CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this introductory chapter is to introduce the topic and to describe the general procedures used in this study. This chapter provides an overview of the topic, a rationale describing the importance of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, review of literature, scope of the study and the approaches used in this study. This chapter also deals with the research methods and techniques used in the study.

1.2 Social Formation: A Definition

Social formation, largely synonymous with ‘society’, is a concept which refers to the institutional context that provides the conditions of existence of society, a term devised by the structuralist Louis Althusser. It is a complex of concrete economic, political, and ideological relations bound together.¹ The social, economic, legal and political structures and traditions of a given community or society; in the modern period often embodied within a nation state is called social structure.² And social formation embodies all the above elements.

According to Ginsberg “social formation or structure is concerned with the principal forms of social organization i.e., types of groups, associations and institutions and the complex of these which constitute societies. A full account of social formation would involve a review of the whole field of comparative

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institutions. Murdock uses social evolution instead of social formation. In speaking of the evolution of social organization he refers to the normal processes of cultural change as they find special application in the area of social formation. Social formation of Siddhis is an interesting element to observe as their social structure is different from that of the other tribes in the vicinity. The isolation that they succumb to has played a vital role in their exclusive social formation in the districts of Karwar and Dharwad of Karnataka state. Past 500 years in the history of Siddhis in Karnataka have given a new turn to their lives in their social formation in the given areas of research. A real social imposition process was on from the day they began serving the masters in these areas.

1.3 Siddhis

Siddhis are a tribal community who are found in the jungles of Western Ghats in the Dharwad and Karwar districts of Karnataka; an important social group whose history, experience, and expression are part of the ongoing changing world culture of dispersed peoples. These tribal people believe to be indigenous where as in reality they are not. They are supposed to have come or being brought from outside India for diverse purposes. In the words of Sunil Janah, “people of all races and religions had come and settled, intermingled within these hospitable shores to make the people of this subcontinent culturally rich and wholesome.”

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Among such variant races that settled here Siddhis are one, who resemble those of Negroes, a Diaspora that has its history of more than a five hundred years in India.

They are found in various parts of India, states such as Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Though a few of them have assimilated themselves in the Indian society most of them continue to maintain their indigenous customs, traditions, identity and the way of life despite settling in India five hundred years ago or more. But in Karnataka, Siddhis live in small clusters of distinct settlement either in the forest or in the outskirts of it in small villages, settled almost in six major Talukas of Karwar across the Western Ghats. The reason why they settled only in these districts in large numbers is a matter that is discussed in the following chapters. The researcher has focused on these two districts because they are found in large numbers and the researcher has lived with them in these areas.

The census report of 2001 census does not count them as tribes rather they are placed in the OBC section, which takes 41st place in that division. These Siddhis seem to have assimilated what the local culture and traditions offered them. From the time they have entered into India and later moved into various parts of Karnataka they have been very observant and have acculturated in response to what the land offered them. There has been a gradual social formation into being Indian rather than a foreigner so much so that they call themselves indigenous people today.

1.4 Etymology

The most widespread name of these Afro-Indians is usually spelled “Siddi” and pronounced Siddhi in Kannada language. The name is assumed by some linguists to be derived from Saiyed, an Islamic honorific meaning a descendant of the prophet Mohammad. Platts gives the derivation of the word as a vulgarization of Saiyid, ‘an appellation of Africans; a negro’. The term, Siddhi is taken to be corrupt form of Syed\(^8\) or Saiyad\(^9\) or Saidi\(^10\) or Sayyid.\(^11\)

‘Saiyad' is considered to be the designation of a descendant of the prophet\(^12\) and which, according to some authorities, means ‘priest’. But it is contested that a term designing priest should have been used by the Abyssinians (Abyssinia) who were notorious for their lack of priestly qualities.\(^13\) Abyssinians, from the Arabic Habsh, the name applied to the country called Abyssinia, meaning “dark”.\(^14\) Hubshy\(^15\) as well as Zanzibar were places from where slaves were

globally imported. Other forms of Sidi are Seedi, Syddy, Siddy, Siddee, Seddhee, seddee, sidi, sidi, seedy (a Urdu Sīdī, Marathi- Siddhī, ad., Arab – Sayyidī meaning ‘My Lord’) originally, a title of honour given in Western India to African Mohammedans holding high positions under the kings of the Deccan. They were preferred to chief employments, which they enter by the name of Siddhis. Sayyid- also as Seid, Seyd, Seyed, Seyyad, Syed, meaning “lord” or ‘prince’ in Arab language. In Mohammedan countries, the title given to a man who is supposed to trace his descent from Husain, the elder grandson of the prophet. Murdock, In his book *Africa* divides the Sidamo tribes of Ethiopia into seven major groups. He mentions Sidis as a tribe of a major group called Ometo.

