

Siddi-A Primitive Tribes of Gujarat

Dr. Vinod Sonvane

I/C Principal & Associate Professor, Balhans College of Social Work, Bharuch-Gujarat-393130

Abstract

Gujarat's economy has a strong broad base. And the state's achievement of the Eleventh Five Year Plan is commendable. This has also affected the tribal areas and the development of those areas has accelerated. Of course, there are some weaknesses in this development story, which need to be addressed. Some new challenges are also to be overcome. Measuring the development of tribal areas is somewhat difficult. Because different aspects of this concept have to be seen. The Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, recognized the Kathodi and Kotwaliya tribes of Gujarat as primitive tribes in 1976. And then in 1982 Padhaar and Siddi tribes were recognized as primitive tribes. Kolgha caste was declared as primitive caste in 1983-84. Such primitive caste groups are spread over eight districts namely Surat, Tapi, Valsad, Navsari, Dang, Bharuch, Narmada and Sabarkantha. These districts are included in the tribal area sub-plan, while Ahmedabad, Surendranagar, Junagadh, Bhavnagar, Rajkot and Jamnagar districts are also populated by these groups but those districts are outside the area of Integrated Tribal Development Grant. In This paper we discussed about A Siddhi Primitive tribe's current status

Keywords: Siddhi, Primitive Tribes, Tribal's Problem

Introduction

There are 31 notified schedule tribes in Gujarat, as per census of 2011 its total population in state 60,439,692. ¹ In this there are five primitive tribes in Gujarat and its population is 1, 44,593. Among the five primitive tribes the population of siddi is 8661 (5.99% of total primitive tribes) here we discussed about population, health, education, food habit, customs, family, property rights, status of women livelihood, caste panchayat, folk tradition etc.

Methodology

The paper based on secondary data collected from different sources internet and. The main method is content analysis for data explanation

Population

8.1% of tribal population of the country lives in Gujarat. The total population of tribal in Gujarat is 89.17 lakhs. Which is 14.8% of the total population of Gujarat. The tribal population lives in the eastern part of the state from Mount Abu on the northern border of Rajasthan to adjoining Dahan district of Maharashtra in the south. The area under tribal sub-scheme occupies 18% of the geographical area of the state. There are 11 major tribes of tribal in the state, of which the Bhil caste has the largest population

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Scheduled_Tribes_in_Gujarat

and constitutes 47.89% of the total tribal population of the state. According to the current census, the population of the five most backward primitive caste communities in the state is 1,44,593.²

Literacy

According to the 2011 census, the effective literacy rate among Scheduled Tribes was 62.5%. Which was 14.8% higher than in 2001. Also, there was an impressive improvement in the female literacy rate, which was 17.2% higher than in 2001. In a very short period of time the gap between the literacy rate which was 21% reduced to 15%.

The Primitive tribes of Gujarat

Name of Primitive Tribe	District	Population (2011)	Share to Total PVGT Population	Traditional Activities	Economic Activities
Kotwalia	Surat, Valsad, Dangs, Bharuch, Navsari	24,249	16.77 %	Making Bamboo baskets	Selling of Bamboo products and Manual Labourers
Kolgha	Surat, Valsad, Dangs, Navsari	67,119	46.42 %	Animal grazers	Manual Labourers
Kathodi	Surat, Dangs, Sabarkantha, Narmada, Navsari	13,632	9.43 %	Collect Kattha for Betel-leaves	Manual Labourers
Siddi	Junagadh, Bhavnagar, Amreli, Porbandar, Rajkot	8,661	5.99 %	-	Peasants, cultivators, servicemen
Padhar	Ahmedabad, Surendranagar	30,932	21.39 %	Collect root vegetable and fish	Cultivators, Manual Labourers
Total		1,44,593	100 %		

Source : <https://tribal.gujarat.gov.in/particularly-vulnerable-tribal-groups>

SIDDI –A Primitive tribe of Gujarat in detail³

• **Historical Back ground**

The Siddi community is also known by different synonyms such as Habshi and Badsha. It is believed that they are of African origin. There are some controversies regarding their actual time of arrival to India. According to Census (1931), the Siddis appear to have been brought to India by the Portuguese towards the end of 17th century, presumably as slaves; while Russel and Hira Lal (1916) state that they

² <https://tribal.gujarat.gov.in/tribal-demography-of-gujarat?lang=Gujarati>

³ <https://trti.gujarat.gov.in/siddi>

have come to India in the middle of 15th century. The history of their migration is recalled in oral tradition as well as from the historical accounts. At present the Siddis are living in the western coast of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka states. Their main concentration is in Junagadh district of Rajkot division. They are a scheduled tribe.

