



“Political Position and Empowerment of Shiddi Tribal Women in Uttar Kannada District of Karnataka”

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Introduction:

The problem of political status of Illiterate masses of shiddi tribal areas must be dealt Within terms of the social, economic and political condition of the region. Uttar Kannada situated in the midst of the **Western Ghats** is surrounded by tribal communities. These tribes includes **siddi, Gouli, Kunabi, Gouda** and others, in these shiddi's are non-Indian origin, they supposed to have descended from South Africa. The siddi's in Karnataka were brought as slaves by the portugues in goa, and with the abolition of slavery, siddhi tribal migrated to thick forest of Uttar Kannada. Than they have lived their lives in the Western Ghats unaware of the progress in the outside world, This ignorance often lead to their social exploitation and violation of their political rights in particular political status.

Etymology of name:

There are conflicting hypotheses on the origin of the name Shiddi. One theory is that the that the word Siddhi is derived from the Arabic “**sayyid**” or “**sayydi**” meaning **Leader or Master**. It means the tittle borne by the captain of the Arab vessels that first that first brought Siddi settlers to Indian. There captains were known as **sayyid**, another theory is that **North Africans** call each other ‘**sidi**’ as a title of respect. Today all African origin people in India were however, called “**siddi**”even though they were not all from North Africa.

History of Siddis of Uttar Kannada District of Karnataka:

The first Siddis are thought to have arrived the Indian subcontinent in **628 AD** at the Bharuchport, several others followed with first Arab Islamic invasions of the sub-continent in 712, A large influx of siddi's to the region occurred in the 17th century when portugues slave traders sold a number of them to local princes.

The siddi tribe in Uttar Kannada are descendant of siddhi's slaves who were brought from Mozambique & Tanzania of East-Africa to goa by the Portuguese and Arabs between the 16th & 19th centuries. Some of sidi slaves were escaped and took shelter deep in the forests of Western Ghats region of Karnataka, mainly they are concentrated around **Dandeli, Yellapur, Haliyal, Ankola, Joidu, Mundgod** and of Uttar Kannada district, and in **Khanapur** of Belgaum **Kalghatagi** of Dharwad district.

A Siddhi called Gajaveera is noted to have joined hands with Sangoli Rayanna. In his revolt against the British in 1829-30 near Kittur.

Demographics:

In India Karnataka has the largest concentration of Siddhis. According to latest estimates there are around 3.118 Siddi families in the state with a total population of 25.345.

Social Status and Rehabilitation:

Like Siddhi populations across the sub-continent, Siddhis in Karnataka also have remained isolated, neglected and economically socially political backward. Efforts are being made to rehabilitate them. In 1984, at the instance of the secretary of the Rural welfare Trust, Dandeli and few others, an “**All Karnataka Siddi Development Association**” was formed to bring Siddhis together works for their integrated development. On 8/1/2003, the Union government brought the Siddhis under the list of Scheduled Tribes.

Political Position and Empowerment of Siddi Tribal Women

The political sub-structure is analyzed in terms of political aspects that effect the status of siddi women in Uttar Kannada District of Karnataka. In political aspects, an attempt is made to delineate all the political forces which have been brought into life siddi tribe Specially siddi women prior to and since Independence, To Know the political life of siddi women in western Ghats specially in Uttar Kannada of Karnataka, their Participation in politics decision making ,election ,voting, awareness of political affairs are taken into consideration, And also to Know their Participation at village Panchayat & its election, decision making at village level are taken in to account . Also an attempt is made to outline the legal status of Siddi women of Uttar Kannada District against the background of various legislations passed prior to and after Independence to protect the rights of siddi women , How for these have helped in creating an awareness about them and there by becoming conscious of their rights in the midst of Indian Origin People ! to what extent constitutional provisions have been used! They throw light on women, legal position in this context of my universal of study.

Prior to the advent of the British, the status of Women was very low as they were under the grip of numerous Socio –Political -Economic disabilities. The Dominance of the traditional pattern of life made women subservient to the whims & fancies of men. This was so in case of siddi tribe women.