1.5 **Geographical Settings of Dharwad District**

Dharwad district is the secondary district in Karnataka that has a very scanty Siddhi presence as in Kalgatigi which solely represents the Siddhi dwelling unit in the district. There are few Siddhis who have temporarily migrated in the cities of Hubli and Dharwad in search of jobs. Their number though less compared to Karwar district, Siddhis make their presence felt very much in Dharwad district. In the senses of 2001 ST population of the district was 5.3%. (See appendix. Fig. No. 03)

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17 Ibid. p. 155.
While referring to topography of the Dharwad district, it contains black soil though red soil is found is suitable for vegetable cultivation. The climate is on the whole healthy and agreeable. It is pleasantest in the tract parallel with the Sahyadri crest between Dharwar, Hubli, Kod and Bankapur. There are thorny forests, scrub forests in the district. The forests are of deciduous type. Containing a good percentage of teak on the west, sides bordering Kanara and towards east it is scrubby containing good percentage of sandal wood. The chief forest produce are timber, firewood, Charcoal and sandal wood. Minor produce are jumri leaves, harda, tarwal and kakki, gum, honey and bamboos that are marketable. The Bombay wild Animals and Wild birds Protection Act (XXIV of 1951) has enabled the forests to preserve the wild animals and birds. The wild animals found in these forests are Tiger, pig, deer, Leopard cat, Indian sloth bear, Indian bison, wolf, Hyena, Jackal, Indian fox, wild dog, spotted deer, sambar, wild boar, bats and monkeys. Birds of various kinds also are found here such as wood peckers, bluebird and so on.

1.6 Geographical Settings of Karwar

Karwar also known as Uttara Kannada, is one of the biggest districts of Karnataka. It is located in the Western part of Karnataka state. It is divided into eleven administrative Talukas, namely Karwar, Bhatkal, Sirsi, Yellapura, Siddapur, Mundgod, Honnavar, Haliyala, Ankola, Kumta and Supa. The district has a population of 13,53,644 according to 2001 census. The total area of the

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22 Ibid. pp. 15-36.
23 Ibid. p. 40
24 Ibid. pp. 41 -42.
district is 10,291 sq. km.\textsuperscript{25} This district is located in the Midwestern part of Karnataka, between 13°- 55’ and 15° - 31’ North latitude and 74° - 9’ and 75° - 10’ East longitude. \textsuperscript{26}(See appendix. Figure no. 01 and 02)

Topography of Karwar District freveals that there are four principal rivers drain westwards from the crest of the Sahyadris to the sea; from north to south they are the Kali, Gungawali, Aghanashini and Sharavati. The North Western Ghats moist deciduous forests cover the Sahyadris below 1000 meters elevation. In pockets above 1000 meters elevation lie the evergreen North Western Ghats mountain rain forests. Anishi National park, near Dandeli, preserves approximately 250 kms of semi-evergreen forest, which is home to tigers, elusive black panthers, leopard cats, gaurs, Asian elephants, Sambars and a range of birds and reptiles. Dandeli wildlife Sanctuary protects 834 km of semi-evergreen and bamboo forest in the watershed of the Kali River and its tributaries, the Kaneri and Nagajhari. Much of the lowland has been cleared for agriculture.\textsuperscript{27}

The chief crops of the district are rice and sugarcane, along with a great diversity of other crops. Tree crops include coconut, areca nut, cocoa, cashew, mango, banana, pineapple, Garcinia, and sapota; vegetables include onion, radish, cucumber, cauliflower, sweet potato, brinjal, and amaranth; spices include pepper, cardamom, ginger and nutmeg. Millet and cotton are grown in the drier portion of the district east of the Ghats.

\textsuperscript{25} Manorama Year Book 2007, Malayalam Manorama, Kottayam, 2007, p. 621.
\textsuperscript{26} <http/www.karwardistrict.org.>
\textsuperscript{27} <http//www.kamathistory.com.>
1.7 **Demographics**

In India, Karnataka has the largest concentration of Siddhis. According to latest estimates there are around 3,700 Siddhis families in the state with a total population of 18,000. Apart from these settlements in Karnataka State Siddhis are also found in the states of Gujarat in negligible numbers in states of Andhra Pradesh, and Maharashtra. There are about 10,000 Siddhis in Gujarat and 12,000 in Hyderabad. A few hundred are also in Lucknow, Delhi and Calcutta. Pakistan has some 30,000 ‘Shidis’ and fewer than 1,000 ‘Ceylon Kapris’ live in Sri Lanka.²⁸

1.7.1 Reasons for settling in this area

The geographical settings of Dharwad and Karwar are very convenient for the tribes to settle in here as the terrain in mountainous covered with thick forest with rich fauna and flora. The forest gave them a cover to hide from their enemies besides the Siddhis were used to living in the forest. Forest provided them with rich food that would keep them alive and strong. The west coast of India in which these two districts are situated is accessible to sea by land as well as by water. This sought of conveyance during the time of danger enabled the Siddhis to settle down in these districts. Siddhis also were in much demand for labour in these districts as land lords needed strong, hardworking and personnel skilled in agriculture. Siddhis were good at climbing trees which was also a need in these areas due to tall aracnut trees, trees that hold honey combs, trees that have delicious fruits for consumption as well as for sale. Historically we see in the later chapters that Siddhis were very skilled at Guerilla warfare which kept the enemies fearful and at

bay. In this sense the west coast was a safe haven for them which forced the Siddhis to settle down without much hesitation.

