proper tribal mother tongues are basic for their hybridized dialect in here.”  

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Geralda mentions that the marooned salves who escaped from Goa and crossed the border of the present Karnataka seeking refuge in the deep forest of Western Ghats spoke relatively basic version of the Konkani in use by the

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Christianized Goans and their servants.\textsuperscript{87} Their original language was a sociolectal alternative of the Konkani spoken by their former Christianized Goan masters, a dialect that contains a lot of Portuguese elements. Moreover the contact between Siddhi Konkani and its original Goan Konkani font was episodic since centuries and as a result both the languages evolved independently.\textsuperscript{88}

3.6.11.1. Language Formation of Siddhis

Geralda Angenot shares that “the current Siddhi-Konkani language is the hybridized result of various prehistoric and historic interactions between several members of several linguistic families, phyla and mega phyla.”\textsuperscript{89} She continues to mention that the Sunni Muslims in Karnataka speak Urdu and other languages unlike the Christian and Hindu Siddhis of Karnataka. This is because they were under Muslim rulers of West Bengal, Janjira Island, Mumbai city and different places in the Deccan like Bijapur Sultans and Hyderabad sultans. An avant-guard of this internal migration reached Karnataka where they met the settled Siddhis. Nowadays numerous speakers of the present generation are totally or partially bilingual in their use of the Siddhi-Konkani and Kannada languages. ‘It is due to their variant retroflexion they employ depending on the language’ observes Dr. Jean-Pierre Angenot. Thus to conclude this discussion on the issue of Konkani language spoken by Siddhis we observe that their Konkani is not a pure Konkani but a mixture of many local as well as foreign languages. For sure as Dr. Geralda observes that so far no words of clear African origin have been found in Siddi-Konkani in the usual vocabulary, contrary to the Siddhi-Gujarathi languages

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., p. 76.


\textsuperscript{89} Geraldo, p 77
where several items of African Origin were identified by Abdulaziz Lodhi of Uppsala University.\textsuperscript{90}

3.6.11.2. Multi-Lingual Community

When it comes to this particular tribe the researcher observed that this community is widely multi-lingual one. Siddhis can manage to speak minimum three languages such as Marathi, Konkani, Hindi, Kannada and Urdu. Though they can speak and understand minimum three languages the dialect that they use to communicate among themselves is highly jumbled with various languages. Surprisingly their dialect in turn helps them to understand other languages that are spoken around their settlements or in the towns that they visit. This enables them to enter into any other village or township for labour or shopping. Their exceptional quality of learning an alien language is something that attracts attention. It was under such similar condition be it in Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra or various kingdoms of Karnataka that they picked the language of the place and survived the test of time. Their capacity to grasp the language and learn it makes them defensive against any one. When they communicate with the larger society, their multilingual skill enables them to use the language required for the occasion.

3.6.12. Siddhi Amusements and Arts

Arts in any culture keep the culture, traditions and community sustaining and progressive. Siddhi arts have been a blessing for the Siddhi community which helps them to live in unity and happy. Siddhis’ music, dance and their songs are a unique that enriches their community living.

3.6.12.1. Music

\textsuperscript{90} Geraldo,p 78
Siddhis efforts to preserve the culture brought with them from Africa are noteworthy. Their methods, pitch that they employ to sing, songs and the tune employed, their dancing, patting of feet, clapping of hands, and the gross superstitions came straight from Africa. Despite banning Siddhis from using drums, dancing, singing during their slavery the culture has sustained the test of time. Music is used with almost every human activity and had a persistent central role in African culture.  

Moreover it is generally believed that music has an affective power and functions as a force or causal agent. “The gods will not descend without song” is a common aphorism in West African cultures observes Olly Wilson. Besides music is integrally related to language, because at the root level both are modes of communication that use sound and language exist in time. Siddhis love music which is noticed even in their language as they drag a bit with a musical flow. The incorporation of body motion as an integral part of the music-making process is essential to Siddhis. Body motion and music are integral components of the same process as we witness singing and playing music is associated with elaborate body movements among Siddhis.

