

## **STUDYING DEAF LORE IN THE DEAF COMMUNITY OF ALIPURA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper aim is to introduce about the Deaf People in the Village of Alipura in the State of Karnataka in India. This area of study in Folk lore Studies which is called Deaf Folklore. This paper gives you a view to understand the Deaf hood and their unique nature of their Communication Culture and about the Deaf People in the Village of Alipura, in the State of Karnataka in India. The peculiar phenomenon of this village is some of the Shia community of this village people are suffering with Deafness from the last six generations continuously and eventually it became a culture in this village. Here the striking rate of Deafness is at about 0.75 percentage compared to government estimation for the national average is 0.41 percentage (Based on data from the 2011 census) Deaf folklore helps us to understand the group of these peoples rituals shared beliefs customs and traditions some of their myths and religion in a folkloric perspective way, deaf communication is considered Talking Culture. **THE DEAF LORE EXIST IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS:** It includes deaf jokes, anecdotes, riddles, sign lore, ('sign play' it is including manual alphabet and number stories, sign poetry, 'catch' sign riddles, sign puns, name signs, and many other forms. In typical sign lore or sign play, signers creatively combine hand shapes and movements to create twisted signs or sign puns and other humorous changes of words). Personal-experience narratives, games and lore about notable deaf person Some individuals collects deaf cartoons, which depict deaf characters or comment on some attribute of hearing loss, deaf cartoons have appeared in both deaf and hearing publications. All of these genres depicts the strong revelation of deaf culture and heritage that stimulate deaf children's and adult's pride in their own identity.

**Keywords:** Deafness, Deaf hood, Deaf as a folk group, Deaf communities, Deaf culture, Deaf lore

### **INTRODUCTION**

There are 30 States and seven union territories in India. Karnataka is one of the State. The state of Karnataka formed on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1956, initially it is used to be Mysore. Another Name of Karnataka is Karunadu.

## A BRIEF DESCRIPTION ABOUT THE VILLAGE OF ALIPURA

Alipura is a Shia Muslim Majority CT<sup>1</sup> town in Karnataka State of India. Alipura is a village in Gauribidanur Taluk in Chikballapur District of Karnataka State, India. It is located 35 KM towards west from District headquarters Chikballapur, It is located off highway SH94, 55 kilometres away from Kempagowda international Airport and 70 kilometres from Bangalore.

The small village of Alipura makes a small replica of Iran in the view of the residents. There is an Anjuman e-Jaafria<sup>2</sup>, a Madrassa Hussainia and a Zainabiya High School and also an Imam Khomaini Hospital and an old Ashurkhana now it had a modern building extension, in a distance there is a Eidgah and a grave yard named Behisht-e-Ali standing in the serene. For all practicality this is a small village through urban culture does not effecting the people of their living this village has a credit of some Urdu poets. The village has nearly 22 scholars they are better known as mullahs/clerics trained in different places, Qom, Iran, Damascus and Syria one of them is Nabi Raza Abidi who graduated from Qom seminaries but none finished the honour of Dars-e-Khari to win a title of Ayatollahs and a high centre of theological education Hauze Ilmiah Baqarul Uloom.

Much later the poet-scholar Mohammad Shaffi Baqari arrived from Hyderabad of Andhra Pradesh some 150 years ago he who founded the Anjuman Jafria which is the organisation today controls the mosques, Madrassa, Eidgah and also Behest E-Ali Grave yard and an Al-Abbas boys Hostel. There is a couple of onion domed Masks and Ashurkhana's throne in the Midlist will gives you a remembrance or resemblances of a Iranian look in support of the villagers point of view. The main road of this village is Imam Khomeini Road it is named after the Iranian spiritual leader.

Visiting Alipura is a new experience it is a Shia main stream in India. It is a village where nearly 10,000 Shia community is residing with their community faith but less effected by the Persian culture, there is a deep impression of Iranian imprints since 1980.

