

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: Assimilation of The African Diaspora

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Abstract

The phrase Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam is an ancient Indian principle that offers a philosophical foundation for understanding the unity of humanity, transcending boundaries of race, religion, and nationality. In this context, the African diaspora in India—particularly the Siddi community—presents a unique case of assimilation and social integration within Indian society.

Historically, the Siddi community migrated to India through the Arab slave trade and Portuguese colonial activities along the East African coast. Over centuries, they transitioned from roles as slaves, traders, and emigrants to positions of influence, including military, clerical, and even royal ranks—becoming kingmakers and rulers in regions such as Janjira and Sachin. The historical journey of the Siddis reflects complex socio-political dynamics including servitude, integration, and identity formation within India.

Indian influence on the Siddis is evident in their adoption of local languages like Gujarati, Kannada, and Marathi, and religious practices from Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity. Their culture reflects a fusion of African, Arab, Portuguese, and Indian traditions, symbolizing India's pluralistic fabric.

Today, the Siddis reside primarily in Indian states like Karnataka, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, and Andhra Pradesh. Despite their historical significance and contributions, they often face economic challenges and social marginalization. Their presence enriches India's cultural heritage and exemplifies long-standing Afro-Asian relations.

As Arundhati Roy poignantly notes, "I see Siddi not as a foreigner in India but as a vibrant thread in the diverse tapestry of our nation." This highlights the importance of recognizing and integrating the community into the broader narrative of Indian identity.

Keywords

African diaspora, siddi community, assimilation, migration, identity.