1.7.2 Reasons for choosing these two districts for research

The districts of Dharwad and Karwar hold the highest number of Siddhis in India. Though there are few of them settled in Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and some parts of Maharashtra, these two districts have huge number of them living in several settlements. History reveals that these Siddhis who have settled themselves have come down to these districts right from Bengal, Hyderabad, goa and Maharashtra as they felt secure in the western Ghats of India which has very many mountains covered with dense forests.

As their number is considerably more than any other parts of India the researcher chose these districts for the research. It was easy for the researcher to work in these districts even though the settlements were in remote areas non-accessible and tough.

1.8 Ethnicity of Siddhis as Tribe

Tribes have their own life ethos, historical individuality and ethnicity, in which case Siddhis have intra-tribal Hierarchy and not inter-tribal. The attributes that constitute core of ethnicity according to S.C. Doshi, which are basic to any tribal life include as follows:

a. Scattered pattern of habitation, as witnessed today among the Siddhis.
b. Life style oriented to hills, forests and isolations
c. Institutions such as polygamy, bride-price, status of women, drinking etc
d. Subsistence economy
e. Fairs and festivals.  

Siddhis enjoy distinct identities who have shared values, mode of life, exclusive symbol of identity and a consciousness of kind. The caste principle of hierarchy is non-existent among Siddhis. Siddhis live in hills, forests and isolations and have some of the traits of tribes as enumerated above by Doshi. The researcher discusses a few of those characters that concern Siddhis as a tribe.

1.8.1 Scattered Pattern of Living

In both districts of Karwar and Dharwad, Kiran Kamal Prasad, found Siddhis living in about 80 villages. But the researcher raises it to 118 settlements. The settlements remain more or less the same except for the fact that many people shift their settlements. But Siddhis have not begun any new settlements due to new forest laws that forbid them to clear the forest and begin a new settlement as intended by them.

Only eleven families lived in Dandeli, a town in Haliyal Taluka in 1984. The settlements are in eight Talukas of three districts namely Ankola, Yellapura, Sirsi, Supa, Mundgod, Haliyala of Karwar district, Kalgatgi of Dharwad district and Khanapur of Belguam district. Most of the Siddhis like to live in the forest and in small isolated settlements. Houses in the compact villages are close to each other and fields are at some distance from the village. No matter to which religion one belongs, rich or poor, educated or illiterate the Siddhis express fondness to reside in a scattered village which becomes a core of their ethnicity.

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29 Doshi S.C. *Tribal Ethnicity; Class and Integration*, Rawat Publicaitons, Jaipur, 1990, p. 144.


1.8.2 Unique Physical Features

Siddhis have thick protruding lips, flat and wide noses, dark hairless bodies and frizzy, wooly and bushy hair on the head. They have a strong physic and are athletic by nature, living in the deep jungles of Dandeli forest. They are sought after for hard labour in the farms be it digging, cutting wood, hunting or working in the scorching sun. Simple in their life style are also dance loving and singing tribe. There is rhythm in their body that automatically moves pulls them dance and singing especially at gatherings and in the evenings.

1.8.3 Unique Language

Siddhis in common use a mixture of Konkani, Marathi and Kannada in their conversation. Yet those who follow Konkani, Marathi or Kannada cannot follow their dialect as it is unique to them alone. Though the assimilation has taken place with regard to language they seem to have no knowledge of their original dialect. They picked up Konkani as it was the local language spoken in Goa as well as throughout the Konkan region with change of accents. Though Portuguese officials time and again made every effort to make Portuguese compulsory language of the Estado da India, people rarely followed the instructions. They preferred Konkani to Portuguese. Siddhis speak a corrupt form of Konkani which is a bit difficult to follow. Even those with knowledge of Konkani might, at times, need the assistance of an interpreter or translator. The


33 Sen S N., Indian Travels of Thevenot and Careri, “Indian Travels of Careri” Published by the national Archives of India, 1949, p. 188.
uniqueness of their language lies in the fact that it is a mixture of Konkani, Marathi and Kannada.

1.8.4 Religion

Among the Siddhi families in Karnataka there are Catholics, Hindus and Muslims. In Haliyala there are only Muslims and Christians, and in the ghat areas of Yellapura and Ankola only Hindus. Owing to the division of the Siddhi people into three religious groups a distinct self-identity has not developed. In terms of religious affiliations, 40 percent are Catholics, 33 percent are Muslims and 27 percent are Hindus. It was a normal procedure for the Portuguese to baptize Negros before boarding the ship to be transported to other countries. Yet those Africans who were brought by the Muslim merchants and sold to sultans in India embraced Islam and those who remained in the houses of Bhats of Yellapura and surrounding talukas followed the religion of their master.

1.9 Significance of the Study

Siddhis, the only African Diaspora found in Indian sub-continent are migrants from east Africa. Lack of sufficient research has made this tribe unheard in the state of Karnataka and India at large. Hence the researcher took up the study


36 Jeanette Pinto,, Slavery in Portuguese India (1510-1812), Himalaya Publishing House, Bombay, 1992, p 63.
after living with these Siddhis for a few years, observing their life style and their living conditions. The researcher chose these two districts specifically because Siddhis are large in numbers in these districts than any other in the state of Karnataka. The findings in this research will reveal to us the gradual social formation of Siddhis in the years spent in India as well as Siddhis’ political, economic, social and cultural history and their struggles for survival and their contributions to the Indian society at large.