During the British Regime numerous changes occurred in Indian Society. Introduction of English language in educational institutions, spirit of nationalism, emergence importance of liberty all these have contributed to a new wave of thinking among the intellectuals, The social reforms urged the government to take up statutory measures to remove Political-social disabilities & atrocities on women. Prevention of (Sati) Child –Marriage And equal Wages act are some of the legal measures that came to the rescue of women but these are not effect on Siddi tribal women who are settled in thick forest of the Uttar Kannada.

The equality of women in politics can be judged by their participation in such activities as their voting behavior and representation in various bodies’ right from village Panchayat to parliament and other decision making borders. If we consider their representation at present it is less then 5% of the total membership in parliament.

It is also worthwhile to note women's representation in political parties, contest in elections, active participation in the deliberations at the party meeting & influencing the decision making as indicators of the degree of women's political rights guaranteed by the constitution. An analysis of the involvement of siddi tribal women of Uttar Kannada district of Karnataka in context of above indicators realized that siddi women of their settlement areas are not much involved in political activities and public affairs, to context, the urban women show their awareness with changing status of women.

Women had to fight for centuries in other countries for some rights because they realize the importance and values of their rights but Indian women special siddi tribal women are not in a position to realize the importance of their rights especially political and human rights. The majority of tribes as well as rural women never felt the subjective necessity for their exercise of those rights.

Both the education & uneducated Siddi tribal women never felt the importance of casting their vote during the election time, they says that they are not bothered whosoever is elected and have a feeling that whosoever is elected will be interested in taking benefits for himself and his family without caring for others. In such a situation why one should cast vote and what is the use of voting for them.

Though adult franchise guaranteed by constitution has made women equal to men in political sphere. But women of western Ghats region Specially Uttar Kannada siddi tribal women have not realized its importance, even they doesn't know about their fundamental rights. Some siddi women opinion that just one decade back nobody either from the political party or those contesting election of MLA, MP, even ZP had approached them to caste vote and also said that the workers of the political parties did not visit the siddi settlement areas. A few party members had came to the village and handed over the posters and requested the leaders of the siddi men to canvass on behalf of their candidates.. It appears that the political parties relied solely on the local leaders. But the local leaders did not show any interest involving the siddi people in political participation, Therefore a majority of siddi women have not voted even once all those years. But from few years political leaders, workers visited to siddi tribal areas and canvassing for cast their vote to their parties and today some siddi men and women are elected as members of local bodies and some are elected as presidents of local bodies Special because of ST reservation.

The confinement of women to domestic activities and its acceptance as a desired virtue prohibited women to contribute to the political process. Their role as politicians is far from satisfactory. Political career for tribal and rural women are not considered as necessary. It is believed that women's participation would create disruption in family.

Women of Siddi tribe people of Uttar Kannada are neither aware of political rights nor consider them as essential for their living. They still go by traditional conventions. Cook and serve food, the feeding, socialization of the young are tasks of siddi tribal women. She also tends the cattle grazing, helps in agricultural work, bee caching and craft work etc.

In Indian a few important and high position in politics are held by women. But it does not mean that the level of political participation of females in our country is high especially non-Indian origin siddi women are far from political position in their own area. Most of the women in Uttar Kannada district who are in good political

position they are associated with prominent male politicians, but regarding siddi tribal people especially women apart from ST and women reservation in local government they have no other political bases. Today some siddi men and women are elected as members of local bodies and some are elected as presidents of local bodies Special because of ST reservation. In 2015 Smt Reeta F Siddi was president of Haliyal Taluk Panchayat, she was unanimously nominated because that position was reserved for ST women. She is only ST women in Haliyal Taluk Panchayat among the 6 women members elected for Taluk Panchayat of Haliyal Taluk.

In most of the siddi villages people do not have dedicated leaders who can sincerely devote their time for the welfare of the siddi tribal people. These people require genuine leaders. When researcher have conducted survey in different settlement areas of siddi people researcher found that, most of the people especially women were not knowing their local representatives and MLA.

Siddi people especially siddi women are opinion that they do not have time to go over to the election booth to cast their vote as they are busy in their routine work due to poverty and nature of shy. They are not ready to forgo a day's earning for the sake of election, when researcher visited Wada siddi settlement area the siddi present members of local Gram panchayat She is working in agriculture field. Siddi women feel that the political life /public life is not meant for them. siddi men of the village also do not encourage women for public life even till today in election polling booths are not situating in the siddi tribble villages but situating in other villages. Therefore these shy nature people not interested in elections. Today few educated women are took interested in canvassing for election and from recently partly workers & political leaders visited and approach the siddi people. And most of the siddi tribble women cast their vote but not according to their will they cast their vote as directed by their father or husband or son, this is the real political position of siddi tribal people in Uttar Kannada.

