

# THE MATRIMONIAL RELATIONS MUST BE CONSTITUTED AMONG THE SUB-CASTES OF BANJARA COMMUNITY FOR SOCIAL UNITY, EQUALITY AND FRATERNITY...!!

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## ▪ ABSTRACT:

The Banjara is one of the biggest ethnic groups of India. Banjara history which traces back to ancient times to pre- Indus river civilization was buried and not known to the world as no written documents written. Their history was unearthed by using fables and fictions, stories, songs, memories, census reports and ethnographic writings, travelogues, interviews, questionnaire and other local sources are used by me to construct Banjars' history and current social issues regarding history, culture and matrimonial relations. Different fluxes of opinion about the sub-castes of the community are reflected in the research and literature. In this research article, I have presented the research of various streams of community and social problems related to the marital relationship among the sub-castes of the Banjara community. For social unity and equality, why it is necessary to establish matrimonial relations among the sub-castes of the Banjara community, with this view in mind I have the purpose of writing this research paper. That is why this paper points on Banjara tribe and its social structure regarding matrimonial relations among their sub-castes. The discussion would move around the changing social, cultural patterns and sub-caste matrimonial relations and rites of the Banjara tribe under the influence of today's changing social tendencies. At the outset, I would like to assert that the information provided about various facets of Banjara community has been collected from the literature as well as my own experience, external and internal circumstances of the community and observations in Banjara Tandans.

(**Keywords:** *Banjara, tribes, ethnic groups, Tanda, sub-castes and matrimonial relationship*)

## ▪ RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

Considering the research title, "*The matrimonial relations must be constituted among the sub-castes of Banjara community for social unity, equality and fraternity.*" I have set the following objectives to analyze the research topic.

- ❖ To review the glorious culture and history of the Banjara community as well as review the social status, problems and changes occurred in Banjara community in the current scenario.
- ❖ To study the importance and need in uniting the all sub-castes of Banjara community through the initiative, matrimonial relations (Roti-beti) practice in order to build a socially and culturally healthy Banjara community of India.
- ❖ To study the real impetus of the organization, '*All India Banjar Sewa Sangh*' and social reformers by adhering the democratic principles to develop Banjara community.
- ❖ To describe the causes, consequences of the problem, measures to solve the problem and the benefits of solving the problem under the research topic.

Thus, keeping in view the above research objectives, the information collected for the research is obtained using descriptive analyzed research methodology to get authentic, reliable and credible conclusions and recommendations regarding research title.

## ▪ BANJARA COMMUNITY IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:

The Indus River Civilization was the oldest civilization in the world and many nomadic tribes once lived here. It is known that the Banjara tribe belongs to the family of Indo-Aryan race who speak the similar language as Sanskrit and Hindi. The origin and background of the Banjaras were not preserved due to their nomadic nature and illiteracy. There are differences among historians regarding their place of origin, their settlements within and outside India. While studying Banjara castes and sub-castes it is necessary to know the importance of the historical perspective and today's changing trends in the community. Several so called gypsy-like tribes are said to have resided and migrated to and from India. In which, the Banjara tribe described as a nomadic people, are sometimes identified as the "*Gypsies of India*". They are popularly known as *Gor, Gor-Banjara, Gormati* who settled in different parts of India as groups in Tanda (living place). Nomadic culture is considered a central aspect to *European Gypsy-Romas* and Banjara identity. Therefore, few studies have established a cultural connection between these communities. The caste system in India dates back to the Vedic period. There are thousands of castes and tribes in India. But as these castes and tribes are bound by nation, society, religion, language, culture, etc., they are living with brotherhood, love and unity. Among these tribes, the Banjara tribes are found all over India.