The Imamia trust of Bangalore build a resettlement colony for the wandering tribes of Persian-Speaking gypsies. Women in black overall burqas like Iranian style chadors walk freely in the sub streets. The school girls attend the Bintul Huda and Zainabiya high school with a falling back headscarves. The supreme leader of Alipur is Mohammad Zaki Baqri. This village is previously known as Belligunta some 300 years ago it began to attract after the arrival of Syed Mustafa

<sup>1</sup> CT means Census town is a type of town which is not statutorily notified and administered as a town,

<sup>2</sup> Anjuman Jaafria is an Autonomous organization which takes care about the religious and social affairs and also welfare of the people of Alipura.

Hussaini, and Abidi Sadat, following the down fall of Adil Shahi kingdom of Bijapur. Syed Mustafa Hussini and his wife Bathoola settled here.

Seeing the simple profile of the villagers even though the Iranian leaders and some political people visited this village it still remains Indians origin. Due to their visit certain reforms came up like women are allowed to pray at the upper chambers of the mosque during Jumaa and Ramazan and Imam Khomeini Hospital came up in 1991 and a ladies cultural centre also Imam Mahdi trust and Sajjadia Welfare Association all these bodies serving the Shia Muslim communities. Most of the Alipur Shias are engaged in gem cutting and polishing business but very few have made it big. Youth are engaged by gem cutting and polishing but there is a lack of skill development training. Says Shafiq Abidi, a journalist from Alipur who is working in a Bangalore daily.

Alipur still does not have a Police Station. The Anjuman Jaafria settles all the disputes of the villagers liquor rand prostitution strictly prohibited and this organization selects all the 10 panchayat members surprisingly the surrounded non-muslim villages also authorizes Anjuman Jaafria to select their 6 members representation to Panchayat elections. Dowry is still dominates this village Shia community. Over all Alipur is a village of Muslim culture. Alipura is surrounded by Dodlaballapur taluk towards South, Koratagere Taluk towards West, Chikballapur Taluk towards East, and Madhugiri Taluk towards North. Nelamangala, Chikkaballapur, Madhugiri, Hindupur are the nearby cities to Alipura.

**Demography of Alipura:** Kannada is the local language here. Urdu speaking Shia community.  
**Politics in Alipura:** INC, BJP, JD(s) are the major political parties in this area.

(Some of this source of information has taken from the article published in the Islamic Voice.com in August 2000)

NOTE: I have visited the field area of Alipur village of Karnataka State of India firstly in the month of June first week of 2017 and had a personal experience of meeting the village organization and the people and also obtained the oral permission to conduct an in depth survey about the Deaf People and conducting a primary survey about the phenomenon.

## ALIPURA VILLAGE MAP



### About the Phenomenon of the Village

The panchayat office and the 2011 census shows Alipura is having 9,930 people now the local says it is doubled and the Deaf population in this village is a phenomenon. That put this village in another space a number of 120 deaf people are here that is much more of the Indian average deaf population ratio (0.41 percent based on the data of 2011 census)

Generations together consanguineous marriages are believed to lead this situation happened here, the tightly knitted community of Shia's remains particular about marrying within. A genetically test also carried on these Deaf people still the occurrence is continued. Lack of formal education about this and proper medical guidance hence so far the community which is effected like this has suffered. There are lot of Deaf people who are running tea stalls in this village. Here the Deaf people had a special signing language which falls under village sign languages list. For the survival and to live further Deaf signing became a cultural discourse in between the Deaf and Hearers.

Their signing is equally understood by Hearing community also. Most of the Deaf here living here by doing labour works, plumber works and electrician works and stone polishing works. It is a fact that the people of deaf and dumb families in the Alipura village have had a Village

signing<sup>3</sup> distinct kind of communication culture and having a Name lore and Personal Name lore that is to be studied under Deaf folklore.

\*NOTE: Again I have made another visit to the village of Alipura in the month of February first week in the year 2018 and gathered more information regarding the Deaf People and their folklore.