The pages of history reveal that Siddhis were sought after for playing musical instruments in Goa, Bengal and other places in India. “Wanted – two Caffrees, who can play well on the French Horn and are otherwise handy and


useful about a house”. Another mention of such case is found in 1781 in a Calcutta Paper as follows,

“two cafree boys who play remarkably well on the French Horn; about eight years old, belonging to Portuguese padrie lately deceased. For particulars enquire the Vicar of the Portuguese Church.” 95

Siddhis carried along with them some impressions from the Goan musical tradition such as Gumhat used for popular dance called mando.96 When it comes to music Africans seem to have it in their blood as they love to sing, dance and make peculiar noises that keep them happy and others excited. Music being natural to them enables their compositions to be original and creative which other tribes around them cannot copy especially their tone, rhythm and the movement of the body.

3.6.12. 2. Cultural and Social History through Folklore

The researcher found that their cultural and social history has been handed down in the form of folklore songs, legends, and dance with Dhamaam at various occasions especially during Nyasa Jaathre (pilgrimage). As one song goes as follows:

“The face of the whites was as read as monkeys and the whites our masters, ugly to look, yet attractive and authoritative.

95 W H. Carey, The Good Old Days of Honorable John Company: Manners and Customs of the British in India During the Rule of the East India Company, from 1600-1858, Printed at the Arcus Press, Simla, 1882, p. 73.

96 Jose Nicolau da Fonseca, An Historical and Archaeological Sketch of the City of Goa, Thacker & co Limited, Bombay, 1878, p. 15.
They punish the guilty but themselves are guilty and ignore their mistakes…”

Other legends of Siddhis’ bravery and valour are the daily stories told to kids by the elders in the evenings. The researcher found that the Siddhis articulate in their songs about their colour, height, weight and bodily strengths in comparison to their neighbours. These songs do speak of the colour of their rulers and their discipline as well as their dominance in their songs during various dances at various occasions. Through the scanty material available through folklore the researcher concludes that the Siddhis do know little of their history though not in detail of the achievements, sufferings and the exile to the forest region of Karnataka. They are proud of their past, be it as slaves, as soldiers or as rulers of small islands.

3.6.12. 3. Songs

Poogdi dance is mere a dance of attractive and collective movements. The songs sung for this dance are sometimes composed spontaneously according to the mood of the community. The sigmu and dhamaam songs are simple comments on life with some religious references. However, it is customary in sigmu dance to begin this dance with the formula for making the sign of the cross. The songs followed can be of humour, telling a small story, or anything in reference to Siddhi way of life such as hunting and fishing.

3.6.12. 4. Dhamaam Dances

Siddhis have an almost instinctive flair for music, an emotional product, developed, through suffering. They have their own traditional musical instrument a long kind of narrow drum of various sizes, from two to eight feet in length, three or four of which make a band. The principal dancers or leaders are dressed in a variety of wild and savage fashions, always ornamented with a number of tails of.

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97 This is a song sung in Konkani language during the Siddhi Nyasa Jaathre at Dasanakoppalu
the smaller wild animals. In Africa, the drum is a language organized into a discourse: there are orchestral groups of drums where each instrument has its voice. The drum is an act of sharing …

Dances are performed on festive occasions such as marriage, the birth of a child, feasts of a saint, and funerals.

Dhamaam dance is a mark of Siddhi identity in the Western Ghats. Dhamaam dance is performed on navarathri as well as on hiriyara puje and other entertaining occasions exhibiting their distinctiveness. While a man plays dhamaam (See Appendix. Fig. 09) at the background, two ladies or two men wearing sarees with peacock feathers and a coconut in another hand dance to the rhythm that is unique. The researcher gives few similarities between the Siddhis’ Dhamaam dance and that of African customs.

a) It is performed during hiriyara puje which is done in Africa too. Hiriyara puje or ancestral worship is considered the primary duty and obligation of any tribe in African Continent.

b) The coconut husk or head is held by the dancer/s in their hand when this dance is performed and it is believed that the spirit enters the person. And speaks of problems that will be faced in future but also tells tales of the past which are hair rising to the listeners.

c) Dhamaam is a special instrument that is used by other Africans besides the rhythm that is unique and sounds familiar to that of Africans.

