



P R E F A C E

In view of the directives from Government, a detailed survey of thirteen villages in Palghar Tahsil has been conducted with a view to find out whether people living in these villages belong to Wanjaris or genuine Banjaras, Mathura Banjara, Labhan community.

The survey was conducted by Shri M.B. Aphale, Research Officer and field staff of this office. The focus of the survey was on the social, cultural, economic and ethnic aspects of the inhabitants.

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Inclusion of Wanjaris in the list of
Vimukta Jatis

INCLUSION OF WANJARIS IN THE LIST OF VIMUKTA JATIS

1. Introduction

The Tribal Research and Training Institute, Pune, conducted a detailed survey, of 13 villages in Palghar Tahsil, with a view to find out whether Wanjaris who are living predominantly in that area are the sub-groups of Banjara Community or otherwise. The following 13 Wanjari villages were visited:

- | | | |
|-----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| (1) Pam-Tembhi, | (6) Vengani, | (11) Maswan, |
| (2) Kumbhawali, | (7) Kurgaon, | (12) Dukatan, and |
| (3) Murabe, | (8) Dapoli, | (13) Bandhan. |
| (4) Boisar, | (9) Morekuran, | |
| (5) Parmali, | (10) Kolgaon, | |

2. Method of Survey adopted

The information requisite for the report was collected in two types of schedule viz.- (i) Village schedule and (ii) Family schedule. The information was collected in the following way:-

Village Schedule

Information of each village with reference to Wanjari population etc. was in the following columns:

- (1) Name of the village with Tahsil and District,
- (2) Village or Tanda, (3) Total population of that village including population of Wanjaris, (4) Total population of village exclusively of Wanjaris,
- (5) Surnames of village people and of Wanjari people-familywise, (6) Hereditary occupation of Wanjaris,
- (7) Present occupation of Wanjaris, (8) Common God and Goddesses of that village, (9) Gods and Goddesses

of Wanjaris only, (10) Main festivals celebrated by Wanjari people in that village, (11) Caste Panchayat of Wanjaris alongwith names and designation of Office bearers and the duties performed by the caste panchayat, (12) Migration, (13) Mother tongue and languages known to them, (14) Nomadic traits, (15) General information if any.

Family Schedule

(1) Name of the Head of the family, (2) His age, (3) Members depended on him, (4) Full address, (5) his caste, (6) Gods and Goddesses worshipped, (7) Migration, (8) History of family and community in general, (9) Rituals and festivals, (10) Birth rites/ marriage system, (11) Mother tongue and other languages known, (12) Present occupation, (13) Hereditary occupation, (14) Criminal tendency, (15) Nomadic tendency, (16) possession of property, (17) Total income of the family from all sources, (18) Education, (19) Sept/ Gotra, (20) Details of married persons, (21) His opinion about Wanjari and Banjara, (22) Social leaders of his community, (23) Caste Panchayat - whether he attends meeting with details, (24) Marriages between Wanjari and Banjara, (25) What he knows about Banjara community, (26) Family members dress, ornaments used, (27) Details of celebrations and festivals in family.

3. Village/Tanda

Out of 13 places visited, it was confirmed that these places were revenue villages. Tanda is generally

movable from one place to another. Tanda people take temporary shelter, live in tents or in a Pal or in huts. Here people live in Pakka Houses and the house is their permanent abode of residence. They are permanently settled from their fore-fathers in that village.

Banjaras in other places still live in Tanda, a nomadic life, a life distinct from the people who are permanently settled.

In 13 villages, survey of 163 families was conducted. Almost all family heads explained that they did not know when their fore-fathers came to reside in that place. It was, however, told that about 6 to 8 generation ago they settled in that village. Secondly, even though these villages are predominantly occupied by Wanjari community, yet other caste people also have permanent abodes of settlements in that village. The following statement will show the population number of Wanjari people and also other caste people who have been living together generation to generation in those places.