- Some of the information source taken from initially by the article published in the Deccan Harold Newspaper nearly 250 deaf people and perhaps several thousand hearing people (fewer than 10,000 hearing people)

**Personal Communication on sign languages.** James Woodward (2012)

What is Deafness? it can be seen into four models 1) Medical model 2) Social model 3) Cultural model and 4) Religious model

- In a social model Deafness is considered as a disability.
- In a medical model human body, hereditary, infections, Gene defect
- In a cultural model Identity of their Signing nature of communication
- religious model it is super natural spears, spiritual beings, and karma

MODELS	EXPLANATIONS OF DEAFNESS	DEFINITIONS OF DEAFNESS	OUT COME
RELIGIOUS	SUPER NATURAL SPEARS, SPIRITUAL BEINGS, AND KARMA	CONSEQUENCES OF IMMORAL BEHAVIOR, PUNISHMENT OR TO BE A CHOOSEN ONE	RELIGIOUS PRACTICES, FOLK MEDICINE, EXCLUSION OF WORSHIP/INCLUSION OF WORSHIP
MEDICAL	HUMAN BODY, HERIDITORY, INFECTIONS	PATHOLOGY, DEVIANCE	ELIMINATION OF DEAFNESS, COCHEALER IMPLANTS, GENETIC ENGINEERING
SOCIAL	IMPERFECT ENVIRONMENT ATTITUDEAL, PHYSICAL, LINGUISTIC AND OTHER BARRIARS	SOCIALLY CONSTITUTED/ IDENTIFIED/ CATEGORY	SOCIETY RECOGNITION EQUAL ACCESS, HUMAN RIGHTS INTIGATION, ORALISM, AUDISM
CULTURAL	DEAF BODY CREATES A VARNACULAR CULTURE	CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC DIFFERENCE	VALUE AND MAINTAINING DEAF HOOD, BILINGUALISM, BYCULTURALISM

<sup>3</sup>Panda Sibaji, 2012 Alipur Sign Langue: A Socio Linguistic and Cultural Profile: Sign Languages in Village Communities, Anthropological and Linguistic Sign).

Deafness becomes a source of value for deaf Indians as they interact with non-governmental organizations with employers in the information technology sector, and with the state. Deaf Indians increasingly depends less on the state and sometimes surprising spaces such as NGO's, multinational corporations, multilevel marketing business, churches, that attracts deaf congregants. They also gravitates towards each other. Their social practices are invisible to the outsiders neither the state nor their families recognises their sign language, which they use among themselves. And they also learn the importance of working within the structure of their communities to maximise their opportunities. It is said by Michele Friedner<sup>4</sup>. So the phenomenon of deaf births are not one particular region it is affecting almost all continents with varying degrees.

First, the phenomenon is not limited to only one continent, but other countries are increasingly showing the phenomenon that may soon turn out to be a global phenomenon.

Second, proving that their phenomenon as a problem that needs solution. Our personnel intuition of seeing a phenomena to be classified as a problem.

Problem may be defined based on perspectives why do you think this is a problem? Negative consequences of this phenomenon can be put forwarded as evidence that this is a problem. Are resources wasted to this phenomenon? Is it decreasing work efficiency? Is it violating ethical standards? These all points are supporting the literature review I have done so far.

**Deaf hood** which, according to Deaf researcher Paddy Ladd<sup>5</sup>, it is a more flexible and dynamic concept than deafness (Ladd 2003:3) and name related theme of deaf people based on existing approaches, folkloristic researches has studied disability as a folklore theme but Ladd research considers people with disability as folk groups. In the context of folk groups, the problem consists in the pathological definition of deafness, based as medical model, but in Deaf folklore disability is rather seen as being linguistically and culturally different.

Allen Dundee's argues that folklore tends to give an intrinsic, not external picture of the person (Dundee's 2002:69) In order to ascertain, and he also mentioned that I have interpreted Deaf Folklore texts based on cultural context as the most comprehensive frame work (Dundee's 2009:35). Larry Hanko emphasises the unifying role of folklore group and its relations with a community's world view and identity (ef. Honko 1998:57)

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<sup>4</sup> In the Book of "Valuing Deaf Worlds in Urban India by Michele Friedner discussed all the points in her book

<sup>5</sup> (Ladd, Paddy 2003, Understanding deaf culture: In search of Deaf Hood; Clevedon Buffalo, Toronto, Sydney, Multi Lingual Matters)

That comprises several contexts example being Deaf in medical, social, pedagogical, and cultural context. Social reality, which is reflected in Deaf folklores is developed in contacts and dialogue between the signing minority group folk life and hearing society's verbal communication space, medical, economical, educational and socio-political contexts.

