



### BANJARA COMMUNITY AND THEIR TRADING IN MEDIEVAL PERIOD

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#### Abstract:

*The Banjara community, also known as Lambanis or Gypsies, has a rich history rooted in India. Traditionally nomadic, they were skilled traders and transporters of goods, often using bullock carts. The Banjara people played a significant role in trade and commerce, especially in South India, during medieval times. The Banjaras combined pastoralism and the carrying trade. Their role in Indian agrarian commerce was extremely important. The basis for the trade and, indeed, for the existence of the Banjaras lay in conditions of inland transport. Goods were carried on boats and carts, and by camels and bullocks. One such type of nomadic group was that of the Banjaras. Banjaras during the medieval period of Indian history were generally traders. Banjaras played a great role during the period of Alauddin Khalji. Alauddin Khalji used the Banjaras to transport grain to the city markets. The Banjaras were a nomadic tribe who originated from the Marwar region of Rajasthan. Historically, they were merchant tribes who traded all over north-western and southern parts of India. originally, Banjaras are one of the largest communities living in India today.*

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#### Introduction:

The word ‘Banjara,’ as they are being called in Deccan in general and specific denoted actually what they were and where do them habituate. Banjaras in addition to supplying of food grains also did trade. The Banjara dialect is predominantly a mixture of Sanskrit, Rajasthani, Marathi, Gujarathi and Hindi and bears the influence of the local language. The downfall of the Mughal Empire along with later kingdoms and introduction of new technology like that of railways and postal system had a severe impact on their means of income. The railways badly affected the business and trade of this community. It has been known that the Banjara were perhaps the most travelled tribe in medieval and modern times. The term Banjara is mainly

applied to the itinerant grain, salt and cattle merchants, who lived in tents and moved about with their live stock and carts. They used to visit even the most remote and inaccessible regions to forage or to search for grain and other commodities to sell in more populous areas. Historically, this nomadic Community is referred in “Dashakumara Charitra” (6th Century A.D.) composed by the renowned Sanskrit scholar and writer, Dandi. Since they were, highly fascinated by the spirit of adventure, the Delhi sultans and Mughal rulers recruited them for supplying food grains to their army. According to the Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics Vol. II, Arthur-Bunyan, edited by James Hastings, the name Banjara comes from Sanskrit Vanaji, means the tribes of wandering grain-carriers. There are many reasons to



point out the forces that made the community to abandon their nomadic life style.

### Review of Literature :

There were many scholars, writers and other great linguists who studied their origin, culture and life-style. But very few attempts have been made to Banjara Community And Their Trading In Medieval Period. Keeping in view of the above said topic here are some of the relevant books and documents which give some basic information and are also reference source to support my topic. Some of them are as follows.

### Research Problem :

There are two issues that have to be discussed, one is about economic aspect and other is social aspect. In economic aspect trade, transport, goods of import and export in medieval Period and likewise in social aspects concentration is made on one of the more or less trading cum peddler community i.e., Banjaras has to be discussed.

### Objectives :

1. To study and explore the trade and transportation in late medieval Period
2. To explore trade routes, mode of transport, import and export of goods during late medieval times.

### Scope of the Study :

The scope of study is confined to later medieval times. The area of study covers only medieval era. The present study is aimed at studying the trade, trading communities, means of transportation, goods of imports and exports.

### Hypothesis :

The present research programme will cover the major aspects in Trade, Transport and related communities that existed at certain point of time medieval period.

### Methodology :

Data shall be collected through various methods to extract the required information. Data collection and its review followed by evaluation of materials will also provide basic information to research. Both primary and

secondary sources will be taken into consideration for better study.