The present research work assumes importance as it enables the law making authority to enact appropriate legislation to look into the socio-economic problems of the siddhi community. Besides it also helps the executive authority to implement the existing law more effectively for the benefit of the siddhi community and enlightens academicians, students and interested group concerned to know the conditions of Siddhi community and undertake further research which contributes towards the existing literature on history.

1.10 **Formulation of Research Problem**

The unique features of the Siddhis living in Dharwad and Karwar including their physical features, language and life style raise a number of questions in the minds of researcher and the researcher tries to frame the following problems:

1. Why do the Siddhis differ from other people of India? What are the unique features of the Siddhis?

2. Are they the original inhabitants of India?

3. What is the social status of the Siddhis?

4. Are the Siddhis a marginalized group? Are their rights protected by the existing systems?

5. Are they following their traditional customs and practices?
6. How far the life of the Siddhis is influenced by the cultures and life styles of other people in India?

7. Does the modern education have any impact on the socio-economic and cultural changes of the Siddhis?

8. How did their traditional household skills, religious practices, social customs and traditions reach to the present status?

1.11 Objectives of the Study

The major objectives of the study are:-

1. To trace the history of Siddhis’ migration to India and the aftermath.

2. To critically analyze the major socio-economic and cultural changes that had taken place in the Siddhi community after their settlements in the forest of Karnataka state.

3. To assess the role of education in the transformation of the community.

4. To analyze the aftermath of the government’s initiatives to uplift the economic status of the Siddhis.

5. To evaluate the position of women among the Siddhis.

6. To make an exhaustive study of the religious beliefs of the Siddhis in the settlements.

7. To examine the changes which have taken place in the power structure of the Siddhi tribe.

8. To have an in depth investigation into the subsistence economy of the Siddhis.

9. To explore the cultural changes which have taken place due to their contact with other people of the locality.

10. To study the changing consumption pattern and its impact on tribal economy.
1.12 **Hypothesis**

The important hypotheses of the study are the following:

1. The Siddhis belong to a different race from the majority of the Indians and, being the most recent entrants into the Indian society, they are in a way foreign to it. The physical or geographical factors did influence in bringing about socio-economic changes in their society.

2. The impact of education was very little for socio-economic changes in the siddhi society. The advancement of technology has not brought about very significant socio-economic changes in the siddhi community.

3. Cultural diffusion has taken place in the siddhi community.

4. Embrace of the religion of the Siddhi community from their native religion is always believed to be voluntary.

1.13 **Sources of Data**

The study is largely based on the variety of sources both primary and secondary, collected from the archival repositories and other centers of research. The primary sources include Government orders, Government files, Census reports, Administration reports, reports of the various committees, Manuals, Gazetteers and directories. So far as collection of data is concerned there are sources such as direct source and indirect source. The former represents data collected directly from the respondents relating to the Siddhis’ economic background, their conditions, standard of living, and their association with other world, how they have been marginalized, whether these people have access to welfare programmes sponsored and implemented by the government. The latter comprises both primary and secondary data such as text books, rules and
regulations dealing with this community, current awareness publications, encyclopedias, periodicals, websites, hand books sponsored by public offices, NGOs etc. This study is based on historical accounts of contemporary regimes, anthropological works and data that the researcher has collected through field study.

The supplementary material for this study was collected primarily from various Siddhi settlements in Haliyala, Yellapura, Ankola and Mundgod talukas of Uttar Kannada. The selection of places and households was at random. The study material was also collected partly through an interview schedule formulated for collecting information regarding family, kinship, education, economy, health, medicine and political life of this tribe. Besides, the data was also collected through exhaustive field work and through personal observation and participation in social, religious and cultural gatherings. Thus for the purpose of the extraction of data concerned various research techniques have been used such as interview schedule, observation, personal participation etc in addition to the traditional methods.

1.14 Research Methodology

The research methodology followed in the present work covers both empirical and non-empirical methods. For a detailed study of the topic primary data was collected and analyzed, various text books, committee reports, statutory rules and regulations, journals on tribal community, have been comprehensively analyzed. The empirical method assumes vital significance in collecting relevant information from the respondents. It focuses on the real life situation, problems and difficulties faced by the respondents and their predecessors. Research techniques adopted in undertaking the empirical study are Questionnaire, Interview Schedule, and Personal Observations.
1.15 **Scope of the Study**

The scope of the study was restricted to all the siddhis living in the Karwar and Dharwad districts of Karnataka. The study focuses on the social formation of Siddhis from the year 1500 C.E. to 2003 C.E. The area of the study includes the districts of Dharwad and Karwar. The major Talukas of Karwar and Dharwad districts are Haliyala, Yellapura, Ankola, Sirsi, Mundgod, and Kalgatagi. Out of 180 Siddhi Settlements about 45 major Siddhi Settlements were selected for empirical study such as Gadgera, Balashettikoppa, Birolli, Gardolli, Bukkinkop, Mainalli, Gundolli, Hosur, Hosalli, Yellapur town, Bomnalli, Gund, Golehalli, Kirwatti, Idgundi, Gotgolli, Lalguli, Bhagavathi, Gunjavathi, Chikkoti, Manchikere, Bidrolli, Dehalli, Balagar, Wada, Kegdal, Tatwanigi, Nagshettikoppa, Balashetikop, Bidralli, Angod, Kotemane, and Hunshettikoppa.