Today, Banjara is one of the biggest ethnic groups of India, it is not a caste conventionally constructed in Indian society. It does not fall in any categories of '*Manu Smriti Chaturvarna*', but it is only a community or social group. Therefore, it is needed to search authentic and accurate history of Banjara. It can be a subject of research as how the Gor-Banjara civilization remained unknown. They speak a common and independent dialect, '*Gor-Boli*', which is also called as '*Banjara language*' and assumed that it belongs to the Indo-Aryan family of languages. This community has a very remarkable place in the multicultural and multilingual Indian society. Banjaras do not follow the caste system. They have clan system and clan denotes a close knit group of interrelated families. In the context of this community, it refers to principal social base of a 'Thanda'. The '*Tanda*' (hamlets) refers to "a multi layered and multi purpose system that developed in the course of their nomadic life and continued in their settled lives. Each Tanda is inhabited by different clans, such as sub-castes. Thus formation of Tanda system and social code represent Banjaras' transition. That is why, Banjara have preserved their significant culture, language, traditions, rites, rituals, crafts, code of conduct, unique 'Tanda System and oral /folk-literature. Today, it seems that the influx of modern life style and growing contact with non-Banjara world, urbanization, keeping away from Tanda had affected the Banjara cultural, matrimonial relations and linguistic life. Therefore, Banjaras' linguistic existence binds all sub-castes together with sharing of one single Banjara language-Gorboli.

The history of Banjara says that they had been carriers of supplies and drivers of pack-bullocks. There are a number of historical evidences and landmark which prove that the Banjara tribe is one of the aboriginal and primitive tribes of Indian sub-continent. The '*Lamani Margas*' dating back to 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C., proves that this tribe lived even before the period of Buddha. The Banjara tribe seems to be the most ancient, since their migrations go as far back as the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Their extensive migrations took them sometimes outside the frontiers of Rajasthan. These migrations, if they are judged by the inscriptions found in Khyber and Bolan passes, had taken place between 600 B.C. and 350 B.C. Perhaps, the Banjara stopped their migrations towards west during decline of Buddhism around 12<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. before Moghul invasion. However, the identity of all the sub-castes of the Banjara has now changed into different patterns of Travelling. In addition, they travel on a seasonal basis. Nevertheless, most of them have settled in one place. In the modern era, the nomadic culture is replaced with a constant search for income opportunities, obeying the law, settling down with families and trying to be a part of community.

According to the report of the organization, '*All India Banjara Seva Sangh*', although the Banjaras are spread throughout the country, they gradually became immobile over a period of 150 to 200 years, as British merchants and rulers used railways and automobiles for transporting goods. As a result their trade stopped. Therefore, Banjaras started settling permanently in many states of the country, little by little, after the Second World War, large population of Banjaras settled after India's independence. The main feature and unifying factor of the Banjara and their sub-castes as the ancient and largest ethnic group of India that they have the rich culture and centuries-old tradition of the Indian continent, Even all the sub-castes of the Banjara community have preserved their identity through their unique culture, social system and rich traditions.

Both the native tribes of India and the Western Gypsies have undergone constant changes in relation to their cultural and personal identities which are the sudden result of political, economic and social influence. Today there has been a change in their language and culture and marital relations among the sub-castes of the Banjara community. Banjaras are a nomadic community of people who are found in the north-western belt of the Indian subcontinent from Afghanistan to the state of Rajasthan. They are also variously called as *Gor, Lambani, Vanjara and Gormati*. The word '*Banjara*' is said to have originated in Sanskrit "*vanachara*", means '*wanderers in jungle*'. Banjara art revolves around *Rangoli, textile embroidery, tattooing and painting*. Their dance and music are also unique and have been acclaimed. Although widely dispersed today, Banjaras are primarily found in the states of Rajasthan, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Telengana.