Historically, the Banjaras had been carriers of supplies and drivers of Pack-Bullocks and lived as wandering transporters. There are a number of historical evidences, which prove that the Banjara tribe is one of the aboriginal and primitive tribes of Indian sub-continent. The Lamani Margas of 6th Century B.C. proves that this tribe lived even before the period of Budha. This class is as important as other trading and merchant communities in India since bygone days. The "primitive" merchants like the Banjaras were for inland trade, they represented only a subordinate sector in the Indian commercial world. The basis for the trade and, indeed, for the existence of the Banjaras in all over India. Goods were carried on boats and carts and by camels and bullocks. A bullock could travel quite fast, but it would normally be more expensive than a cart. However when the pack-oxen travelled slowly, grazing as they went, and were assembled in herds so as to reduce the cost of watching and guiding them. When did the communities of nomadic caravanners first appears in the historical account, what are the terms used by medieval. The origin and history of Banjaras are very vague and ambiguous. There are many views that explain about the origin of Banjaras. Some argued that term was derived from the Persian Biranjar or rice-carriers, while another believed that its origin could be traced to Sanskrit words like vanjari van (forest) and char (to wander) means forest wanderers that later came to be known as Banjaras. However, we have no significant evidence that suggests a relation between the ancient Banjaras and the modern Banjaras. The Banjaras were perhaps the most travelled tribe in medieval India and world as a whole. The term Banjara is mainly applied to the itinerant or wandering grain, salt and cattle merchants, who lived in temporary settlements and moved along with their Livestock and carts. They visited even the most remote and inaccessible region in hunting grain and other commodities to sell in



more populous areas, they also accompanied troops to keep them supplied with food grains. Comprised of both Hindus and Muslims, they claimed a common origin and affinity but today most of banjaras who settled in Deccan are Hindus. Banjaras, the trading community prior to their adopting of settled life consider themselves of Rajput origin and are Kshatriya or warring caste. The migration of Banjaras to the south can be traced out during the period of Delhi sultanate and during the invasion of Mughal on Deccan as well. Allauddin Khilji became the sultan of Delhi in the year 1296 A.D., It is believed that Banjaras acquired their criminal habits in the later period.

Earlier, Banjaras were petty traders by profession, who used to get salt and other commodities, which are made available in Deccan region, from other places. The entry of railway made them loose not only their livelihood but also culture. When the services of Banjaras were discontinued due to the development of road transport and railways, the Nizam's took many welfare measures to rehabilitate them away from criminal activities. The foregoing study of Indian trade, transport and merchant communities has focused on different communities with limitations especially like Banjaras, Baniyas, Muslims and local Hindu castes. In addition to the Banjaras, there was a group of transport contractors called Adhawiya. They were an organised group, particularly in western India. The distances travelled per day depended very much on the mode of travelling, the season and number of men and beasts in the party. Tavernier suggests that an ordinary caravan or a small party of traveller could normally make a good thirteen kos (26 miles) a day, the emperors, and nobles with large retinues, at a much slower pace. The Banjaras were known as major caravan traders and merchants. It seems that they didn't have complete financial knowledge and control over market but might had on in ancient times, its form was different. In ancient times bullocks were used for trade and transportation. This load-carrying bull is a bull carrying

goods loaded on its back by the Gor Ganas." Further, Dr. Pawar writes, "The 15th sukta of Kanda 3 of the Atharva Veda tells about traders. In the 1st verse of the same sukta, the chief hero of the traders is mentioned and in the 2nd verse, it is said that the traders travel to many countries by extracting water, air and land from the mountains. In the 7th verse of the same sukta, merchants are called all benefactors." Information on the trade of Banjara has been provided by various authors. The essence of this information. Shriram Pawar has mentioned in his book. From this it is clear that this society has been wandering for thousands of years. The purpose is to satisfy the hunger of the stomach this will be clear from the following example.

- "1) Banjara traders are mentioned in Jataka Katha of Buddhist period 567-489 BC. in 305 BC Megasthenes, lawyer of Seleucus Nicator also wrote about this trade.
- 3) Artemiodorus, a Preca geographer who came to India in the 1st century BC, mentions traders carrying these on Bela's back.
- 4) Banjara traders are also mentioned by Pliny and Olemi who come in the second and third centuries AD.
- 5) Chinese travelers coming in 4th, 6th and 7th centuries have also mentioned these Banjara traders.

The Banjara community was formerly largely concentrated in the province of Northwest India (Rajasthan). But "during the medieval period due to frequent famines in Rajasthan, Mughal invasions, increasing atrocities etc., this community migrated from Rajasthan to other provinces." Because the communication facilities were not good during this period. Therefore, no one but Banjara could do the work of delivering army goods and logistics. Therefore, keeping in mind the importance of this tribe, Shahajan's vizier Asaf Khan brought the Gore Banjaras of Malwa to the south to supply supplies to the Mughal army. A.D. Around 1630, the warriors Bhangi Rathod and



Bhagwandas Vadtia first came to the south with Asaf Khan's army. Prof. Motiraj Rathod writes, "At that time, Jangi Bhangi had 1 lakh 80 thousand bullocks and Bhagwan Das had 52 thousand bullocks. Considering the importance of goods transportation, Jangi Bhangi obtained some concessions from the Moguls. His orders were written on copper plate and given to the Jangi Bhangi Naiks." The contents of that copperplate, "Ranjan ka pani roof ka grass.