Statement showing approximate population of villages
Information gathered from responsible persons from
villages like Sarpanch/School teachers etc.

| Sr. | Name of the village surveyed | Approximate total Popn. of the village | Approx. To- tal popn. of Wanjaris & their famls. | No. of families surveyed | No. of persons in the families surveyed |
|-----|------------------------------|--|--|--------------------------|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 1 | Maswan | 1,500 | 600/70 | 35 | 232 |
| 2 | Duktan | 1,680 | 40/6 | 5 | 34 |
| 3 | Bandhan | 250 | 25/5 | 5 | 26 |
| 4 | Boisar | 6,000 | 1000/80 | 14 | 77 |
| 5 | Murave | 7,000 | 65/11 | 11 | 64 |
| 6 | Morekuran | 880 | 600/90 | 17 | 119 |

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|-------|------------|--------|------------|-----|------|
| 7. | Kolgaon | 1,500 | 880/125 | 12 | 102 |
| 8. | Dapoli | 1,350 | 1150/200 | 9 | 56 |
| 9. | Kumbhawali | 2,200 | 1800/375 | 16 | 104 |
| 10. | Kurgaon | 1,500 | 400/75 | 3 | 25 |
| 11. | Vongani | 1,800 | 1150/150 | 11 | 86 |
| 12. | Farnali | 3,500 | 600/35 | 12 | 109 |
| 13. | Fan tembhe | 1,100 | 775/75 | 13 | 88 |
| Total | | 30,060 | 9085/1292. | 163 | 1122 |

From the above figures it will be seen that as compared to the total population of villages, Wanjaras community population forms 30% population. References to old publication throws some light of the character of Banjara community which can give an indication of differences between Wanjaras and Banjaras. E. Thurston in his Book entitled, "Castes and Tribes of India, Vol-IV", has given a vivid description of the Banjaras in the following words:- "Banjaras associate chiefly together seldom or never mixing with other tribes. They seem to have no home, no character, but that of merchants, in which capacity they travel great distances to whatever parts are most in want of merchandise, which is the greater part of corn."

From the above statement and the family schedule, it is revealed that Wanjaras are living with other castes for generations together. Their occupation is cultivation of land. Presently also they cultivate land of their own. Farm labourer, driving of bullock carts, service in Government/Private sectors are their subsidiary occupation. It is to point out that these people have no knowledge of their own

beyond 5 to 6 generations and since then they do not lead nomadic life. It is also noticed that even 5% of the family surveyed, were not merchants conducting merchandise, which is told to be their hereditary occupation. They have their permanent places of settlements. These people seemed to be peaceful and law abiding having no wrong in their character.

4. Commission of crime

Out of 163 families surveyed only one case was noticed about the commission of crime, which is negligible.

People living in these families said that they are afraid of crime and courts. Nobody explained that their past or present record was suspicious or bad in the society in general.

Banjara class is addicted for highway robbery and dacoity. Kidnapping of children is also a speciality among Banjaras. Sheep or cattle stealing is known to them. Dacoities and robberies are committed while Tanda is on the move, from one encampment to another. Under such circumstances the old men and women accompany the goods and cattles which are carried on the pack bullocks. While some of the able bodied men strike off to some distant place, previously fixed upon, rapidly perpetrate a dacoity and rejoin the main body on the march. This is possible when they are in Tanda. So far as these people are concerned. They seem to be honest cultivators having no criminal tendency, as is seen in the Banjara community.

5. Mother Tongue

Wanjara people who are living in this tract, speak Wanjari language. This language is a mixture of more than 3 to 4 other languages. More words are of

Gujarathi language in Wanjari language. The difference between the Wanjari language and the Banjara language was explained by them that these two languages have many words such as 'Ghugari', 'Tukari', 'Chhora', 'Chhori', 'Jeth', 'Devar' common, but many words are different and these two dialects have separate entities. In this connection, it is to point out that the Banjara dialect is an independent and the distinct dialect. All Banjaras with their whatsoever synonyms and sub-caste speak single dialect i.e. Banjara dialect which is known as 'Gor-Boli'. Even to this day, Banjaras can freely converse among themselves in the same Banjara dialect throughout the country. Even though there may be some influence of the regional language, the original structure of Gormati dialect relation to the various parts of human-body, dresses, ornaments, food, profession etc. is the same. Hence taking this aspect into consideration Wanjari and Banjara dialects are different even though some words are common in both.

6. Dress and Ornaments

Their ordinary dress is dhoti or loose knicker backers, pairan, head cloth coloured or white. Women wear saris and cholis like Maratha Kunbi. Some women were however seen wearing sarees after the style of Gujarathi women. Women have bangles made of glass and Mangalsutra, a common fashion prevailing in Maratha Kunbi community.