#### ▪ ANALYSIS OF SUB-CASTES OF BANJARA COMMUNITY:

Since the Banjaras were traders of '*Lavan*' (salt), they have settled in different parts of India, but they are recognized by alternate names as *Lambadis, Lambanis, Labanis, Lamas, Banjarans, Banjaris, Banjaras, Brinjaris, Vanjars, Vanacharas, Vanjaris, Sugalis and Sukalis*. There is diversity among researchers about the different sub-castes that exist in Banjara community today. Based on information expressed in historical research, it is stated that there are eighteen Sub-Castes of Banjara community, such as *Charan Banjara, Singadya Banjara, Marru Banjara, Bamanya Banjara, Bagora Banjara, Digora or Gigora Banjara, Badi Banjara, Bajigar Banjara, Rohidas or Ravidas Banjara, Dhankute Banjara, Bhat Banjara, Jogi Banjara, Sikh Banjara Banjara, Mathura Banjara, Dhadi Banjara, Sanar Banjara, Navi Banjara, Dhaliya Banjara or Bharv aand so on*. From the historical point of view, the Banjara tribe was divided into five clans' viz., *Mathura, Labhani, Charan, Dhadia and, Dhalias or Banjari*. Among all others clans, the Charan Banjara formed a majority in south (Nizam territory and Bombay provinces) and they were divided into five exogamous clans - *Rathod, Pawar, Chavan, Vaditya, and Turi*. From head of the each clan the lineage flows down. Rathod had seven sons, Pawar had twelve sons, Chauvanhad six sons, Vaditya had thirteen sons. And Turi (Tamburis) had six sons.

There are also some major sub-castes of the Banjara original primitive community, such as *Dhaliya, Dhadi, Navi and Sanar*. The names of these sub-castes are business-oriented and they are considered as true carriers of Banjara glorious culture. The Dhaliya sub-caste is one such artist, who is endowed with their extraordinary artistic qualities. Their artistry is an integral part of the Banjara culture. The Banjara community is entirely proud of this artist community who has preserved the diverse beautiful culture of Banjara. The costumes and jewellery worn by the women of the Banjara community are endowed with special artistic qualities. Banjara Sanar-goldsmiths are engaged in the business of making and selling women's jewellery and ornaments, *Ghugri, Topli, Ati, Baliya, vitifula, Patli, Golia, silver anklets* and so on with special techniques, skills and still engaged in doing this work today. Banjara culture has been preserved by their work. Sanar Banjara is the carriers of Tanda culture and the entire Banjara community should be proud of such an artist. Many centuries ago, when the Banjara community used to trade by carrying goods on the backs of oxen, a family of the Dhadi sub-caste lived with their Ladenis, the work of establishing matrimonial relations in the Banjara tribe was done by the Dhadi community. At the same time, they were expert in composing *Doha, Haridas, Bhavana and Kavana*. And through singing they invented Banjara oral literature. The customs, traditions, tribes, genealogy of the Banjara community as well as the attitudes, trends and vast civilization of the Banjara can be heard in his varied poetry and compositions. This poetic sub-caste is adept at composing its own poetic songs.

Banjara community including all sub-castes (clans) can never forget the contribution of the Dhadi community therefore it is wrong to abuse and humiliate them because the Dhadi community is the only community which has been promoting and enriching the best culture of the entire Banjara community. Dhadi is believed to be a Brahmin in the Banjara community and is the most respected

person in the community. Dhadi is considered as an ambassador of the universal Banjara community. The musical instrument, *Sarangi* is a symbol of the united Banjara community. Dhadi community is therefore the propagandist, historian, donor, culture maker and genealogist of the universal Banjara community. Dhadi community is the birthplace of many great people. Such as "*Narasinha Bhanawat*" was the chief advisor of Saint Sevalal Maharaj and he used to consider him as a guru. "*Ramsing Bhanawat*" of Maharashtra State was the great personality and he is the only Padma-Shri awardee in the Banjara community. "*Saranga Bhat*" had performed the marriage of *Bhima Nayak and Dharmani Yadi*. "*Rudavat Anjaiyya Nayak*" who was the legend of Mahbub Nagar Banjaras of Telangana State. "*Ganga Bhat*" had done tilak of the great Maratha king Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. The great poet, "*Chand Bardai Bhat*" was a minister and best friend of Prithviraj Chauhan. "*Bhattu Panthulu*" who was the first teacher of Andhra Pradesh. "*Daulat Shere*" is the Shaheer, lyricist and singer of the modern Banjara community. Thus many such great personalities are from the Dhadi community. The Dhadi community has not only preserved the Banjara culture orally, but also played an important role in spreading and propagating the Banjara culture globally. *Banjara Dhadi, DhaliyaSanar and Navi sub-castes* has played crucial role in establishing matrimonial relations in Banjara community.