Some Siddi women were contest for G.P & T.P membership against other community women but they are very few in number. siddi women are opinion that to be a Panchayat members one should be bold and educated more overt one should be free from house hold chores to attend the meetings and other activities of local bodies.

But siddi women are busy with day today's house hold work, right from their childhood days. Even at their old age they cannot take part in political activities which require leisure time .They have to struggle for day today's livelihood politics comes to their mind only when the elections are around. They are apathetically ignorant of politics. Some siddi women of siddi local body representatives opinion that they cannot work properly with other members of Panchayat as they are illiterate and does not level sufficient time to spend and they are not very shrewd or intelligent to deal with them not a problem for them.

Total number of members of siddi tribal women of the Haliyal Taluk Panchayat-2015

SI No	Gender	Total
S1	Female	09
2	Male	03

	Total	12
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Awareness of Siddi respondents about Panchayat Raj System of Karnataka

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	32	33.68 %
No	63	66.31 %
Total	95	100 %

Above Table shows that all the 95 respondents are rural people, it was expected that all the respondents must be aware of Local bodies but only 33.68 percent of respondents including elected representatives answer positively while 66.31 shows their lack of awareness and knowledge about the Panchayat Raj system of Karnataka, which clearly shows their low level political literacy, it leads to political exploitation of Siddi tribal people.

Siddi respondent's knowledge about women Reservation in the Local bodies

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	36	37.89
No	59	62.10
Total	95	100 %

Above table shows that only 37.89 percent of siddi respondents are aware of the reservation policy adopted in Panchayat Raj system for women whereas 62.10 percent of respondents they are not aware of the women reservation policy of the Panchayat Raj institution. In this condition how siddi people can utilize the political opportunities for their development.

Recommendations for enhance the political status Siddi tribal women

- Reserve some seats for Siddi tribal people specially women in local and urban governments of their region.
- Reserve some seats in schools, colleges, universities, residential schools and hostels of their region.
- Conduct programmes regarding interactions between siddis and non siddis regularly carried out to remove prejudices against siddis and the non siddis
- Carry out political, legal and human rights education programmes for siddi specially siddi women in their region .
- Establish self help group and provide financial assistant..,
- Adopt Siddis villages for bring them to mainstream by MPs and MLAs of concern region.

- Proper implementation of welfare policies of siddi tribe which are formulated center and state government.
- Carry out adult literacy programmes for siddi tribal women in their region.
- Carry out the development policies of siddi tribal women in collaboration with NGOs Trusts and Universities.
- Encourage researchers to conduct research on Siddi tribal people specially siddi women for bring them to the mainstream of the Indian society .
- Encourage the siddi tribal women for public participation which leads to increase the value and quality of life.

Summary:

The political status of women of siddi tribal people has been analyzed in terms of their awareness about political situation in the country. Their participation in elections their decision making on political issues and the impact of the political forces emanating from the nearby city. The women of siddi do not show their awareness of political equality granted to them by the constitution, despite their being near to the city and visiting the city every day. They hardly know the political situation and if at all they know that it is only about two political parties namely congress.

Conclusion:

State and Central Governments must immediately recognize the Siddis as a backward tribe and take the necessary steps to uplift them, a by and large neglected and forgotten section of humanity. Residence should be provided in compact blocks close to their original locality where they can give legalized landholdings. Mere provision of opportunities offered by the Government to the weaker sections in general cannot be availed of by the Siddis. At present they are not in a position to profit from those privileges due to very many reasons. The Government should make special provision for this community. Roads, Bridges, Hospital and Mobile communication should be provided at least for the main villages to bring about effective means of communication. After providing blocks, communication, roads and postal facilities, they should be provided with educational and health facilities. Boys and girls passing out primary high school must be encouraged and given incentives to pursue further study. Hostels, clothes, books and monetary help should be provided to them. Than only the social, economical and political empowerment of siddi tribal people especially siddi women is possible and policy makers should take appropriate steps to bring them to the main stream of the Indian society.

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