The drum beater is always seated in the middle as dancers take turn when the songs change and very many artists enter the centre stage to exhibit piece of their talent. This sort of entertainment can run for hours, sometimes an entire night.


with a bon-fire. Daniel Police observes that the Indian Siddhis in their dances comfort themselves with a gravity which is gentle and noble.  

3.6.12.4.1. Poogadi Dance

Poogadi dance performed by Siddhis is well-known. Borilingappa E C. observes that this dance was prevalent among the fisher folk women of the coastal Uttar Kannada and is adopted by the Siddhi women. Equal number of women stand opposite to each other, holding an empty earthen pot each, the vessel is held up with both palms together in-front and blow into the mouth of the pot and dance to the rhythm of gummatt (see appendix. Fig. 08) a special skinned instrument.

While dancing they bend and get up each time they blow into the mouth of the earthen pot. When the song changes the steps and rhythm also change. In this dance there is the culmination of konkani’s koda (earthen or any other light material pot) and the gummatt of Halakki Okkaligas (another tribe in the surrounding area). The blow of the breath into the mouth of the pot and the rhythm of Gummatt blends together as a unique taste of harmonious wave. The leader of the group starts a refrain and the rest repeat after her. An appropriate movement of the body is made, depending on the meaning conveyed in the refrain. The length of the song can be extended or shortened according to the need and mood of the gathering. The verses are composed on the spot at times, taking into account the situation or the disposition of the people.

3.6.12.4.2. Holi Sigmu Dance

Sigmu dance unique to Christian Siddhis has its origin among Marathas, performed during holi festival. But now the Catholic Siddhis perform them at the

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beginning of the Lenten season. Some of the male Siddhis group themselves and go around the villages singing and collecting their contributions of the season. The songs are composed in the language unique to Siddhis. The drum beater stands in the middle of the group that surrounds him with an in-toner who is instrumental in changing the songs and the steps accordingly. The role of a comedian is essential in making the dance more entertaining and captivating. The steps are changed in accordance with the song and rhythm and are carefully led by the leader as pursued by the others.

3.6.13. Fine Arts

Siddhis have developed their own fine arts that are carried out on the walls of their houses or on the earthen pots and other household goods. The carvings on the wooden luxury cots and on the wooden handles of various household as well as agricultural implements depict their special taste for fine arts. They have not practiced them so as to be professionals. Fine arts have become an additional pursuit to them as they take interest and pleasure to do it freely at times.

When it comes to painting Siddhis have a natural talent if not all of them. Their paintings are focused towards anything that is natural. Hence their paintings will have portrayal of animals, birds, trees, rivers, fish and birds. These days they seem to have developed a taste to paint extracts from Indian epics and Christian scriptures. They paint them on their walls, on pans that are used for fanning themselves, on clothes, on the inner room walls as well as some of the trees at the settlements. So far none of them are trained in painting for becoming professionals. In fact the Siddhis that are capable of painting are not aware that they can be professionals. While speaking to them of becoming professionals they just deny that they could come up to that stage in their life time besides fetching money for their carvings. As their physic is strong and meant for hard manual labour, that they think that paintings and carvings need lots of patience, skill and
time which they cannot afford at the given situation. Yet there are private NGOs that are training their women in various skills that can fetch them money.


For any sports stamina of a person is very important, be it athletic or any other. Siddhis are very strong people that have high stamina and healthy physic that can be channelized in the sports field provided they are trained well. Their eating habits, food consumption that is devoid of chemicals and pesticides but of pure natural items such as roots, wild animals etc., keep their physic strong and ready for any kind of challenges in the sports field.

