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“Siddi Tribe: The Africans of India”

The Siddi (Not to be confused with Sindhi) are an ethnic group inhabiting India. They are originally Bantu people from Southeast Africa, who were originally brought by Arab and Portuguese traders as slaves, soldiers or servants, but today, they exist as Indian citizens and subsist on farming, construction labor and army work.

The first Siddis are thought to have arrived in India in 628 AD at Bharuch port in Gujarat. Several others followed with the first Arab Islamic invasions of the subcontinent in 712 AD.

The Siddi community is currently estimated at around 20,000–55,000 individuals. Most live in the western Indian State of Gujarat. Smaller populations are found in neighboring Maharashtra and two southern states, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. They are primarily Sufi Muslims, although some are Hindus and others Roman Catholic Christians.

Their food, clothes, and language are completely adapted to the local cultures of whichever part of India a particular Siddi

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community lives in. The only remnant they retain of their African lineage is their music and dance.

Although Gujarati Siddis have adopted the language and many customs of their surrounding populations, some African traditions have been preserved. These include the Goma music and dance form, which is sometimes called Dhamaal (fun in Gujarati). The term is believed to be derived from the Ngoma drumming and dance forms of Bantu East Africa. The Goma also has a spiritual significance and, at the climax of the dance, some dancers are believed to be vehicles for the presence of Siddi saints of the past.

According to the researchers of autosomal DNA of Siddis in India, about 58% of the Siddis' ancestry is derived from Bantu peoples. The remainder is associated with local Indo-European-speaking North and Northwest Indian populations, due to recent admixture events.

"If faith in ourselves had been more extensively taught and practiced, I am sure a very large portion of the evils and miseries that we have would have vanished"

- Swami Vivekananda
(Indian Hindu monk)

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