If a hearer feels Deafness is Disorder a physical condition in which there is a disturbance of normal functioning but in Deafness also they have a communication or the activity of communicating or the activity of conveying information through their signing. So in Deaf people point of view hearers have a word way of communication through the mouth **deafener had hands to convey the word in a visual format of communication tools.**

It is a kind of situation similar to a hearer facing a different language known hearer which he don't know. Same kind of conveying information process comes out. So Deafness cannot be a disorder rather than a bodily condition. It may explain like pidgin language for certain extent.

### **Deaf as a folk group**

In contemporary folkloristics folklore is commonly viewed as folk culture present in small groups instead of general big groups. Alipura deaf people are a small social group whereas American Sign Language used deaf people are large group in an international arena. According to the folklorist Alen Dundes, a folk group may be theoretically understood as a human community consisting of at least two members who share a common feature such as profession, language, or religion (Dundes 2002: 17-18) According to the definition provided by Allen Dundes'. And also A. Dundes notes that the identity of the members of a minority group is not supported by the majority society, thus the folklore of the hearing people reflects on the perceptions and values of hearing group, and not those of the deaf (ef Dundes 2002: 59)

Marxist theory used in limiting folk to the lower classes to the oppressed. Folklore is the weapon of class protest. There is also right wing folklore expressing the ideology of groups of a conservative political philosophy. Folk is not a dependent variable but, an independent variable.

Deaf community signer's languages are within themselves exclusively and with otherselves contrast with village sign languages in that they tend to be used only by the deaf at least at first and most communication in between the deaf people only. Deaf community signers need to communicate with strangers also and therefore must be more explicit. More abstract and grammatical use of sign space. But both these types differ from speech taboo languages such as varies aboriginal Australian sign languages which are developed by the hearing communities.

Deaf community languages may develop directly from Home Sign or from Idealistic Sign. In an argument by Nancy\_Frishberg<sup>6</sup> set out a framework for Identifying and describing home based sign systems of Deaf in 1987. She states that home signs differ from sign languages, in that they (a) Do not have a consistent meaning-symbol relationship (b) Do not pass on generation to generation (c) Are not shared by one large group (d) And are not considered the same over a community of signers.

However, home sign is the starting point for new deaf sign languages that (emerge) when deaf signers come to-gather and home signs played a part of the formation of American Sign Languages<sup>7</sup>

**DEAF CULTURE** is the set of social beliefs, behaviour, art, literary traditions, history, values and shared institutions of communities that are influenced by deafness and which use sign languages as the main means of communication. When used as a cultural label especially within the culture, the word deaf is often written with a capital D and referred to as 'big D Deaf' in speech and sign. When used as a label for the audiological condition. It is written with a lower "Deaf culture"<sup>8</sup> is a set of learned behaviours and perceptions that shape the values and norms of deaf people based on their shared or common experiences. 'From Dr. Bill Vicars' ASL University: says "Deaf culture consists of the norms, beliefs, values, and mores shared by members of the Deaf community. When two of us meet for the first time we tend to exchange detailed biographies and describe our social circles in considerable depth."

Deaf people communicate manually rather than orally Deaf culture is mainly depends upon this manual communication. On this grounds they have their own culture, belief, customs and social life. These differences have linguistic consequences. Urban deaf communications lack the common knowledge and social contest that enables village signers to communicate without being verbally explicit. Here it can be explain liberty of using the primitive expression which is no connection with any language and only used secondarily by the deaf.

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<sup>6</sup> Nancy Frishberg set out a framework for Identifying and describing home based sign systems of Deaf in 1987. She states that home signs differ from sign languages, in

<sup>7</sup> (according to Anne Sullivan Helen Keller Susan Golden Meadow Adam Kendon on deaf Enga woman from Papua New Guinea)

<sup>8</sup> Reference: \*Carl-Gustaf A.O. Croneberg, B.A. 1955 "Library Deaf Collections and Archives" gaisalamdora.wroc.prg Retrieved 2019-01-29.case d. Carl G. Croneberg coined the term of 'Deaf culture' and he was the first to discuss analogies between Deaf and hearing cultures in his appendices C/D of the 1965 dictionary of sign language.