A.D. in 1546, Malwa came under the control of the Pathans. In 1568, most of the feudatories accepted Akbar's suzerainty. Akbar's affair with the daughter of a prince came with the aim of befriending the prince. As a result of this incident and practice, the Gaurs did not tolerate this act. So some bands of Nayaks went to the south of the Vindhya Mountains to settle permanently. Kripalsingh Gaur Naik's herd with lakhs of bullocks in Madhya Pradesh in AD. Came in 1668. In this regard, in the book 'Banke Bol Bundel Khand Ke', Kailas Madveya Pa. 75 writes, "Kriparam's son moved south from Madhya Pradesh to Shirpur, Dhule, Jalgaon area on both sides of the Satpura mountain. At Khandwa Burhanpur, Harsud area, Kunwar Pawar and his two sons, Bhagat Singh and Dev Singh, took up the business of farming and rearing cattle. For some time He did the logistics of the army." Regarding the Banjara business, Ramnarayan Upadhyay writes on page 26 in his book 'Nimad Ka Cultural History', "Banjare kabhi gaon me nahi baste balki gaon se door apna tanda basakar rahte aye hai. In the days when there were no means of transport, Tab Ye Bailopar worked by loading the goods and transporting them to other places. His work was known as Banjaro Ki Bald Namse. Now he left the business and started working as a farmer. Coming to Hyderabad, Jangi Bhangi halted at Satara district of Bhagwan Vadtia Nizam State. (Entire Marathwada) Descendants of some heroes came to Marathwada from Nizam State of Hyderabad along with the great saint of Banjara community Shri Sevadas. Eighth Nizam 'Hashtum' had

offered Jagiri to Sant Sevadas. But Sevadas refused that jagiri." Later, these Tandes stayed with Sevadas from Hyderabad region to Yavatmal, Akola, Buldhana, hilly areas of Marathwada near Marathwada. The British first started railways in India and the system of transportation became faster and cheaper. Thus, the traditional occupation of the Banjara community ended. So it became orderly for the Banjara people to earn their livelihood by doing whatever business they could get. To the south of the hill, on the plateau, Tande is situated on the road to Ladeni. Banjare was angry with the British for losing his business because of the British. In this, the British passed laws such as the Arms Act and the Forest Act. Due to this, the disaffection of the Banjara people against the British increased. A.D. After 1857, the British made special efforts to establish a firm grip on India. Law and order was broken at this time. At this time, the brave and valiant Banjars living in the mountains and valleys were approached by the patriots and stood against the British. At this time the Banjars started committing robberies against the British, robbing the railways, burning garbage, blowing them up, and making secret attacks from the forest. Then "to permanently settle this Banjara tribe, the British passed the Criminal Tribes Act in 1871 AD and started police surveillance on Tandaya." Thus, the Banjara clan, a tribe with a tradition of chivalry, was considered criminals by the British. A.D. This Act was applicable in India from 1871 to 1952. At that time Banjara people called the British as thieves and thieves, many people turned to criminal tendencies. During this period farming, rearing cattle, distilling liquor, mercenary, construction etc. Business started. Sometimes Khilar goes to Mysore for bullocks, sometimes to Khandwa in Madhya Pradesh for trade. 'Laman' is a prominent tribe that carries goods on the back of bullocks. Banaj means a trader and the word Banjara came into being. "Only those who carry goods on the back of bullocks are called Banjars." This is called Ladeni. In the transportation of these goods,