1.16 **Limitations of the Study**

Bearing in mind the various constrains it was impossible for the researcher to cover chief segments of nearly hundred and eighty settlements of the Siddhis. The vastness of area and lack of transport, lack of approachable roads and the dangerous terrain made the researcher to restrict his research works and visits to the area accessible to him. Much care has been taken to make the research as much impartial and methodical as possible. Further, the results of the study cannot be generalized beyond the limits of the study area as the articulated views of the respondents with regard to various topics may not be completely free from personal prejudice. In comparison to the Siddhi population the number of

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members interviewed and respondents approached for filling the questionnaire are very less.

1.17 **Review of Literature**

Complete and extensive literature on the socio-economic situation of Siddhis of Dharwad and Karwar has been very little, thin and insufficient.

- For the first time Joseph Harris in 1971 produced *The African Presence in Asia: consequences of the East African Slave Trade*. This great work provided us with a historical survey of the Siddhis in Indian subcontinent. He gives the details of history of Siddhis both in North and South India, their life in slavery, their political participation, their services as soldiers and generals in the military services of various kingdoms, and their rise and fall in power.

- A classical work on the sociological aspects of the Siddhis in Karnataka, especially in North Karnataka was published by Palakshappa T. C. in 1976. He did a focused study on the Siddhis’ social situation of the time. He gives a good analysis of the kinship systems, as well as religious practices of Siddhis. He made an in depth study on their settlements, their family structure, their marriage and children, their kinship, their daily routine life, of their religion, language and also political organization. The study includes the working of the Siddhi community and its assimilation and absorption into various religions mainly Hinduism, Christianity and Islam.

- Lobo Cyprian Henry S.J. (1984) studied the “Siddhis in Karnataka.” He covered general issues such as sociological aspect, particularly laying stress on their literature, occupation, family kinship, religion and rituals right from birth to marriage and death. The main focus of his study was to make
the Siddhis known to the people of Karnataka as well as governments both of state and central as a distinct group with an ethnic identity, deserving a tribal status. He observed one common feature of all Siddhis found in Gujarat, Karnataka and elsewhere India that they had not retained anything of their original culture.

- Shirodkar P.P. (1985) has discussed *Slavery in Coastal India: with special reference to Goa, Daman and Diu*. He has traced the roots of Slavery right from centuries before Anno Domini (A.D) both in the west as well as Eastern countries and kingdoms of the past. While indicating slavery in the East he mentions about the slavery during the wars between the invading Aryans and the aborigines. Barter of slaves was common even during the time of Buddha. While in the West slavery existed in the Greek and Roman civilizations that exceeded the citizens of Rome leading the way to rebellion. He describes the role of the Portuguese who increased slave trade between East African coast to West coasts of India and the abolition of slavery in the Esato da India (Portuguese territories in the East) and China.

- Pavate P.P. (1985) gathered information on the anthropometrics, dermatoglyphics and blood groups from the three endogamous groups of Siddhis. He focused on “*Morphogenetic Study of the Siddhis in Karnataka*”. He observed that there is not much difference in the distribution of ABO and d genes in all the three groups. While accepting that the three groups of Siddhis are descendants of the same ancestors he indicated the dermatoglyphic difference between Christian Siddhis and Hindu Siddhis as well as the Muslim Siddhis in A-B bridge count. He also indicates that the differences may be due to the adaptation of these groups to a particular social set up.
• Vijayakumar M., Malhotra K.C. et al (1987) in their publication, “Genetic Studies among the Siddhis of Karnataka, India: a migrant population from Africa”, have focused on examining the blood samples of around 237 Siddhis. The research scholars concentrated on the serological and biochemical markers such as blood group antigens, Isozymes, serum proteins and hemoglobin variants. The DNA study revealed that Siddhis’ genetic pattern matches with that of Ethiopians and not of Indians and their study established the Siddhis’ origin and confirmed their migration into India.

• In the same year D’ Souza T.R. (1987) produced a paper on “The Afro-Asian Church in the Portuguese Esato da India”, and observed that there prevailed a great tradition of open and peaceful commercial relationship between East Africa and India right from centuries before Portuguese could come. He also examines the African Slave trade with India and opines that the Ethiopians slaves continued to flow into India as late as 18th century. Siddhis have contributed to the cultural richness of south India as well as have assimilated few elements into their culture.

• Hiremath R.S. (1993) made an in depth study of “Life, living and language among Siddhis of North Karnataka District”, and his research speaks of Siddhis’ social status as well as their social living conditions. He also enumerated how Siddhis’ social contact has enabled them to emerge with a new language of their own that is totally different from the language spoken in their original land i.e., Ethiopia and other north Eastern African countries. He also made an attempt to give a comprehensive picture of Siddhis’ life, migration, health and language.
• Prakash V. Patil (1998) in his research paper “a Biomedical Study of Siddhis of Karnataka” observes that the Siddhi population has increased by 60% over a decade. He examined samples of 269 Siddhis as well as 224 non-Siddhis in his research and observed that Siddhis were healthier than non-Siddhis due to their specific nutrition and hygiene. His research showed that scabies, tinea, eczema and leprosy were slightly more than the non-Siddhis due to poor hygiene. He also observed that medicine had something to do with their living social conditions.