Until 1980s no Negro sports persons are mentioned in the Gazetteer of 1985. In 1978 Wrestling Association of Haliyala, was established to utilize the resources available in and around Haliyala thus we read the names of Agnel Hanjinamani, a siddhi who received *Karnataka Kesari award* in 1983 (See appendix. Fig. No.07) and Juje Hanjinamani, another siddhi who received *Karnataka Kumar award* in 1983.\(^{102}\) Kamala siddhi broke the national record of hurdle race. Another D’Souza Siddhis has shown to be a promising athlete in the future.\(^{103}\) Several Siddhis are involved in the local wrestling clubs that still exist in Haliyala and Mundgod talukas.

Siddhis’ strong physic and greater stamina to withstand any sought of weather conditions brought a golden line in the dark clouds of their lives. They were observed and studied by experts to make right use of them for the national cause. Most of them were selected and sent to various places for special training. Siddhi children and youth reached not only Bangalore but also as far as Shimla for their sports activities and trainings.

\(^{102}\) Gazetteer of India, Uttar Kannada, 1985, p 293

\(^{103}\) Pashington Obeng, 2007, p. 40.
Welfare workers stress the need for facilities and opportunities for education and jobs to help this community move ahead with the rest of the Indian population. The Village Hostel innovative efforts of Jesuit missionaries have given importance to extra-curricular activities in these Hostels. Those in Hostels excel in sports; many have participated in the Taluka level competitions and have won prizes in talent exhibitions besides proving academic excellence. These tribals need to be recognized for the service rendered in the field of sports at the same foster in them the love for sports and athletes. When Karnataka is provided with natural talent and personal to be successful, the successive state governments have neglected to use these people rightly in the fields that they excel.

3.7. **Assimilation**

The above given practices among the Siddhis has not been their original practices rather the assimilation with the local traditions and practices that has been a gradual and unprecedented one. Some of the changes that members of a group will undergo because of culture contact have repeatedly been demonstrated. They adopt practices and beliefs from their neighbours, but interpret them in a manner reflecting indigenous experience. While studying the Siddhis the researcher found that very many practices that Siddhis presently have are a copy of what their neighbours or owners did. Super-imposition of indigenous culture over Siddhis has been easily accepted by them in-order to fall in the mainstream unlike other tribes of India like Lambanis, Kurubas, or Jenukurubas who have not changed as drastically as Siddhis. Yet Siddhis have retained some of their cultural

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traits which are being adapted by the neighbours. It has been a mutual exchange of what is good and attractive that has kept the Siddhis special in their social change.

3.7.1. Siddhi Culture

Man cannot control culture i.e., beliefs, customs, institution, languages, tools, techniques, dwellings or art forms. Culture controls man, man can merely react to it. Culture is the independent variant and man is dependent variable. Siddhis in Karwar and Dharwad districts of Karnataka have their culture exclusive to them. Since the time they have entered India as merchants, soldiers, slaves, rulers or artists they have tried to retain their rich culture. Yet some of them could not retain them due to *sits-in-leben* or ground realities that forced Siddhis to integrate things from the locals besides making their own contribution to the local cultures. This chapter deals with various aspects of Siddhis culture and practices that are observed by the researcher, their customs, traditions, and other cultural elements specific to Siddhis.

The researcher enumerates the family and kinship of the Siddhi community which is basic to their tribe after which the rituals and ceremonies of various stages of life cycle are dealt such as maternity, celebration of puberty and marriage with precise details. Later the researcher explains various customs that are carried out before, during and after marriage; various sports conducted during marriage and finally the pilgrimage undertaken by the Hindu Siddhis. Then the researcher proceeds to present the important festivals celebrated by the Siddhi community, one being celebrated in their settlement and the other together in a common place which is called the Nyasa Jaathre. Later the researcher enumerates their dress pattern, food habits, arts and sports of the community. Finally the researcher

evaluates the lost culture of Siddhis as well as their cultural adaptation and integration into various other traditions of the locality.