Now, so far as Banjara dress is concerned, the dresses of Banjaras are a unique case. It is identical throughout the country. The colour scheme and designs and the model of their dresses are almost

same everywhere in all the states in India. Because of this unique feature a Banjara can be easily recognised in any part of the country. The fabrics used for the Banjara dress might be woollen, silk or cotton, but the designs adopted have a common national pattern. The dress making is never given to tailors. Women at home do their own stitching with their needle and embroidery skill. They make their own dress. They use glass pieces, small sea shells, lead ornaments or wornout coins to decorate their dresses. The dresses are predominantly red, but other colourers are used but less in proportion. The Banjaras do not have any seasonal changes but wear only one type of clothing in all seasons. They pay little attention to cleanliness, their hair once plaited is not combed or opened perhaps for a month. Married women wear Phetia, i.e. lenga, kachali (like blouse), Tookari i.e. Odamin, Dori and Jhalarao and Ghoongato. Gents dress consists of Gudaki, Bankashi, Jhagala, Pag, Dola Moliaya (only put on by a bridegroom). Married ladies wear the following ornaments: Ghoogari (a type of ornament tied to the hair hanging over the temples), Topli (an ornament used with Ghoogari), Choode (bangles made of ivory and wood and worn above the ankle), Rakodi (a kind of anklet), Mathi Choonde (a type of ornament holding the vail), Bhooriya (nose ring), Har (a type of neckless made of old coins), Hasali (a type of neck ring), Moonga (neck-less of red beads). All choonda and chandala are a peculiar hair ornaments worn by Banjara women on the back of their neck. It is thus obvious that there is nothing common in dresses traditionally worn by Wanjaris and Banjaras since the dresses and ornaments are quite distinct and there is no similarity.

7. The Banjara - Navi, Dhadi, Dhalia

The Banjara Navi is a specialised barber who alone knows the pattern of hair dressing of Banjara men. The hair dressing pattern is known as Jhapa.

The Wanjaris do not have Navi of their own caste. They do not have any specific pattern of hair dressing. Their pattern of hair dressing is similar to the Marathi/Kunbi communities living nearby.

Banjaras have strict observance of Tanda administration in which the Banjaras have their own professionals like Navi, Dhadi, Dhalia, Sonar etc. This institution is not in vogue in Wanjari community.

8. Birth

In Wanjari community, Hati - Sati - is celebrated after three days of the birth of a child. In some cases, it is done even at the late time of 'Yatra'.

On the contrary, in Banjara community exactly on the third day of the birth of a child, a ceremony called 'Jalava Dhokarro' which is quite distinct is performed. The delivered women are considered purified only after this ceremony. After this ceremony women are allowed to do domestic duties. On this occasion, prayers in the name of 'Vemata' are made. This ceremony does not seem to be in vogue in Wanjari community.

9. Marriage

Wanjari community performs marriages according to Hindu Vedic system on auspicious day in the month of Margsheersh/Magh/Falgun/Vaishakh after consulting Brahmin. This system is similar in Marathi/Kunbi community. Whereas Banjara marriages are performed any time and according to their distinct system.

Wanjari community woman cannot marry her deceased husband's brother while in Banjara it is a preferential widow marriage.

Both in Wanjari and Banjara communities dowry system is prevalent, but for dowry, Wanjari says 'Dengya' while Banjara says 'Karar' which is the difference in the dialect.

Wanjari wants auspicious days for marriage while Banjara does not observe any auspicious time and date. Banjara marriages are even solemnised during night time.

During marriage ceremony, Banjara elderly women teach 'Dhavarro' to bride. This peculiar teaching is not in practice in Wanjari community.

In Banjara community, on confirmation of marriage known as 'Gol' a 'Shkikiya Rapia' is given to the Nayak of bride's tando to indicate final settlement. This is not in practice in Wanjari community because no caste panchayat is in existence in these villages.

In Banjara community the function of 'Sadi Toneroo' is performed at the place of bridegroom. Vadao Song is sung. Bhang, Ghota, Vaya, Got are performed at bride's place. Banjara women sing chorun songs on every occasion of marriage.

Enquiry was made whether marriages between 'Wanjari' and 'Banjara' can be celebrated. The reply was affirmative. There-upon, it was asked to quote examples of the marriage already done in Wanjari and Banjara communities. Out of 163 families surveyed there was not a single instance of such a marriage. In the entire community it was told that some three

to four Wanjari/Banjara marriages are performed which number is negligible. These marriages have been performed in the highclass families according to the modern trend in the general community.