grains, coconuts, dates, salt and all the essential items (goods) were carried on the back of Bela. "There was a famine in India from 1396 to 1408 AD. During this period, there was a shortage of food grains. At that time, Banjarani served the countrymen by bringing grain from Nepal, China, Tibet, Brahmadesh, Iran, Kabul, etc. All the farmers were exempted from paying the tax per bull. Many ports in the country were developed for domestic trade. "All the ports for goods coming from abroad were in Konkan. All kinds of goods like salt, sugar, cloth, betel nuts, coconuts, dates etc. were to be brought to the country from that port and the country's grains, turmeric, jaggery, chillies were to be unloaded under the ghat. Many people used to transport these goods in sacks placed on bullocks." Various tools were used for trade. "If we trace the original culture of the Banjarani society in the Indus Ghats, it will be found that this Banjarani society used bullocks, donkeys, Transport has been done with the help of camels and horses. There are records of their trade routes in the ancient history of India. It was known as Laman Marg. A.D. A map of the route of this society was recorded by the people of the Pturias in the 600 BC. Apart from food, salt is also used for dressing skins (raw), dyeing clothes, making medicine, immobilizing dead animals, and societies where corpses are buried in the ground require salt. Such life useful salt is also available in other places besides water.

Seeing the need of salt in India etc. S. In 1766, Lord Clive imposed a tax on salt production and trade. Because a large amount of salt was exported from India to Europe and other countries. China was ahead of India in salt production then. Vanjara played a major role in the export of salt to Europe. The Banjares used to plan the detailed arrangements for transportation in different parts of the country. It goes to major ports for export of salt. Salt production in India is major in coastal areas of Gujarat, western India and northern India. It was happening in proportion. In this trade and exchange of goods, the Banjarani people knew the main roads of the

country. There was knowledge of difficult steps. Banjarani Samaj was the messenger in transport. He was well aware of the economic and political developments in the country.

### Assistance to Army :

The Banjarani community excelled in supplying food to the army and gained the ruler's trust. East India Company, Maratha Empire, Mughal Empire depended on Banjarani for logistics. Muslim rulers depended on Banjarani transport during droughts, various war campaigns. The Banjarani community used to do this service with sincerity. once someone Goods paid for the ruler were not given to other rulers under any circumstances. Hence Banjaranis gained social status in the Mughal Empire. Banjarani walks with bullocks with Tandaya. Logistics was on the back of a bull. Every day they had to walk. They had to walk 20 to 25 miles in a day. In this regard, Dr. Singh writes, "The speed of the bulls was very fast. European travelers praised the speed of the bulls. According to Delavalle and Tavernier, they ran as fast as our horses. According to Terry, they ran 20 miles in a day. yes."

If Banjarani does not reach the army's food grains on time, the army will die without food grains. That means Muslim rule, Maratha and French rulers were dependent on Banjarachya traffic. Regarding this, Dr. Sharma writes, "In 1612 AD, Niyamatullah has written in 'Tarikha Khanjahan Lodi' as follows - In 1504 AD, the ruler of Lodi dynasty had gone on a campaign. It was felt that in order to feed the soldiers, Therefore, there is not enough food in the cantonment. There was a shortage of grains due to the non-arrival of the Banjaranis. A letter was written from the cantonment to Azam Humayun Samant asking him to motivate the Banjaranis to bring food grains to the cantonment.

### Implications :

Banjarani Samaj is an honest warrior tribe. Cows, bulls, buffaloes, goats etc. They used to keep it close. A lot of bulls were nearby. Traded on their trust. Since the



animals were near, this community settled by seeing mountains, pastures, forests and water for fodder. Banjara society was completely primitive during this period. However, he used to keep the account of food grain in the trade. In this regard, etc. S. In 1768, the British and the Nizam came to an agreement where both of them devised a plan to weaken Tipu Sultan of Mysore. The Banjars were made theirs even before the war. In this regard, "The British gave an advance of one and a half lakh rupees to the Banjara from the Nizam to buy grain. With this rupee, the Banjara bought the grain and went with the Nizam's army to the Tanda. At that time, the British army was loaded with 25 thousand bales of grain." Lt. Gen. 'Harris' was doing it. It thought that if the fighting went on for a long time, the army would not have enough food. For this he was also providing food grains to Tipu Sultan. Then Harris persuaded Banjara that Tipu would not get the logistics. When Tipu Sultan came to know about this, Tipu Sultan started a campaign against the Banjars. "Bhima Nayak is loading food grain on his 25 thousand bullocks. When Tipu noticed this, he tried to keep the Banjara camp away from the British. Tipu's general Kamaruddin Khan was attacking Banjara and preventing them from advancing. At this time, Bhima Naik was protected by Major General Floyd. was able to reach the British camp."