**DEAF LORE** is Sign lore it includes Sign Puns, ‘Catch’ Sign Riddles, Manual Alphabet and Number related stories and many other forms (Carmel 1996; 198-199)<sup>9</sup>. Sign lore also includes ‘Name Signs’ “Place Name Signs” “Personal Name Signs”<sup>10</sup> and Name Signs in Sign Languages attributed by Deaf People to the Cities and States and Nations.

NOTE: (Paales Articles II, III, IV)<sup>11</sup>

Deaf Folklore and Deaf lore includes deaf jokes, anecdotes, riddles, sign lore, (‘sign play’ it is including manual alphabet and number stories, sign poetry, ‘catch’ sign riddles, sign puns, name signs, and many other forms. In typical sign lore or sign play, signers creatively combine hand shapes and movements to create twisted signs or sign puns and other humorous changes of words).

Personal-experience narratives, games and lore about notable deaf persons.

Some individuals collects deaf cartoons, which depict deaf characters or comment on some attribute of hearing loss, deaf cartoons have appeared in both deaf and hearing publications. All of these genres depicts the strong revelation of deaf culture and heritage that stimulate deaf children’s and adult’s pride in their own identity.

### **THE MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THIS PAPER IS**

In Alipura there is a scope of study in a folkloric way about their Signing as Language and lore, lot of scope about studying different Genres in deaf folklore like Place name signs, Personal name signs, cultural study about their community as a Deaf, and concern about the future of the community, and their metaphoric and metonymic name signs and also deaf stories, riddles, sign play like.

Place lore is a shared folklore tradition that needs a long time to emerge and develop, it is always connected with the heritage of previous generations. Generally a rich place lore characterizes the narrative traditions of those regions where people have settled for centuries (explains Ulo Valk, chair, department of Estonian and comparative folklore, University of Tartu)

In this regard the approach is to be taken into two ways one is video recordings and the other is written text by the native Alipur deaf signers and the recorded toponyms. The History of deaf

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<sup>9</sup> Sign lore is a part of Deaf folklore and according to Carmel it contains Sign Play, where the signers creatively combine hand shape and movement to create twisted signs, Puns and other humorous changes of words.

<sup>10</sup> Paales did extensive work on Estonian deaf communities place names, names, and personal name signs

<sup>11</sup> Paales did extensive work in Place Name Signs and Personal Name Signs in Estonian communities under Deaf Folklore

people and their culture make up Deaf History. Alipur deaf culture is an ethnocentric culture that is centred on sign language and relationship among one another. Unlike the other Deaf cultures here in Alipur it is their native. Actually Deaf culture based on relationships among people providing common ground.

And this research observes from the way how 'Alipur' deaf people developed their DEAF LORE and their traditions, beliefs and also about their Names and Place Names and Personal Names and the LORE Behind it.

The Theory that it supports to the argument is according to the Journal of American Folklore in an article where William Bascom<sup>12</sup> one is education, second is validation of culture and social norms the thired is maintaining conformity and exerting social pressure and the fourth providing a release, outlet, or wish fulfilment.

Text without Context remains lifeless. Many folklore studies do not discuss the native categories, a point by 'Chatelain's<sup>13</sup> comments on Mbundu folklore in the first volume of 'Memories' of this society. So, the method of folklore is, when an apparently irrational and anomalous custom is found in any country, to look for a country where a similar practice is found, and where the practice is no longer irrational and anomalous, but in harmony with manners and ideas of people among whom it prevails.

Our method, then is to compare the seemingly meaningless customs or manners of curtsied races with the similar customs and manners which exist among the uncivilised and still retain their meaning. The second function of folklore is that which it plays in validating culture, in justifying its rituals and institutions to those who perform and observe them. The third function of folklore is that which it plays in education, particularly but not exclusively, in non-literate societies. In the fourth function folklore fulfils the important but often overlooked function of maintaining conformity to the accepted patterns of behaviour.

Although related to the last two functions it deserves to be distinguished from them. The functions are Amusement and entertainment, Education using folklore to learn, Validation of Culture and maintain conformity.

