

# FOLK ART FORMS OF UTTARA KANNADA DISTRICT OF KARNATAKA STATE

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## Abstract:

One of the most culturally rich districts of Karnataka State is Uttarakannada, known for spectacular beauty of nature, also well known for having different tribes and beauty of folk traditions, this district is one of the beauty of Karnataka state. Major coastal district, the highest forest covered area in Karnataka, abundant natural resources and the different tribes and communities of people living in the district. The district is Uttara Kannada. mostly known for its tourism and diversity.

The tribal people of this place is one of the best examples that the folk tradition is alive in the modern time. The tribes and folk tradition is interlinked, the songs, dances sung by these people slowly disappearing day by day. They are trying hard to preserve their culture. In the past, they did not get enough materials to preserve it. But, modern technologies and advanced studies helped them a lot to preserve it in a proper way. And the researchers are also taking interest in collecting and researching the folk arts at an advanced level. Some scholars are also trying immensely to give a digital structure for folk arts. These folk dances, folk songs are used in films and various television programmes. They are remaking, modifying, and giving a new style to it. But, as we all know, the original form of folk is something different. It is the treasure, it is the property of the tribal people. Indeed, the folk songs, arts, and dances teach the morality and beauty of life.

## Key Words:

*Tribe, Folk, Communities, Traditions, Culture.*

## The Different Tribes and Backward communities of Uttara Kannada District:

The reason behind writing tribes and backward communities here is that, as we all know and researchers have mentioned in the abstract that folk culture and tribes are both interlinked. They are the real reason behind that the folk culture has widened in a large area. There are different tribes in Uttara Kannada district. They are famous for their own different cultures. The Siddhis, Halakki Vokkaligas, Kunbi tribes, Gond tribes, Gouli tribes. The backward communities are Mukri, Aagera, Hallera communities. These sections come in SC/ ST categories, and are considered as an underprivileged section of Uttara Kannada district. The culture, traditions, and celebrations are different in each and every community. Some of these sections mostly live in rural areas. The main occupation or the source of income comes from agriculture, animal husbandry, beekeeping and leather works.

The most popular and major tribes in these districts are Halakki Vokkaliga tribe and Siddhi tribe. Siddhis are said to have been brought by the Portuguese from Africa as slaves some four hundred years ago. They are generally found in Haliyal, Yellapur and Ankola taluks. Halakki

Vokkaligas living in the foot of Western Ghats are known as the “Aboriginals of Uttara Kannada”. The Halakki Vokkaliga tribe's attire is very unique in the district.

The men are partially naked at home. And women decorated with beads and necklaces, heavy nose rings, and dozens of bangles in each hand have distinct attire. The Goulis are a nomad tribe that migrated from Maharashtra. They are mainly cow and goat rearers. Their main occupation is agriculture and providing milk to everyhome where they live. Kunbi tribes are the most backward tribes of Uttara Kannada district. They live in small groups deep inside forests in bamboo huts built in a row sharing the same walls. Gond tribes live mainly in the forests of Bhatkal taluk. They live mainly off forest products. They have a rich folk culture of tribal dance.

Mukri, Aagera and Hallera community peoples of Uttara Kannada district are more backward. They are spreaded in different talukas in the districts. They are mostly dependent on agriculture, working as labourers in the field of upper castes. Though they are poor, they know how to make a name in different fields. Because, as above I have already mentioned that Halakki Vokkaliga and Siddhi tribes are major tribes. The peoples of these communities have made their name at the national level. One of the most proud moments for every Uttara Kannadiga is that the ‘Vruksha Maate’ of our district ‘Tulasi Gowda’ is featured in the tableau of 74<sup>th</sup> Republic day parade. She is a Padmashree awardee of 2020. Her immense contribution in the field of planting trees made her so famous. Sukri Bomma Gowda, another most prominent figure, is famously called the “Nightingale of Halakkis'”. She is the Padmashree awardee of 2018. Another major figure in the folk culture is Sharada Moger from Honnavar Taluk. These ladies are the true example that, not only educated but the poor, village uneducated can do anything if they have the guts to do it.

## **THE PROMINENT FOLK DANCE FORMS AND SONGS OF UTTARA KANNADA DISTRICT:**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century it becomes hard to find a rural culture, the folk songs and dances. But the tribes of Uttara Kannada district spread the rural culture all over. Their folk songs and dances are an integral part of their life. Tribal people would love to sing a song on any occasion. For example, the birth ceremony song, naming ceremony song, marriage function songs, Grass Cropping songs in the paddy field, and the interesting part is they have songs for the death ceremony. (through their folk songs it's their ritual to give strength, not to lose hope). This type of village culture is a very unique thing that we can see in this district.

‘Sobana’, or ‘Shobana Haadu’, is a type of a song which is commonly used to sing on pious occasions. The elder people of the village mostly sing this song in the naming ceremony, marriage functions. The song contains a strong meaning. This type of song gives soothing pleasure.

‘Suggi Kunita’ is a very popular art form in the talukas of Ankola. The Suggi dance is an eye-catching dance form. The group of people wears colourful costumes, makeup, and ties a ‘turai’ on the top (it is a type of a bouquet). Suggi dancers sing melodious folk songs at the time of Holi festival. Holi festival is important for villagers. They welcome rain gods at this time. The groups go around houses playing “Gummate” the drumming instrument, where they are welcomed with Arati. Even the village head will touch the feet of ‘Suggi Makkalu’ (Suggi group) these Suggi Kunita is popular among other communities as well like Mukri community. But not as popular as among Halakki people.