• Pashington Obeng, in his study and publication’ Shaping Membership, Defining nation: The cultural politics of African Indians in South Asia, deals with the history of Siddhis in general India and gives an insight into the Siddhis’ beliefs and practices, examines the uniqueness of Siddhi culture as he appreciates the geo-social displacements, social and religious oppressions experienced by individuals. Further he explores into the extent to which Siddhis depend on their faith and their cultural resources to endure and struggle for their freedom.

The present research work tries to build a bridge between the elements that are not duly answered by the previous scholarly researches. The present research tries to answer questions of Siddhis’ uniqueness as people from Africa, their cultural, social and religious diversity and the gradual social formation. The work also concentrates on the economic aspects of the Siddhis, their living condition, their liabilities, savings, diet and their subsistence farming etc. The present research also focuses on an in depth study into the Indian cultural traits that are found in Siddhis’ culture as well as their contribution as a tribe to the Indian society, culture and economy.
1.18 Conceptual Clarifications

Definition of various terms clarifies the sense of words used in the thesis. There are few words which need to be defined so as to give clarity to the writings as well as right understanding of everything in it.

*Abyssinia*

This name was formerly used in a general way to denote the African Continent, and sometimes even Asia, Persia, Chaldea and Assyria. In the present instance, however, the name seems to apply to the country properly known as Ethiopia i.e., Abyssinia

*Baara Buddi*

Expression denotes inconsistency in matters of trust and responsibility. Literally means twelve minds. This word is utilized by the non-Siddhis in the locality to put down those siddhi people who are inconsistent in their works or payment of debts etc.

*Caffree*

A name used for any African or Siddhi in India as well as in some parts of world. The word indicates the colour and the other physical features of an African. This word distinguishes others from Africans.

*Casado*

An offspring born out of marriage between Portuguese men and native women that are settled in Goa are called casado. This is to distinguish the casados from castico who are born of Portuguese but reside in Goa.
Caste

Caste refers to the hierarchical system of social control in India with each subgroup assigned a ranked status, depending on its origin and religious strictness. Caste system is prevalent and very strong among Hindus in India. The caste system has so many forms of discrimination and oppression built into it that some of these forms of discrimination and oppression such as bonded labour, slavery often fail to draw pointed attention.

Dhamaam

Name of a drum, which is cylindrically long and has a two feet wide mouth on both-sides, covered with skin preferably deer skin or buffalo skin according to availability. This instrument is played both by male and female but squatting.

Gele

A kind of fruit soaked in water and used for washing clothes in olden days by Siddhis. This fruit is also used to catch the fish in rivers and ponds. This fruit cannot be eaten by people.

Hiriyaru

Hiriyaru in the ordinary usage is understood as a form of addressing the elders with respect. But among Siddhis this word means “the ancestor” and not just an ordinary usage. In fact they do not use this word to address elders that are alive but only to the dear departed who are elder to them. For Siddhis ‘Hiriyaru’ is

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a family god because according to their cosmology, the parents after their death become benevolent ‘spirits’ and reside in the house. This is a unique belief of Siddhis though others have such beliefs but do not stick to it so much as the Siddhis do.

**Jamma**

The god of Siddhis which guards their settlements from evils such as disease, epidemics, bad spirits and alien elements. Jamma is usually worshiped under a tree which is considered holy by the Siddhis. Animal sacrifices are made every year to the tree in order to keep the deity happy and the settlement safe. Every siddhi settlement has a boundary and this boundary is guarded by jamma.

**Jāthre**

It is the periodical celebrations connected with a deity or crowds that gather at a religious festival. People from all walks of life gather in order to pay their homage to a particular deity at a particular place. *Jāthre* is common for people of Karnataka a practice specially carried out by the Hindus.

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**Kafara**

The term ‘Kafara’ is of Arabic origin meaning ‘pagan’ and in colonial usage of various European languages in eastern and southern African, it was borrowed from Swahili to mean ‘negro’ or black.

**Katte**

A place where justice is delivered in a village by the Panchayat members. Usually it is under a huge tree demarked by the members of the settlements for the purpose of delivering judgment. A raised plat form helps the leaders to sit over who can be seen by all the members of the village or settlement during the jury. Justice is delivered which is undisputed and is accepted by the members of the settlement.

**Kon**

A bigger portion of house that is used for sleeping and keeping the used clothes. Siddhis do not have large houses that are found in the locality. Their houses mostly are comprise of two portions one functions as kitchen and the other as space for rest and other activities such as eating, relaxing and entertainment.

**Mantapa**

It is a temporary shelter made for a specific purpose among Hindus for various purposes. The mantapa is made with four standing sticks that are covered with either coconut leaves or mango leaves and a temporary roof created out of pleated

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coconut leaves. Mantapa mostly is decorated well and is the centre of attraction for the guests as the important ceremonies take place there. It is mostly erected for the nuptial purpose.

