



UNITED NATIONS NATIONS UNIES

21st Century

Producer: Mary Ferreira
Script version: FINAL
Duration: 8.36

THE SIDDIS: INDIA'S FORGOTTEN AFRICANS

INTRO:

Descended from African slaves – the Siddi people today live in western India. For centuries they've held on to their African culture – and a special relationship with the Asiatic lion.

VIDEO

MONTAGE OF
FACES/DANCERS
CULTURAL DANCE
FIRE

SIDDIS DANCING

DANCE TROUPE

AUDIO

(MUSIC)

NARRATION

They dance to the beat of the African drum, deep in the forest, mimicking a disappearing species that they've grown to love – the Asiatic lion. (10")

They're a part of the 20,000 Siddis an ethnic group of African descent, who live in Gujarat, western India, (8")

Though far removed from their ancestral lands, the Siddis have cherished their culture... now it's a source of income for them. (15")

IMRAN ON-CAM
SOUNDBITE IN UNIA
VERSION*

IMRAN: (In Hindi) M

"We play in hotels for about 1,500 rupees or 25 US dollars. We go to the hotel to dance for the tourists during the prime season." (12")

IMRAN PUTTING ON
MAKE UP

NARRATION

Imran is a Siddi, a descendant of the Bantu people from southeast Africa. (5")

VILLAGE
FOREST

He believes his ancestors originally came from Uganda. Now he lives in a small village called Jambur with his mother and grandmother. The village is surrounded by the forest of Gir, the last bastion of the world's 500 remaining Asiatic lions. (18")

GRAPHIC & PHOTOS
DOCUMENTING THE
SLAVE TRADE - INDIA

Centuries ago, Africans from Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia sailed to the Indian subcontinent as merchants - while others were brought as slaves. The Siddis say they were an elite group of slaves serving the ruling class only. (17")

NAWABS/PALACES

Because of their loyalty and military skills .they were favoured by India's Nawabs or Muslim rulers - and the Mughals, a Muslim imperial power in the early 16th century. (12")

UN EXHIBIT

The Siddis rose to positions of power serving as kings themselves over princely Siddi States – a little-known fact around the world. (8")

IMAGES OF NAWABS

INTRO SHOTS
AMBASSADOR
AKBARUDDIN

NARRATION

Ambassador Syed Akbaruddin, India's representative to the United Nations says the Siddis form an important part of India's history. (9")

AMB.ON-CAM
SOUNDBITE IN UNIA
VERSION*

AMB. SYED AKBARUDDIN: (In English M)

"These were a very small minority. Look at what they have accomplished for themselves and for Indian society. They rose to be noblemen, they rose to be commanders, soldiers, admirals." (12")

SIDDIS AMONG INDIANS
IN VILLAGE

NARRATION

Over time, most integrated fully with the local population, choosing partners of Indian heritage. To preserve their African identity, some isolated themselves, creating small villages in various parts of Gujarat. (20")

FACES OF EDLERLY
CHILDREN

DIOUF MINGLING WITH
CROWD

Curator and historian at the Schomburg Centre in New York, Sylviane Diouf, who has tracked the Siddi people's journey from the African coast to the Indian subcontinent explains the roots of the Siddis currently residing in Gir. (13")

SIDDIS OF GIR

SYLVIANE DIOUF: (In English F)

DIOUF ON-CAM
SOUNDBITE IN UNIA
VERSION*

"The Siddis today are the descendants of the 1800s people as well as some Africans who arrived actually later." (8")

VILLAGE OF JAMBUR

NARRATION

Among them were Imran's ancestors who were

IMRAN	brought to India in the 19 th century. (6”)
JOHN ON-CAM SOUNDBITE IN UNIA VERSION*	<p><u>I IMRAN:</u> (In Hindi) M</p> <p><i>“The Nawab of Junagarh brought us here to lay the train tracks and to serve as their bodyguards because people from Africa were stronger.” (20”)</i></p>
SIDDI PEOPLE	<p><u>NARRATION</u></p> <p>With the passage of time, some escaped slavery, establishing communities in forested areas.(6”)</p>
IMRAN IN VILLAGE SIDDI PEOPLE	But today, life for thousands of Siddis, such as Imran, is far from glamorous. Most live on the fringes of society, in abject poverty. (12”)
IMRAN ON-CAM #1	<p><u>IMRAN:</u> (In Hindi) M</p> <p><i>“After I completed school I was thinking what should I do. So I gathered five or six people and I convinced them that we should keep our tradition and culture of dancing.” (17”)</i></p>
APPLYING MAKE UP LIONS IN GIR FOREST	<p><u>NARRATION</u></p> <p>They listened – and today Imran and his friends support themselves by performing African dances spiked with a bit of drama for visitors... And when he’s not dancing, he works in Gir forest as a guide. (16”)</p>
IMRAN ON-CAM SOUNDBITE IN UNIA VERSION*	<p><u>IMRAN:</u> (In Hindi)</p> <p><i>“Some of us who find jobs in the forest or the army, we earn extra money and then we manage with</i></p>

that money.” (9”)

NARRATION

IMRAN WITH VILLAGERS
PAINTING FACES

Besides their strength, the Siddis say that the Nawabs also believed that they held a special relationship with the Asiatic lions and to nature itself. (10”)

NATURE SHOTS LIONS

IMRAN: (In Hindi)

IMRAN ON-CAM

“Because Africans cared for lions in Africa, the Nawabs felt that we could take care of the lions here too.” (9”)

IMRAN ON-CAM
SOUNDBITE IN UNIA
VERSION*

“We know the nature of the lions, when they are angry, when they can attack, their moods. Wherever we go and there are lions, we do not disturb them or their pride. It’s almost like a family.” (17”)

NARRATION

Since the 1950s the Indian government has supported the Siddis of Gujarat through an affirmative action initiative recognizing them as a Special Tribe and granting them individual rights. They have also made it possible for them to draw benefit payments directly out of bank accounts. (17”)

AMBASSADOR. ON-CAM

AMB.. SYED AKBARUDDIN: (In English M)

“They have access to education in a preferential manner, they also have access to jobs in a

preferential manner.” (6”)

SIDDIS IN STREET

NARRATION

But Imran says accessing this aid sometimes proves challenging. (4”)

IMRAN ON-CAM #6

IMRAN: (In Hindi)

“We get help from the government but sometimes the help does not reach us, it gets stuck in the middle.” (10”)

“The most important for the younger generation is to develop and to develop we need education. So the government needs to provide amenities such as computers. We need to learn English too not only Gujarati and Hindi so our kids can develop.” (28”)

IMRAN IN THE FOREST
ANIMALS
FOREST
VILLAGE

NARRATION

And Imran has another concern – Gujarat’s Asiatic lion population is threatened by increased overcrowding and competition for space among both animals and humans - and he calls for effective efforts to conserve the species...(16”)

IMRAN ON-CAM

IMRAN: (In Hindi)

“The entire village is surviving because of the lions so if the lions don’t live the entire village would be displaced. It would be finished.” (13”)

SIDDIS IN INDIAN GARB

NARRATION

The Siddis want to stay here living with the lions side by side...and when asked about their country or origin, they say without any hesitation...(11")

IMRAN ON-CAM

IMRAN: (In Hindi)

"India is my country. I would like to live and die here."(6")

FOREST
SIDDIS/LIONS
DANCE/SUNSET

MUSIC