- **Population**

According to 1981 census, the population of Siddi tribe was 54291. But Siddi who are designated as scheduled tribe are 8662 out of which 4417 are male and 4245 female according to census 2001.

The Siddi speak Gujarati language within their kin circle as well as with the outsiders. Gujarati script is used. The people living in urban areas can speak Hindustani (a mixture of Hindi and Urdu) also. The dress of the Siddi is a combination of traditional Hindu and Muslim dress. The males wear patloon (trousers), khamij (shirt) and safo (turban). But now-a-days, they mostly use pant and shirt. The females use saree or a ghagro (broad petticoat) and choli (blouse). Girls of the young generation now wear broad pajama and frock. Silver and glass bangles are also used by the women. The Siddi clearly show the Negroid racial strain, in their physical features.

- **Education**

The attitude of the Siddis towards formal education is favourable for boys but it is not favorable for girls. Boys study up to secondary level and the girls up to primary level. Boys, drop-out from studies due to economic reasons. In case of girls, it is due to both social as well as economic reasons.

- **Health**

They avail of both modern and traditional Medicare facilities. The attitude towards family planning programme is favourable. They prefer to have at least three children. Some of the Siddis have been benefited from the rural development program for the development of agriculture. Firewood, cow dung cakes are their main fuel resources. Their attitude towards saving has been found to be favourable but a large section is still dependent on money lenders.

- **Food Habits**

The Siddis are non-vegetarian. They eat buffalo meat, eggs, fish, fowls and goat meat. Bajri (spiked millet) and rice constitute their staple food. They consume all varieties of pulses like gram, Lur (pigeon pea), masur (lentils) etc. Groundnut oil is used as cooking medium. They also consume roots and tubers which they gather from the forest. They use all kinds of vegetables and fruits which are locally available to them. Consumption of milk and milk products is quite low among them. Lately, there has been an increase in the use of pulses and vegetables because of the soaring prices of non-vegetarian items. They abstain from eating beef.

- **Customs of Marriage**

The Siddis are an endogamous group. The exogamous sakhas govern their matrimonial alliances. Cross-cousin marriages are given preference .but parallel-cousin marriages are prohibited. Monogamy is the norm. Both debararni (levirate) and ghorghona (sorrorate) marriage are allowed and practiced. Pre-puberty marriage was an earlier practice. But now-a-days, Siddi girls are married after attaining puberty. At present the age at marriage varies from eighteen to twenty years for girls, while for boys it is between

twenty to twenty five years. Mates are acquired by negotiations of parents. Bride-price exists in their society, the amount of which has been fixed by the jamat (traditional council). Mehar (promised money or article) fixed by the jamat is instantly paid to the bride. The value of the bride price is equivalent to five tolas of silver. Rule of residence after marriage is patrilocal. Divorce is permissible on grounds like adultery, mal-adjustment and cruelty. No compensation is to be given to wife in case of divorce. Only a husband can divorce his wife and in such cases the children become the liability of the father. Remarriage of widow, widower, male divorcee and female divorcee is permissible. Their clans are known as Morewana, Parmar. Mori, Bagia, Sirwan, Valia, Mosangra, Chovert, Darjada, Rayeka, Nobi etc. The sakhas are exogamous in nature. They settle matrimonial relations on the basis of these sakhas.

- ***Family***

Majority of families among the Siddis have nuclear set up; however, extended type of families are also found among them. Joking relationship exists among certain kin categories, like between sister-in-law and brother-in-law, between grandparents and grandchildren etc. Avoidance relations are also maintained between certain affine categories.

- ***Property Rights***

Sons have the right to their ancestral property. A daughter can inherit the property only when there is no male issue. The eldest son succeeds as head of the family after the death of his father. Of late, it has been noticed; that the extended family system is on decline.

- ***Status of Women***

The Siddi women treated lower in status than that of their men. They participate in all social, rituals and religious activities along with their males. Women play an active role in agricultural: operations, collection of fuel, drinking water and other economic: activities. Some Women work as char (maid servants) in the houses; of Kunbi and contribute to family income. Women have no role in political spheres and in the mechanism of social control.