**Muttaideyaru**

Muttaideyaru are those married women who have not lost their husbands and are happy with their husbands. They are revered in the society, especially among the Hindus to be people of great importance and are given privilege to be part of various celebrations as against widows who are not expected to be present at auspicious ceremonies. Muthaide also means a married woman who dies before her husband dies.

**Nyasa**

Nyasa is a lake towards the mouth of Jambesi river located in Abyssinia of Africa Continent. Nyasa meaning ‘lake’ is fed by 14 perennial rivers, and is the third largest of the East African Rift Valloey lakes of East Africa, lying in a deep trough mainly within Malawi. Nyasa land itself was too crowded for all to farm and too isolated from most markets due to which people from here began to move away. Siddhi Nyasa is a black stone in the dark forest around which Siddhis gather annually for a great celebration called Siddhi- Nyasa Jaathre. Siddhis do

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not seem to have a historical record about the whereabouts of this black stone. Siddhis believe that during the time of Shivaji, the king of the Marathas, this stone was found at Yaana in Karwar district of Karnataka from where it was taken and was installed at Sathanabailu by Siddhi ancestors who recognized the stone from the details left behind them by their forefathers. Siddhi Nyasa was brought by their African ancestors along with them as they were brought captured by the Portuguese. And this stone has traveled wherever the family and their descendants carried them following their migration from place to place. At last it came to the hands of Dabaguli family which was called upon to worship it.47

**Panchamrutha**

A mixture of five products taken from a cow and prepared by a Brahmin which is considered sacred and used for various religious ceremonies especially by the Hindu people.

**Patta**

*Patta* is a document issued by the government acknowledging the ownership of an individual. With which one can claim possession of the given property for one’s personal use be it building a house, or cultivating or selling to another person

**Panjari**

It is a ceremony in which turmeric, neem leaves, jaggery and a lamp are set up at the place of delivery by the midwife. This is done in order to protect the mother and the baby from the evils that exist around the place.

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47 Ibid., p. 2.
**Pott Bhorchenm**

A ceremony during puberty in which all sought of edibles are placed in the girls’ sari by the family members so that she may be a fruitful in her life and bear many children after her marriage. This ceremony is carried on mostly by the Hindu and Christian Siddhis.

**Slavery**

The word *Slave* comes from the word *servus* which is not cognate with *servare*, as has often been supposed; it is really related to the Homeric ‘εĻρόє’ and the verb ‘εĻρο’, with which the Latin *servo* is to be connected. It may be mentioned here that slave was originally a national name; it meant a man of Slavonic race captured and made a bondman to the Germans. The historian eludes the derivation of the national name from *Slava*, glory.”

Slavery means “one person legally owing and controlling another and denying him freedom of action or movement.” The slave was bound to absolute obedience, a human chattel, a commodity that could be treated at will if not treated better than their pet animals. Utility was the prize of their personality having no right to set back from the given assignments. “ A Condition in which a human

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being is owned by another. A slave was considered in law as property, or chattel, and was deprived of the rights ordinarily held by free persons.”

**Thatto**

A huge jar made out of bamboo sticks and smeared around with cow dung that can contain two to six quintal of food grains. This is specially found in the villages of Karnataka even today. In Kannada they call it ‘kanaja’ where in grains can be preserved for home purposes for a long time.

**Tribe**

Tribe is a social group, having a definite area, dialect, culture, homogeneity, and unifying social organization. The Imperial Gazetteer of India defines ‘tribe’ as a collection of families, or group of families, bearing a common name, which as a rule, does not denote any specific occupation, generally claiming common descent from a historical ancestor and occasionally form an animal, but in some parts of the country held together rather by obligations of blood feud than by the tradition of kinship, usually speaking the same language; occupying, or claiming to occupy, a definite tract of country. A tribe is not necessarily endogamous, i.e., it is not an invariable rule that a man of a particular tribe must marry a woman of that tribe.

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1.19 The Structure of the Thesis

The present work is structured in seven chapters, such as:

1. Introduction
2. The Historical Background of Siddhis
3. Social History of Siddhis
4. The role of education in the socio-economic changes and the status of women among siddhis
5. Economic history of Siddhis, their social and religious organization
6. Siddhi tribal community: a case study of Dharwad and Karwar districts of Karnataka
7. Conclusion and suggestions

Including the introduction and conclusion the thesis contains seven chapters. The introductory chapter provides the social formation, etymology, geographical settings of Karwar and Dharwad districts, ethnicity of Siddhis, significance of the study, formulation of research problem, objectives of the study, hypothesis, source of data, research methodology, scope of study and limitations, review of literature, conceptual clarifications and the structure of thesis. The first chapter directly introduces the Siddhis as people living in parts of Karnataka, their physical features, their distinct nature, religion, language, and their population. The first chapter explores the origins of their name Siddhi, and their attitude to that name as well as how they describe themselves.