#### ▪ TANDA: A SYMBOL OF BANJARA'S REPUBLIC ADMINISTRATION:

Banjara Tanda is a small symbol of Banjara Republic, in which all the sub-castes of Banjara Republic live happily with harmony. Their art was given a business form by dividing their works according to their artistic qualities. And over time, their artistic profession was dubbed a sub-caste. Banjara community has no caste system but clan system and it is based on the occupation done by them. Banjara community is found to be simple, respectable, humble, compassionate and leading a life without discrimination. In fact, they are nature worshipers as they are a humanitarian community. There is not a single case of quarrel, dispute or discrimination among their sub-castes and all these sub-castes have an independent language, food, dress patterns and Saint Sewalal Maharaj is the place of worship for all of them. Therefore, it is found that these sub-castes are bound with great confidence and in an organized bond of social norms and values. In the BanjaraTanda, the community as a whole, all the sub-castes are actively involved in the social structure and panchayat system and play an important role in enriching Banjaras' cultural and social aspects. However, Children from one sub-caste do not have marital relations with children from another sub-caste. Therefore, marital relations do not appear to have been established in Banjara sub-castes.

Including all the sub-castes, the Banjara community has its own traditional Panchayat for each Tanda. It mainly deals in resolving disputes arising out of economic, social and sub-caste reasons. The Panchayat consists of *Nayak (chief)*, *Karbhari (secretary)*, *Nasabee (jury)*, *Hasabee (accountant)* and *Dao (elder person)* from all sub-castes. The community leaders, "Nayak"(head of the community) led the community both in matters of socio-political and religious life. Tanda Jury Board is headed by the Nayak and wise people of Tand's sub-castes who give valuable suggestions to the Nayak for wellbeing of the Tanda. All the working system of the Panchayat is hereditary. The traditional Panchayat is known as Nayak's house. This traditional panchayat tries to settle disputes between the community and people in a systematic manner after hearing the arguments of both the sides. The conclusion of the Panchayat and its final resolutions are strictly abided by all the people belonging to the all sub-caste of Banjara community. According to the rules of Tanda Panchayat, it is considered appropriate for all sub-castes to practice equal living, festivals, Tanda's organization, worship, religious traditions and social philosophy etc. As per the above social constraints, the Banjara folk life of the Tanda resident introduces their unity in diversity. Their way of life, policies, ethics, thoughts, rites and rituals are their own. Systematic self-fulfillment and self-reliance are motivating them to live with an independent lifestyle. It is very important for them to follow the rules of the panchayat made by the Tanda organization. For this reason, people from all sub-castes in Tanda live in harmony.

All the sub-castes of the Banjara community have adopted the ancient cultural system since ancient times by embracing their unique traditions and culture. Therefore, the Tanda system of all the sub-castes of the Banjara community indicates that the Banjara have maintained their rich traditions by keeping their code of conduct, folk life and culture in their hands. Due to this reason, community has not deteriorated in the face of today's changing modernity. All the credit for this goes to the strong rules of the Tanda system. *Nayak, Karbhari, Hasabee, Nasabee, Dayasane, Dhadi, Dhalia, Sanar, Nhavi*, etc. have an important responsibility towards the community and their contribution has become important in the development of the community.