## **CONCLUSION**

<sup>12</sup> \*William Bascom, "folklore and Anthropology JAF 66 (1953 pp 283-290. Presidential address delivered at the 65<sup>th</sup> Annual meeting of the American folklore society Tucson 27<sup>th</sup> December, 1953) A.J.Hallowell "Myth, culture and personality" American Anthropologist, 49 (1947) p 546).

<sup>13</sup> Chatelain, Folk-Tales of Angola (Memoirs of the AFS) (1894), p20-22. And, "Expressions of beliefs and attitudes" (Boas' classical analysis of Tsimshian Myths).

Deaf people depends upon environment wide symbol expression in their communication. Deaf Folklore gained its momentum with the Becker, Gaylene and Joanne Jauregui 1981 article, The Invisible Isolation of Deaf Women its Effect on Social Awareness, Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare 8 (2): 249-262 and this momentum picked up the face of the work of Carmel<sup>14</sup>, Village Sign Languages are among a group of vanishing languages recorded and written about as part of an endangered languages lot of studies carried on this Sign Languages and its aspects but not much studies taken place about the study of Deaf Culture and Deaf Communities and their folk ways and studying genealogy and family histories. Now it is also a part in modern folklore studies. A nature of sign language depends upon the nature of deafness in the community where most hearing people have also deaf families and most hearers becomes signers (Carol Padden)<sup>15</sup> Signing and Sign languages are the natural visual –gestural languages of deaf communities using the hands, facial expressions, and head and body positions to convey linguistic messages.

But the above said signing and Sign languages study is also going in a full-fledged way all around the world such a kind of works was documented on the Island of Martha's Vineyard (Grose, 1988)<sup>16</sup> Mayan community in the Yucates Peninsula in Mexico (Johnson, 1994) a village in northern Thailand (Nonaka, 2004) and an Arab Bedouin Tribe in Israel (Sandler, et al 2005) and also in a village in Ghana (Nyst, 2007) this kind of communities in such rural setting have also been called 'Integrated Deaf Communities'.

Deaf villages have been documented from the 1960's onwards it has been almost exclusively been in terms of ethnography and anthropology or in a linguistic perspective. But here the approach of looking at such kind of phenomenon and hypothesis is in a Folk lore perspective way.

According to Ethnologies languages of the world site Indian population is 1,252,140,000. In India such a massive population Country the DEAF population<sup>17</sup> is over than 10,000,000<sup>18</sup>

Due to the lack of study and care of preserve there is no fluent signers of MVSL today. The last born in the Island Sign Language tradition, Eva West died in 1950. There was a few elderly resident still able to recall MVSL When researchers started examining the language in the

<sup>14</sup> Simon J, 1987, A arose of Deaf Culture in an American Urban Deaf Community, Ph.D. dissertation, The American University/ And also Carmel, Simon J, and Leila F. Monaghan, 1991, Studying Deaf Culture; an introduction to ethnographic work in Deaf Communities, Sign Language Studies 73.

<sup>15</sup> Carol Padden P 108, Talking Culture, Deaf People and Disability Studies.

<sup>16</sup> NORA ELLEN GROCE, WHO WROTE 'EVERY ONE HERE SPOKE SIGN LANGUAGE HEREDITARY DEAFNESS ON MARTHA'S VINEYAR'

<sup>17</sup> (General references: Bradley 1977, 2005; Briton 1997; Hergoniot, 1970; Morrison, 1967; Masica, 1991; Mati Soff, Baron, and Lowe, 1996; Singh, 1994-95; Van Bik 2006; Van Driem 2001, 2007)

<sup>18</sup> 2013 World Bank report.

1980's. Hearing people sometimes signed even when there were no deaf people present. When it happened to MVSL it can happen similarly to the other Signing Deaf communities also so there is an urgency of caring about these Issues. Deaf people do not live in a geographic community which is why the term deaf diaspora is sometimes used. Deaf people do not naturally form a cultural group, and since they are so dispersed, they have to actively engage in the search for cultural membership.

Deaf folklore is a new area of study in Indian Deaf community's context so the study of the Alipur Deaf community provides a wide variety of thinking and studying deaf people in a further context.

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