10. Death

In Wanjari community the sweet is served to the nearest relatives on the twelfth day of the deceased person. In Banjara community they perform a ritual called 'Kandya' on the third day of death. This ritual is not performed in Tanda but outside the Tanda jurisdiction by Banjara people.

In 'Wanjari' community they observe 'Sutak' for twelve days, after the death of their kith and kin.

In Banjara they do not observe sutak at all.

11. Diet

Both Wanjari and Banjara eat fowls, mutton, fish and take liquor. Exception to this, however, is of the Mathura Banjaras who do not touch meat or liquor. It is to be pointed out that Wanjaris in Palghar claim that they are Mathura Banjaras and they eat mutton and take heavy drinks. This is contradictory.

12. Festivals and Celebrations

Common festivals among Wanjari and Banjaras are Diwali, Holi; but the manner in which they celebrate is different.

Wanjari community celebrate Diwali according to Hindu religion; while Banjara community celebrate Diwali in a distinct manner. They do not perform 'Laxmi Puja' on the first day. On the first day, Banjara marriageable age girls collectively perform ceremony called 'Mera' and sing in chorus. The song is "Varase dader Kot Dawali Yadi Tona Mera, Bapur Tona Mera" etc. This song is recited by

the girls as they go from house to house and offer 'Aarathi' to all members of the house. The idea behind 'Mera' is meant to pay their respect to elders and also to express their love and affection to their kith and kin. They also sing 'Mera' song collectively for the benefit of cattle. On the same day the day is called 'Anavasya' by 'Wanjaris' whereas Banjaras call it 'Kalinas'.

On the second day of Diwali Banjaras perform 'Puravaj Puja'. Girls of marriageable age perform a ceremony called 'Godhan Puja'.

On the third day Banjaras do not perform 'Bhaubeej'.

Holi is celebrated by Wanjaris according to Hindu rites. The ceremonial burning of God Kana is performed by Banjaras in the morning unlike others who do it in the evening. Celebrations called 'Dhoond' and 'ger' are also performed by Banjaras in Holi festival. Folk songs called 'Lengi' and 'Vanjara' are sung and folk dances are performed. Among other festival for Banjaras 'Teeja' is the most important festival. It is not an annual feature like 'Diwali' and 'Holi' but performed only if permitted by Tanda Nayak and five noted persons of the community. When people are happy 'Teeja' is celebrated. Elderly women teach heroic stories, dances and riddles to girls. Elderly men teach playing of musical instruments to boys. This festival lasts for ten days. Every day has its own importance, during Teeja festival. It is to be noted that out of 163 families surveyed nobody told that they have this important celebration in their community.

13. Gods and Goddesses

In Wanjari community the common deity is 'Gaodevi'. Besides this they worship Ran, Shankar, Balaji, Krishna, Hanunan, Saibaba etc.

In addition to this every sept in Wanjari community has a separate auspicious god which is worshipped viz.:

| <u>Sept</u> | | <u>God worshipped</u> |
|-------------|---|--|
| Pinpale | - | Peepal tree |
| Wade | - | Wad tree |
| Bore | - | Bor tree |
| Sankhye | - | Nagaweli pan (betel) and a silver rupee |

The above gods/deities are not practised in Banjara community.

In Banjara community they worship dead i.e. ancestors. They worship saints and some common deities like Lakha Banjara, Bavan Bamoad, Talaja, Mathurnal, Maryamma. In Mathura Banjaras they worship Shri Nayak Sinh who headed a Tanda in Gujarat. They also worship Khande Maharaj.

14. Panchayat System

Nowhere in 13 villages, the caste panchayat is in vogue. There is common Gram Panchayat to all which is doing developmental activities of the village in general.

In Banjara community, 'Gor' Panchayat System followed by Banjaras in Banjara Tandas or localities still retains its rigidity. The Tanda Panchayat is the first unit of Gor Panchayat and is administered by the following officials: (1) Nayak, (2) Karbhari, (3) Nasabi - Hasabi, (4) Daye Sane. These officials are helped by - (i) Dhadi, (ii) Navi, (iii) Dhalia and (iv) Singadia, who do the odd jobs connected with the working of the Panchayat. They collect the concerned people and make lodging and boarding arrangements.

There are five well-known Dharas (regions). These regions cover the entire part of Indian territory for its administration.