3.7.2 Nature of Culture and Traditions

The word “Culture” has a very broad meaning, taken in an ethnographic sense, 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 community or society. Communication holds the key to continuation of any culture.

Siddhi culture is rich and educative having their unique practices distinct from other tribes found in the vicinity. They claim to have sustained the test of time to preserve their culture. But many question this claim as none of them are able to speak their original language, or sing their original songs. Hence Siddhis have adapted many things from the local tribes and people but practice them with their own uniqueness. After a long research and observation the researcher intends to discuss and present the cultural and traditional elements of Siddhis in the following pages.

3.7.3. Ancestral Worship among Siddhis or Hiriyara Puje

There are two principals of animism that any tribe believes in while speaking about survival of souls. The principals are;

1. That there are powerful souls besides powerful gods. The souls are connected with men and feel pleasure and pain through them. They influence the events in this world and also control them.

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2. That the soul of man survives even after death.\textsuperscript{109}

Tylor’s interpretation of primitive religion which he called \textit{animism}, as this word has been derived from the word ‘\textit{anima}’ which means \textit{soul}, is entirely based on ancestor-worship.\textsuperscript{110} Ancestor worship is one of the common cultural traits of tribes in most parts of Asia.\textsuperscript{111} The worship is acceptable to all the tribes though the form may be different in various tribes. Among Siddhis this is known as \textit{hiriyara puje} which is both a social and religious act. Ancestor worship is still a living force among Siddhis, symbolized by a \textit{coconut}(See appendix. Fig. 06) placed in a special corner of their dwellings representing the ancestral souls. The \textit{coconut} should be unblemished and complete lest the dead become angry with them and curse them for their negligence. It is placed at the centre of the \textit{Devara mane} or altar of the house. Christian Siddhis do not reveal about it or talk openly of it to their priests for fear of chastisement or any kind of disciplinary action against them in the name of superstition. Christian Siddhis replace a fresh coconut on All Souls Day.\textsuperscript{112} Christian Siddhis remove the old coconut and break it open with reverence and then the members of the house consume it on \textit{All Souls Day}. After this a simple ritual of replacing with the fresh coconut begins where the eldest in the family, preferably man smears some water around the place and over the coconut (preferably with holy water collected from the holy places) and then a

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\textsuperscript{112} All Souls Day is a Christian Celebration intended to remind people of their ancestors, the dead relatives. This day is celebrated on the 1\textsuperscript{st} November every year.
\end{flushright}
pair of plantains with sandalwood joss-sticks is placed, finally with reverence the coconut is replaced in its consigned place.

Among Hindu Siddhis different gods are represented by this coconut according to seasons and festivals. If it is shivarathri, then Shiva the prime god resides in the coconut and is replaced by Ganapathy at Ganesha Chathurthi, or by another god at a different festival, most of which are male gods. The Siddhis believe in the special power of coconut that protects the family from various illness and dangers.

“If a member of the household false sick, the lady of the house places a lamp or a candle at the ancestor’s altar (coconut), then a little mud around the coconut is collected to make paste out of it and smeared to the forehead of the sick person. This is to entrust the sick member to the care of ancestors who will heal him/her. Siddhis have the ancestral altar (The coconut) only in their ancestral house and not in all houses. If anyone plans to pay homage he / she has to go to the ancestral house for the purpose.”

Siddhis believe that some “catastrophe awaits the family in absence of coconut.” Hindu Siddhis change the coconut on the day of Mahalaya. Falling back to the history, Siddhis who were deported from eastern Africa seem to have a special worship of their ancestors and interestingly the Nyasa Lake around which most Siddhis believed to have their habitat had seen coconut grows around

113 Anthon Siddhi. Personal interview. 22 April 2007.


Nyasa\textsuperscript{116} lake in plenty and when they were extradited to Goa and other coastal places and in the Western Ghats witnessed the same, a theory debatable and requires further research. But for sure before beginning any work or undertakings Hindu Siddhis believe it to be auspicious to break a coconut first and then commence it.