In the second chapter the researcher presents a description and interpretive history of Siddhis in India. It begins with explanation of oral and written traditions in examining the history of Siddhis. The researcher begins to examine the reconstruction and contribution of Siddhis as individuals and as a social group who used their voluntary and forced migration to shape military, social and
political life of India. The chapter tries to establish the fact that Siddhis were from African continent and that they had their role to shape the Indian politics. This chapter begins the discussion by the waves of both voluntary and involuntary migration of Siddhis carried out by the Africans themselves as merchants, Arab slave- masters and finally the Europeans. It provides an important background for examining how the Afro- Indians got to India. The second chapter focuses on the reciprocal impact between the African Indian history, their shared familiarities and how they have responded to slavery, the caste system and other historical forces to form their own identities and social practices. The second chapter also focuses on various roles played by the Siddhis in the Indian political system as rulers of Janjira islands, short term rulers in Bengal history, as generals in the history of Delhi sultanate, as soldiers in the history of Deccan, in the kingdoms of Vijaynagar, Bhamani, Bijapur, Hyderabad, and other Deccan kingdoms as well as slaves in the history of Goa and other parts of the West Indian Coast.

Chapter three examines the social history of Siddhis in Dharwad and Karwar districts. In this chapter the researcher enumerates the social conditions of Siddhis in the past and compares and explains why and how it has influenced Siddhis today. The manner in which, their cultural evaporation and social decay have occurred in the elapse of time. The researcher shows ways in which that marker of identity is used as surname by some of the Afro-Indians to address their own needs, particularly now that they have been granted Schedule Tribe status in Karnataka since November of 2003. It also examines how the categorization Siddi is an index of social status and caste in India. The third chapter further tries to enumerate the social justice that is meted out to Siddhis besides the barriers that block their emancipation from various myths, exploitations and oppressions. The chapter further deals with the social set up of Siddhis as well as thier social formation from the time they have entered India and the change that they face
today in their settlements and explain their idea of divine kingship, marital status and housing pattern as well as food habits and health. The researcher further examines marital relations that Afro-Indians engage and the implications of such marriages for the locality. The chapter also deals with the forest privileges that the Siddhis enjoy.

While examining the cultural history of Siddhis the researcher also enumerates their spontaneous composition songs, the folkloristic culture, various dances such as dhamaam, poogdi and Holi sigmu. The uniqueness of their fine arts, paintings are also dealt in this chapter. Finally the tradition that is kept strong such as hiriyara pooje is also dealt, a tradition which reminds Siddhis of their uniqueness and gives them a special identity and unity. The chapter is concluded with a reference to their cultural sustenance which they preserved despite hardships and parts of their tradition and culture that was lost.

The role of education in the socio-economic changes and the status of women are discussed in the fourth chapter. Beginning with the historical background of siddhi education the chapter continues to enumerate the status of Siddhis in the field of education, literacy rate and reasons for the low literacy rate besides mentioning various organizations that are toiling to economically uplift Siddhis by educating them. In this venture the researcher mentions about the organisations which are meeting the need innovatively in order to make education a livelier affair.

Later in the fourth chapter the researcher deals with the position of women giving a gist of their status in the past and present. The risks they had to endure as slaves, farm workers in the past and daily labourers today. The expectations of the siddhi community as a home maker as well as bread winner are mentioned. The researcher also enumerates ways of their emancipation. The researcher also
concentrates on explaining the changing attitudes of women especially while to play their role in the local bodies. The rise of siddhi women is also briefly discussed while their involvement in various sports, social work, in knowing their rights and exercising their authority in the house are explained.

The fifth chapter deals with several issues among the Siddhis, economic history being dealt first, the researcher enumerates economic position of the siddhi tribe in the past as well as their psyche which sustained them through hard times. Then the researcher discusses various means of their economy such as forest utilities, agriculture, hunting, fishing, skill based earnings such as quilting, wood carving, and other crafts. The reasons for the loss of agricultural holding are also discussed besides discussing the daily wage labourers. Later in the chapter their income, savings, loan transactions and developmental schemes of Government is listed besides briefly discussing various Acts that affect their livelihood.

In the later part of the fifth chapter the researcher describes about Siddhi social and religious organisations. Their construction of cultural and religious ideas, the importance of ritual observed in all stages of life and how they familiarize themselves in a society that is religiously plural, multicultural and the plurilingual in nature. The chapter enumerates in detail various rituals observed during birth, adulthood, during marriage and death in all the three major religions that they practice. The chapter also discusses various sports that they enjoy as well as festivals which concern their social life.

In the sixth chapter the researcher has analyzed the scheduled data. The chapter gives tables and graphics that indicate the percentage of respondents that have opined their view in the schedule. The chapter enumerates right from the sex ratio, age, occupation of the respondents, their education status, their income, savings and debts of Siddhis. This chapter also catalogs the data on Siddhi
religious practices, religious conversion, prevalent marriage practices and festivals. It also deals with ancestral worship, changes in their dressing pattern, the recreational facilities available for them and changes in their food habit. It also gives the opinions of various people interviewed on issues of religion, caste, government policies, various Acts of the government and its welfare schemes.

A bird’s eye view of the whole thesis is discussed in the concluding chapter that would enable the reader to understand the purpose and the results of the investigation done during the research. The seventh chapter gives a list of suggestions to enable various bodies to act for the development of Siddhis.

The following chapter provides a detailed history of Siddhis in India as well as in Karnataka with a special reference to the districts of Dharwad and Karwar.