#### ▪ THE ERA OF MODERNIZATION AND BANJARA COMMUNITY:

Today, the Banjara community, which has embraced a humanitarian culture, is going through a period of tremendous change. The community has experienced a drastic transmutation from an underdeveloped and self-sustaining to a literate and dependent on society. These migrants have stopped from restricting themselves and have started to engage living with the other communities, no matter the caste or religion, and have become the normal law abiding citizens in the society especially after the establishment of sovereignty of India. They have slowly come under the influence of globalization, within which they have advantages, like educational privileges, modern medical facilities, business, employment, career, personal development and disadvantages like extinction of primitive tribal profession, culture, rites, rituals and traditions. On the other hand, the lack of marital relations among the sub-castes of the Banjara community is a major social problem today. The caste system, which once existed as a profession in the Banjara community, later it took the form of caste and today discrimination among the same caste and sub-castes has become a major obstacle for progress in the community. In fact, the religious and cultural values of all the sub-castes of the Banjara community are the same. Discrimination on the basis of sub-caste according to social values is detrimental to social cohesion and it is a major obstacle. In fact, sub-castes marriages should be encouraged to broaden Banjaras' culture and thoughts. Marriages among different sub-castes will help in spreading each other's common culture, ideas, language and knowledge, but today it has become very difficult for the Banjara community to adopt this practice.

The dialect-language, festivals, culture, dress and lifestyle of all Banjara sub-castes are similar not only in India but also outside India. The sub-castes of the Banjara community have been recognized by the Central and State Governments. The community has a registered organization called "*All India Banjara Seva Sangh*" as established in 1953, which is recognized as a 'Mother Organization' by the Banjara community all over India. This organization has implemented various initiatives to create coordination among all sub-castes. The organisation's aim was only to bring the Banjara community under one roof. "Bills" were introduced in

the Lok Sabha with the aim of keeping the Banjaras as one with the sub-castes and giving them tribal status. A study team of the All India BanjaraSeva Sangha was set up to collect the evidence required for the bill and a bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha under the term "Banjara" after studying various Banjara groups and sub-castes in India. However, there is a conspiracy being hatched to dismiss the goal and strategy of this organization. In the social initiatives like *Ori-Bakri, Puja, Teej, Diwali, Holi* and marriage ceremonies in Tandas, all the sub-castes are included and dealt with together. All these social events are successfully carried out in Tanda to Tanda with the joint participation of all the sub-castes. Similarly, in today's modern changing scenario, it is necessary to have 'matrimonial relations (Beti- vyavahar) for marriages among sub-castes. Social workers and educated youth from every sub-caste should seriously consider this issue and promote sub-caste marriage.

However, saints and social reformers have worked to eradicate caste discrimination. Provision has also been made in the Constitution as legal support is required to eradicate caste discrimination. Even so, there is a gap between caste, sub-caste and religion today. Discrimination among sub-castes, non-establishment of marriages with each other is evident in almost all other caste and societies. The population of the Banjara community in India is estimated as 12 crores. Of course, we consider the population of the Banjara community including all the sub-castes. As we consider the Banjaras as a community but dividing them into caste or sub-castes can mean something wrong and different. We have not built an ethnic organization and it is not meant to be in our democracy. Hon. Vasant Rao Naik has worked for Banjara community to coordinate among sub-castes through social organization and his political leadership. Man was the focal point of his leadership. Therefore, decrying the sub-castes and not establishing marital relations with them can be said to be our discourtesy, vulgarity and impolicy and uncivilized attitudes

#### ▪ PROBLEMS OF MATRIMONIAL RELATIONS AMONG BANJARA SUB-CASTES:

Traditional marriage institutions are no longer in community today. Works regarding marriages were being done as a social commitment by the Banjara sub-caste, Dhadi. But today marriage has become the form of big business. People are earning millions by organizing wedding introductory programmes. Divorce has reached dangerous levels in the community. In the past, the Dhadi Banjara sub-caste knew many places of marriage. They were happy and proud to see the happy married life of boys and girls. Due to this charitable work, Dhadi community was honored and glorified in the community. But today, solemnization of marriage has been replaced by commercial marriage.