"Banjarans were minded about their business. They had no reason to worry about who was fighting for whom. That's why the Mughal Empire, Nizams, Marathas, Rajputs and the East India Company also used this community to transport grain, ammunition, weapons." "The Banjara community used to travel all over the country on foot. They knew the roads all over the country. Those roads are known today as trade highways. The Banjara community used to deliver food and grain to the army. In return, they used to get proper fare. Dr. Singh writes, " According to Tavernier, 1 chariot drawn by 2 bulls, the fare is 1 rupee per day and thus the entire journey from Surat to Agra, which takes 40 days, costs

40 to 45 rupees. John Marshall (1668-1672) giving the rates of traffic from Patna to Agra informs us that a cart carrying 40 maunds of goods and drawn by 6 bullocks costs 80 rupees. A chariot drawn by 2 bullocks and in which 4 people can go, the fare is 22 rupees."

Today the original business of Banjara has been destroyed. The Banjara clans came from north to south with the Mughals. Prof. Rathod writes, "Gore Banjars were also used throughout South India for trade. During the period of Krishnadevaraya AD 1509-30 in South India, Vijayanagara was carrying every commodity on the back of a bullock." Banjara community has done the major task of providing logistics to the army. "The Banjara community kept the country alive by bringing grain from home and abroad in times of drought and crisis on Bela's back." Banjarani had more recently taken up the task of supplying logistics to the Mughal army and then to the Maratha and British armies. After the establishment of the British rule and the creation of paved roads, the work of grain transportation disappeared and there was no longer any purpose of carrying such large bales.

The British introduced railways in India and the banjars lost their traditional occupation of trade in the early 19th century. Therefore, the means that will be available are close to the barrens to live had to do Banjara farms are located near the trade route, in the mountains, in the forest near the fodder and water. The Banjars were angry with the British because they had drowned their traditional occupation. Hence looting of railways, robbery, burning of garbage, (blowing) secret attacks from forests etc. The conspiracy was started by Banjari. "To permanently settle the Banjars, the British passed the Criminal Tribes Act in 1871 AD and the British made the Banjara tribe a criminal." This law was applicable in our country from 1871 to 1952. Thieves are thieves and many people turn to criminal tendencies. But the Banjars did not surrender to the British. Rebelled against them. "Birsa Munda, Govind Gor Banjara, Umaji



Naik, Sama Kolam, Bhagoji Naik, Chilya Naik, Mittha Bhukia etc. Banjaras rebelled against the British rule. Act 52 of 1894 AD also gave Banjaras the right to support themselves by selling forest gum, charoli, molea. Hiran was taken away. This led to theft, piracy. "These criminal tribes were de-notified on 31st August 1952 and declared liberated. "" "Criminal Tribes Act made by the British in 1871 AD was repealed by the Government of India in 1952 after independence. So the history of the rebirth of the Banjara tribe starts from 1952. The wandering tribe settled in Danya-Kho. Opposing the British, Hal He lived his life in abhorrence. The stamp of the criminal name on his forehead was erased in 1952. During this period, the Banjara community was subjected to intense persecution, they had to wander in the slums for fear of punishment and death.

### Termination of Traditional Trade :

Today Banjara society is looking at food-grain distribution or transport system. Banjara community does not contribute in any work like logistics or providing necessary weapons to the soldiers. Their traditional business was destroyed by the British by removing the railway line. Therefore, many Banjara Tandayans have to live like forest dwellers. The reason behind this is not the ineptitude of the Banjara community. Because after the railway came, the transport system of Banjara became useless. A big city emerged in the country. Various modern communication facilities were created. Banjara society did not change itself with this changing occupation. He did not accept the new instrument.

A.D. In 1860-62, many Banjara people of Maharashtra went to the seashore with animals. "Many Banjaras have tried to preserve their traditional culture by taking food-grains and tobacco to the coastal areas and importing salt from there. In 1876-77 AD, there was a terrible drought in India. During this drought, the Banjaras suffered widely. Because with the destruction of traditional business, now one had to depend on others. Lack of

modern approach, lack of machinery in Banjara society does not produce more. "The growing family has turned the farmer into a landless farmer. Today his basic needs are not being met. This is why they have to do economic slavery. This leads to unemployment and addiction, poor health etc. problems arise."

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