A married woman when becomes pregnant for the first time, a pre-delivery ritual of lap filling is, observed during the seventh month of the pregnancy at her husband's house. This is known as kholobharo. The pregnant woman receives new clothes, coconut etc. from her parents and the ceremony ends with a dinner to family members and close kins. They do not-observe any pollution after birth. Only the new mother does not visit the mosque for certain days. They observe chhatti ceremony on the sixth day after birth. Phuphi (father's sister) names the child. A male person whispers quran (prayer call) into the ears of the new born. Munddan ceremony is observed only in case of male children. A goat is sacrificed on that day and the relatives are entertained to a-feast. Circumcision of male children is performed when the child is above six months and within twelve years. Aqqa ceremony is also performed by the Siddis.

- ***Livelihood***

The Siddi bury their dead. Food is not prepared in the house, of the deceased till the day of ziarat on the-third day. All the relatives and friends attend this ceremony and are treated with a feast. They also observe dasma, bisma, trisma and chelem on tenth, twentieth, thirtieth and fortieth days respectively. Previously the, Siddis depended on hunting and. gathering but at present their main source of livelihood

is (agricultural: labour and agriculture. Very few Siddis are land-owning agriculturists. Those who live in cities and towns are engaged in various occupations such as driving vehicles and motor repair work. Some Siddis are engaged in government services. The mode of transaction is in cash and kind both. Child labour does exist in the society. The number of casual laborers is increasing day-by-day due to landlessness and lack of other economic resources. They sell their cash crops like sugarcane, groundnut, cotton, bajjri (millet) etc. to the local seth (traders).

- ***Caste Panchayat***

Traditional caste council called jamat exists which settles disputes among the people. But this traditional council is gradually losing its influence due to the Panchayat Raj system. The head of the jamat is called Patel, who is elected by a voice-vote; Jamat also looks after the religious and social affairs of the community. Jamat appoints a Kotawal (paid servant) whose main job is to circulate the news around the village in case of any meeting or gathering. The form of punishment is ex-communication and cash fine in case of breach of norms and taboos. The Siddis consider adultery, rape, elopement and theft as criminal offences. Fairs and festivals are also regulated by their jamat.

The Siddis belong to the Sunni sect of Islam. They do not have any family deity or village deities. During the time of crisis they visit dargha (tomb of pir). In Jambur village, there are a number of darghas of different pirs of which four are very important for them viz. Nagarshi pir dargha, BabaghorKi dargha, Dasal babu ki dargha and Mai-Parsa Ki dargha at Jamlur village of Junagadh district. Each and every sakh of the Siddis are affiliated to one or the other pir. They observe Id, Ramjan and Moharram. Some of the Siddis offer Namaj every day. They also believe in supernatural powers: They have Bhua (a spirit possessed man) who has the power to cure various ailments of the people.

- ***Folk Tradition***

The Siddi have folk tales and folk songs about their origin and migration. These folk songs are sung at the time of 'Dhamal dance (traditional folk dance) which is extremely popular in Saurashtra. Both males and females participate in rasda dance but the dhamal dance is performed exclusively by men only. They also use percussion musical instruments. The Siddis accept both cooked and un-cooked food from any; Hindu or Muslim except from the lower communities. They maintain linkages with regards to economic matters with the Kunbis, Lohanas, Memon etc. Several of them work as labourers. Amongst the Siddis, there are some teachers, doctors and members in defense services.

- ***Conclusion***

Thus, the Siddi's are now in backwardness lack of education, lack of leadership from their community, poor health and hygiene status. Not accept the modern values. – these all things are make them more poor and backward. For their development there are no more NGOs Working specially. Govt. count them in OBC community, in Gujarat there are 147 Caste in OBC list some dominant case get the benefits of govt. schemes but siddi are real needy people but they cant get benefit from the govt. schemes in absence of documentary evidence.

Reference:

1. <https://trti.gujarat.gov.in/siddi>
2. <https://trti.gujarat.gov.in/primitive-tribal-group>

3. <https://tribal.gujarat.gov.in/particularly-vulnerable-tribal-groups>
4. <https://tribal.gujarat.gov.in/tribal-demography-of-gujarat>
5. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Scheduled_Tribes_in_Gujarat
6. <https://tribal.gujarat.gov.in/tribal-demography-of-gujarat?lang=Gujarati>