Today, the increasing number of unmarried young boys and girls has become a matter of concern. Even today girls are discriminated. Due to lack of coordination in our sub-castes, marital relations are not being formed. The process of marriage involves some kind of deception. The Banjara community is no exception for this. Many young boys and girls have crossed the age of marriage. It has become difficult to get brides to small traders, artisans, laborers, farmers except employees. The tendency to spend immensurable money for a wedding by taking money at interest or selling the farm is very prevalent in Tandas. Due to this, the Banjara community is becoming financially weak day by day. At the same time, the situation in Tanda has become very serious. However, due to the lack of proper role of mediators, many marriages are falling apart. The family system has been affected. The types of love marriages are increasing, boys and girls are running with each other in search of the right partner or getting married with other castes or religions. For this, it is necessary to break the walls of castes and sub-castes and start the conjugal relations for marriage. The solution to this serious problem is to carry out the process of marriage with different sub-castes in the community.

Even today, some of the wrong practices are more prevalent in the Banjara community. Unwanted practices like dowry are very prevalent in the society. While this is true, the increase in education in the community has led to an increase in the number of employed people and the community began to move towards progress. But fact is that, the more educated he is, the more dowry he takes. Employees, doctors, engineers, teachers, professors and government employees are seen as the real promoters of the dowry system in Banjara community.

We think of ourselves only as progressive and also pretend to be. The Banjara community is no exceptions to this. The institution of marriage have been instrumental in keeping the Banjara culture united. On the other hand, suicides matters are even taking place because the parents do not have enough money to fulfill the conditions of their daughters' marriage. To prevent this, it has become necessary to maintain the initiative of marriage in the sub-caste. For this, the social workers, politicians and youth of the community need to take the proper initiative. In September-2021 the University of Calicut in the state of Kerala has taken a major decision to prevent the dowry system. It has been made mandatory for all students of the university to write a declaration stating that if they are found to have taken or given a dowry their degree will be cancelled. The step taken by the university has also been welcomed by the people and students of the state. Such initiatives need to be universally implemented to restrict the dowry practice.

#### ▪ CONCLUSIONS:

The inequality between castes and sub-castes in Banjara community is increasing day by day. People from other castes are taking advantage of this. *Saint Sewalal Maharaj, Babasaheb Naik, Vasant Raoji Naik, Padmashree. Ramsingji Bhanawat, Sudhakar Raoji Naik, Baliram Patil, Babusing Rathod, Uttam Rao Rathod, Ranjit Naik* and many social reformers made their significant contribution to unite the Banjara community. But the community is forgetting their real work. The present picture is that, instead of brotherhood among these sub-castes, they are becoming enemies of each other. For this, the social workers, politicians and youths of the community need to take the initiatives.

The fact is that no efforts are being made to eradicate sub-caste inequality in the community. People give the message of social equality, but those who play political games for their personal interests are not less in the community. Marrying a girl of one sub-caste to a boy of another sub-caste has not been such an easy task. But today one sub-caste is not making marital relations with another sub-caste.

In the Banjara community, although the names of this sub-caste are different, everyone has one language, one dress, one culture. Due to this sub-caste, the society is scattered. We are creating our own different groups by dividing ourselves. The Banjara community has been severely affected by the sub-caste division. Society's ability to bear this loss is now exhausted. The biggest obstacle is the educated and politicians of the society. But it takes time for all the sub-castes to come together under one broad

concept of 'Banjara' and deal with marital relation (Roti-beti) and this can be done easily and successful. For this, community needs patience and perseverance to find the right solution to this problem.

In order to build a socially and culturally healthy Banjara community, it is first of all important for the sub-castes to unite and come together through the matrimonial relations (Roti-beti) practice. The Banjara community will have to come together with a sensitive ideology and essential to find a solution to the problem. As soon as soon as we realize this fact of sub-caste discrimination, it will be betterment for the community. If it is too late, it will not take long for the Banjara community to fall apart which has been divided into different names, groups and sub-castes.

Today in the 21st century, we are adopting globalism. Young people are getting married by crossing the borders of the country by breaking the walls of caste and religion in the world. So what difficulty do we have in establishing matrimonial relations within our sub-castes? If it so far in future, then discrimination in the Banjara community will come to an end. The practice of matrimonial relations among sub-caste marriage should be established by destroying the caste system so that it can become a exclusive panacea for social equality, unity and brotherhood for the Banjara community.

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