3.7.4. Cultural Sustenance

The absence of clan has been detrimental to Siddhis’ cultural progress. Due to the food gathering nature of Siddhis their habitat was changed frequently. Living in temporary shelters made out of bamboo reeds and leaves and migrating from time to time has enabled the Siddhis to meet people of other tribes, observe them and thus learn. It is clear from the history of Siddhis that it was impossible for them to retain what precious to them as the situation did not favour them in any part of India. At the same the researcher observes that some of the Siddhis have retained their own social as well as cultural traditions.

3.7.5. Siddhis and Lost Culture

Joseph E., Harris, an American historian, gives reasons of how the Africans in America retained their language and culture to some extent as he observes that the Africans arrived abroad with their languages and cultures, which they continued to speak and practice, especially during the early years, in the privacy of their homes, quarters and social groups. They continued to sing and dance as their cultures had taught them, give their children African names and so forth. Slavery could not break the awareness of their history, which is revealed in their religious practices such as Candomble in Brazil and Sateria in Cuba and oral traditions.

\textsuperscript{116} Nyasa; meaning ‘lake’, also is called Lake Malawi, located at southern most and third largest of East African Rift Valley lakes of East Africa, lying in a deep trough within Malawi. The lake’s middle line and its northern and eastern shores form much of Malawi. The lake is fed by fourteen perennial rivers, the largest being Ruhuhu.
generally. In fact, some of the new arrivals sought their kin and friends after they had been sold into slavery. Their culture and aspirations for freedom were expressed in a number of ways such as songs, poetry, and religion. It was not the case with Siddhis of Karwar and Dharwad. In spite of hostile conditions the Siddhis have managed to retain some of their arts, customs and traditions from the time of their release from their slavery or bondage or their plight into the forest.

3.8. Conclusion

Social conditions of Siddhis in the Karwar and Dharwad districts of Karnataka are yet to see the light of development though they enjoy the status of Schedule Tribe since 2003. In this bargain, though Siddhis might lose certain traditional, cultural, communitarian richness carried down the ages by their ancestors, nevertheless, the social condition of this tribe is pitiable and needs emancipation from their poverty, illiteracy and social discrimination in order to give them their deserved dignity. The subservient condition of these Siddhis has pushed them down to the lowest strata of the society where they have fewer opportunities to rise above their discriminations and oppressions. Their social condition has not changed much from their slavery to freedom. Their only consolation was to be free to live an isolated life undisturbed by the external forces. But this scenario is slowly changing as the neighbourhood is interfering in their social functioning and way of life. Siddhis have had limited options for action and yet they have survived despite the odds. One reason that keeps them survive the test of time is their ability to adapt, flexibility, improvisation in their strategies and tactics to acclimatize to new environments.

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Siddhis are struggling to cope with the varying world and fears death of its sabha and other rich customs and traditions that keep them intact. They need to rediscover various means to preserve the autonomy of Siddhi Sabha, jante and budwont which they have not thought of yet. This calls for a prompt interference from the government to empower the Siddhis organization in order to preserve their autonomy within their settlements, lest the gap between the ancient and the present may create a greater chasm that would distance the future Siddhis to have a touch of their roots. At the same, the tribes are no longer left isolated. The modern world has inexorably moved closer to the tribes. The dance, song, music, deity, skills of art and healing of this tribe are a source of their rich inheritance. Heraclitus declared that one cannot step into the same river twice meaning nothing is static. Siddhis’ culture is slowly facing this phenomenon though many of them are not aware of it. The researcher observed that the younger generation needs to be made aware of the richness of their cultural heritage. Education, economic reforms within the community should lead them get closer to their dear customs and traditions which in turn will help them keep their original, unique identity as Siddhis.

The following chapter provides the role of education in the socio-economic changes and the status of women among Siddhis.

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