Statement showing the Financial Position of (Wanjaris) 13 villages

| Sr. No. | Village | Agriculture | | | Employment | | Other occupation/Annual income | Total Annual income |
|---------|-------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---------------|---------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| | | No. of families | Land owner (in acres) | Annual Income | How many persons employed | Annual income | | |
| 1. | Boisar | 14 | 44 | 44,600 | 7 | 46,980 | 91,580 | |
| 2. | Masvan | 35 | 78.5 | 1,25,200 | 12 | 1,20,840 | 2,48,440 | |
| 3. | Dukhtan | 7 | 15.5 | 25,800 | 3 | 20,400 | 46,200 | |
| 4. | Bandhan | 5 | 62.5 | 1,08,000 | 1 | 3,600 | 1,11,600 | |
| 5. | Murbe | 11 | 17 | 53,600 | 6 | 36,720 | 90,320 | |
| 6. | More Kuran | 17 | 31 | 68,000 | 9 | 31,200 | 99,200 | |
| 7. | Kolgaon | 12 | 20.5 | 43,100 | 10 | 60,000 | 1,03,100 | |
| 8. | Dapoli | 9 | 12.5 | 5,300 | 11 | 47,400 | 52,700 | |
| 9. | Parnali | 12 | 32.7 | 21,900 | 4 | 24,900 | 46,800 | |
| 10. | Kurgaon | 3 | 4 | 3,100 | 3 | 10,500 | 13,600 | |
| 11. | Pan Tonkhil | 13 | 22 | 15,500 | 7 | 51,200 | 66,800 | |
| 12. | Vengani | 11 | 27 | 15,600 | 5 | 40,800 | 56,800 | |
| 13. | Kumbhavali | 16 | 19.5 | 13,300 | 7 | 36,180 | 51,480 | |
| Total | | 165 | 386.7 | 5,42,500 | 85 | 5,32,720 | 10,78,520 | |

Average income per annum per family is Rs. 6537/-

With the mergence of different social groups of human beings each group evolved its own panchayat to settle social disputes. Some groups changed their social institutions to suit the need of the time, but the institution 'Gor Panchayat' that has remained for generations has not yet lost its originality in the Banjara community. This special characteristics of the Banjara community was totally absent in the Wanjari community.

20. Conclusion

Wanjaris must not be confused with Banjaras. Wanhari and Banjara are altogether distinct classes or castes though descended from the same stock. The Wanjaris conform in manners, customs, dress, religious activities, Gods and goddesses, festivals and celebrations etc. to the Maratha Kunbi community for the reasons explained in the foregoing paras. The Wanjaris are peaceful, law abiding and agriculturists. Their language, appearance, dress slightly vary owing to their different environments.

21. Educational and Economic position of Wanjaris

Information in respect of economic condition and educational standard of 165 families collected is given below:-

| | | | |
|------|----------------------------------|-----|------------|
| (i) | Literacy percentage | ... | 85.50 |
| (ii) | Annual average income per family | ... | Rs. 6537/- |

This Institute feels that there is nothing common in character, dialect, dress, ornaments, festivals, rituals, marriage practice, panchayat etc. between Wanjaris in Palghar and Dahanu Tahsils of Thane district and Banjaras

community in general. They are distinct from each other. Wanjaries residing in the tract have 85.50% literacy percentage which means they are not backward in educational aspect. The average annual income of each family is Rs. 6537/- which is quite a good supporting financial aspect to them.

In short, Wanjaries from this tract cannot claim to be Banjaras owing to the reasons explained above.

However, the view point may be examined in consultation with the enlightened Banjara persons for inclusion of Wanjari community into Banjara community before final decision is taken by Government.

Statement showing the educational and economic position of villages surveyed in general

| Sr. No. | Name of the village | No. of Families | Literacy Percentage |
|---------|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1. | Pen Tombhi | 13 | 84.81 |
| 2. | Kunbhawali | 16 | 90.72 |
| 3. | Murabe | 11 | 85.00 |
| 4. | Boisar | 14 | 88.61 |
| 5. | Parhali | 12 | 82.82 |
| 6. | Vengoni | 11 | 82.09 |
| 7. | Kurgaon | 3 | 81.82 |
| 8. | Dapoli | 9 | 75.00 |
| 9. | Morekuran | 17 | 78.95 |
| 10. | Kolgaon | 12 | 84.27 |
| 11. | Kaswan | 35 | 95.00 |
| 12. | Dukatan | 7 | 97.22 |
| 13. | Bandhan | 5 | 85.71 |
| Total | | 165 | 85.50 (Average) |