Suggi Dancers

One more unique thing is that Halakki people have their own Ramayana. The actual beauty of the villagers are these minute things. They have their own Ramayana. They named it 'Seetha Kami'. They sing about how Lakshmana killed a cow that was obstructing Janaka's meditation to win Seetha for marriage. The name of 'Seetha Kami' itself shows that the story is Seeta centric. This is also the best example of folk tales.

Sukri Bomma Gowda of Halakki Vokkaliga community is enough to understand the beauty of folk songs of this district. Having abundant knowledge of nature and songs. She knows approximately 4000 folk songs. The songs for each and every occasion. She is a 'Nati Vaidya' (local doctor) as well. Her immense contribution in the field of folk tradition is commendable. Her important works are: Maadevaraya, Chandanaraya, Rama- Lakshmana, Airavata, Kunti Kathe, Bleendraraya, Govindaraya, Karidevaru, Sobane songs.



Sukri Bomma Gowda



Halakki Vokkaliga Women Group

The women of this tribe sing their way through their daily lives, as they go on about their work from deities and duties, nature and nurturing, land and longing. The different dance forms



like Bgudi Kunita, Taarale, Pugude, Bidarande are very famous among the Halakki community. The art form Shedi Kale is very famous among Halakkis. These Shedi means (type of thin paste of white clay) using these Shedi the women draw amazing art on their home wall. It looks so attractive to see.



Beautiful Shedi Art

‘Bedara Kunita’ or ‘Bedara Vesha’ is the most popular art and dance form in the Sirsi Taluk of Uttara Kannada. This Bedara Kunita happens in the alternate year in the district. Wearing loud makeup, heavy costumes, a bundle of peacock feathers on the back, holding a sword on one side, giving scary expressions and doing a wonderful dance with loud music. While watching this wonderful folk dance which gives goosebumps. Indeed a unique art form of this district.



Bedara Veshha

‘Yakshagana’, how can a Kannadiga forget the beautiful art form Yakshagana. This is a very popular art form in the coastal districts of Karnataka. The bright costumes, loud makeup. The various instruments used in this Yakshagana – Maddale (Percussion instrument), Taala (Bells), Chande (drum). Basically It is considered as a traditional theatre. I have mentioned it here because it is connected with root culture. Mostly played in the villages.



Yakshagana Artist

‘Damama Folk Dance’, become more popular nowadays. It’s a folk dance form by Siddhis of this district. The men and women of this particular community dance and sing songs with full enthusiasm. Women wear saree or colourful attire most of the time performing this dance and men with a half naked body wear the leaves below.



Dhol or Damamiye is one of the most important instruments used in this dance. This dhol is very heavy to carry. Because it is made up of animal skins. Wearing colourful flowery costumes shows how the Siddi tribe is connected with nature. This type of dances, songs, instruments made their culture more rich. 'Dhamal' is another celebratory song which can be famously seen in this tribe. The song, 'Tininga Mininga Tisshya' became more popular in Karnataka.



Damami Dancers

'Gajja', a dance form of the Gouli community of the district. This Gouli community celebrates Navratri festival uniquely. The one member of the family of this community 9 days of Navaratri walks bare footed. They do fast, and do not receive food from somebody's home. This 'Gajja' or Gaja dance is compared to (elephant walk). It is a group dance, with some handling the instruments and others engaging in simple, slow foot walks with swaying movements like elephants. It is almost mandatory for every man of this community to learn the dance from elders.



Goulis Navratri Festival

'Kolata', is very much popular in Karnataka. So in Uttara Kannada. It is nothing different than Dandiyas of Gujarat. But, the dance form is different from Gujaratis. Holding sticks in both hands and dancing to folk songs at the time of Ugadi and Kannada Rajyotsava. The famous 'Cheluvayya Cheluvo Taani Tandana chinmaya rupe Kolanna Kole' is the most popular song to dance with Kolu (stick).



Kolata Dancers

### Conclusion:

The folk dances, songs, culture, traditions, village festivals, rituals, celebrations, tribes, the village God/ Goddess fairs (Jaatre), Hagaranas (wearing a colourful costumes, presenting a structures of god/ goddess, tableaux depicting stories of puranas.) The traditional instruments like Taala, Caddale, Chande, Gummate Vadana, the colourful costumes, loud makeup, nature, each and every aspect is the real beauty of Uttara Kannada district. Having a rich cultural heritage the district stands different in Karnataka State.

The scholars like Dr. NR Nayak and his wife Shanti Nayak have been working on the folk heritage of Uttara Kannada district for the last 50 years. Shanti Nayak co- authored over 80 books in Kannada on topics of folk games, arts, songs, dance, food, rituals, festivals, gods, costumes, ornaments. Etc. her important books 'Halakki Vokkaliagara Janapada Geetegalu' (Folk Songs) (1984), 'Karwar Jilleya Janapada Geetegalu' (1982), 'Uttara Kannada Jilleya Janagala Janapada' (1989) etc. the immense contribution in the folklore field Karnataka Govt. awarded her 'Attimabbe Puraskara'. Their works are available in their trust and also in Karnataka's Folklore University.

The tribal culture, the folk tradition is declining day by day. The effect of modernisation is the reason that the culture is vanishing. But the old villagers are trying hard to preserve it by taking help from youngsters. These old peoples are struggling in the clash between modernisation and their culture. The impact of modern culture drastically changed their lifestyles. They are searching for their identity, their culture in the modern country. Before the complete incline of our folk culture it is our major responsibility to take care of our heritage. It is not just our culture that is fading but India's beauty is also fading. The rural areas, villages and culture is a main part of the real beauty of our country.

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