

HISTORICAL FACTS ABOUT MIGRATION OF BANJARAS TO HYDERABAD STATE

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ABSTRACT

India, a country with diversified cultural heritage, spread widely with various cultures, traditions, castes based on their respective professions. Banjaras a tribe in India, meant for their efficient logistics is a shining beacon to the nation's culture and are the best known for their migrating from one place to other in search of merchandise, with their Pack-Bullocks. They have shown path to various empires from north to south and are meant to be the outstanding service providers to the kings in showing path to them, as they themselves are the explorers of the places. To elevate their cultural richness a brief secondary research is carried out based on the previous scriptures, and many facts regarding these tribes have been unveiled during the study. The paper makes us to travel from 6th century BC to the current day and shows their importance in the past and present. Their significance and their participation while forming an empire, is clearly articulated in the paper.

KEY WORDS: Sugali, Banjara, Lambada, Commissariat, Migration, Bullocks, Travel, Up-liftmen

INTRODUCTION

Banjaras, a tribe with rich culture and heritage known for their logistics in past, they are the reasons for empires to fall or rise, besides they are known for their quality of exploring the nation and are meant to be the great service providers in the form of showing path to many kings like Mohammad-Bin-Tuglak, Shah Jahan, Allaudin Khilji and many more. However, historians have shown their importance in various scriptures and have mentioned how they have migrated from north-west to south, most of them have quoted that they have come to south in 600AD. In regard to their importance, a study is conducted based on the secondary data available, which shows us a clear path how these once nomads have turned to merchants in transport and migratory beings along serving various kings in wars and are true discoverers of nation and currently are good participants. Besides the study mentions about their active participation in freedom fight towards the nation and telangana which was ruled under the nawabs, their presence in Warangal and their active role in deciding the nation's future is also mentioned as they are efficient and effective people in Andhra Pradesh are great contributors for development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Historically, the Banjaras had been carriers of supplies and drivers of Pack-Bullocks. 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' brings back to 6th Century B.C. proves that this tribe lived even before the period of Budha. The Banjaras are known variously in different parts of the country as Sugali, Banjara, Vanjara, Lambada, Laman, Labhan etc., differences being phonetic variations of the same nomenclature. All the words except the first two are derived from the sanskrit word 'Lavana' meaning salt, which was one of their principal items of trade. The word Banjara is said to be derived from the Sanskrit word "Vanachara" or Wanderers of jungle and the 'Sugali' is derived from the word 'Sugwala' means a 'good-cowherd', and who produces good breed bulls. The name of the Sugali, Lamana or Banjara signifies neither an ethnic group nor a caste, since each group finds always the other inferior to them, but signifies only an activity as

wandering transporters. The sugali seems to be the most ancient. Since their migrations go as far back as the 6th 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. The Banjaras stopped their migrations towards west during the decline of Buddhism around 12th century A.D., before Moghul invasion. This period noted with a great isolation of agglomerations. Thus, the carvaneers found great possibilities of selling goods. They exchanged luxury articles for some time and that was given up to the benefit of items of food stuffs of duty necessities exchanged between towns and villages in North-West India.

The migration of Banjaras to the south can be traced out during the period of sultanate and during the invasion of Mughal on Deccan as well. Allauddin Khilji became the sultan of Delhi in the year 1296 A.D., he thought that he would become Alexander the second in conquering the world. In this adventure, he thought of taking the help of Banjaras, who could move fast along with their pack-bullocks and quick supply of rations to the armies of sultan. This system of speedy transportation in those days was difficult in trackless terrain and Banjaras stood in high esteem in the eyes of the sultan and his generals. Banjaras kept the well stocked provisions required by army. For their services in transporting ration to the armies they were granted many privileges, such as advancing money for their trade and asked to supply food grain whenever the state needed. There is no unanimity among the historians about the exact location or exact place from where this tribe spread to other parts of the country.

Mythological and historical accounts suggest that their homeland was somewhere in North-Western India and more likely in the Marwar region of Rajasthan, from where they spread in the historical past, in all directions to Kashmir in the north, Deccan and beyond in the south, and in the east to eastern Uttar Pradesh. It appears to be a mixed ethnic group and owes its origin to the wars in the southern India of the Delhi, emperors, both Afghan and Moghal. When the Banjaras carried the commissariat of the imperial armies, they helped the imperial armies fighting in an exhausted country far from their supply base, by conducting a fearless and reliable transport service. In view of their occupation the Banjaras may be referred to as non-pastoral nomads or service nomads. The association of the Banjaras with Muslim imperial Army can be traced back to the time of Sikandar Lodi's attack on Dholpur in 1504 A.D., from then onwards they supplied on the eve of every campaign in the south with grains and provisions. The armies in the war fields are fed by the Banjaras and they are never injured by either armies.

The Banjaras of Deccan often mentioned by Mohammedan and British historians have a long history of migrations. What distinguishes the migration of the Banjaras from the migration of other tribal groups is the fact that they never shifted their habitat as aimless wanderers rooted out of their native habitat by the invasions of a superior people or by the exhaustion of natural resources or livelihood in the original homeland. The earliest recorded evidence regarding this nomadic trading community is available in the personal narration of Mohd Fershta Bilgram's 'Tarikh-e-han-Jahan Lodi-e-Niamutullah' about 1612 A.D. According to Mohammad Kasim Ferishta in his work on 'History of the Rise of the Mohomedan power in India' in the year 1417 A.D., large convoys of Banjaras bullocks were seized by Khan Khanan who rebelled against Feroz Shah Bahamano to occupy the throne of Gulbarga. As carriers of grain for Mohammadan armies, the Banjaras figured in the history from the day of Mohammad-bin-Tuglak to Aurangzeb. They also supplied grains to the British army, British army under the marquis of Carn Wallies during the seize of Srirangapatnam in 1791-92 A.D.

According to the opinion of Kaul that Banjaras migrated to the south with the first Mohammadan armies, which invaded the south in 14th Century. Cumberlege, British historian, opines that Banjaras first came to the Deccan with Asaf Khan in the campaign which closed with the annexation of Ahmednagar and Berar by the emperor Shah Jahan about 1630 A.D. He further mentions that the immigration which settled the Banjaras upon the Deccan soil took place when these

grain carriers came down with the Mogul armies early in the 17th Century. Syed Siraj-ul-Hussan was of the opinion that the Banjaras came to the Deccan with the armies of Asaf-Jah, the Vazir Shahjahan, Prof.Haimendorf and Russel and Heeralal also have expressed the same supporting opinion that the Banjaras came to Deccan along with the forces of Asaf Khan.

From the above discussion it may be noted that majority of scholars are of the opinion that the Banjaras came to the Deccan with the armies of Moghuls which had been linked with Asaf-Jah's, sometimes called Asaf Khan, raid in 1630 A.D. It is also traced out that the migration of Banjaras took place during the reign of Shahjahan and also even during the campaign of Aurangzeb to the South. Asaf Jah, the Vazir of Shahjahan who came to the Deccan, was followed by Bhangi and Jhangi Naiks who had 1,80,000 bullocks and Bhagawandas, the Vaditya Naik had 52,000 Bullocks. They accompanied Asaf Jah carrying his provisions during his raid to the Deccan. Bhangi and Jangi Naiks of Rathod Banjaras formed the army commissariat of the Vazir. In or to keep up the supply of grain and fodder, they secured from Asaf Jah the following prescriptive rights engraved in golden letters on a copper plate:

“Ranjan ka pani, Chappar ka ghas;

Din ka teen Khun Maaff;

Aur jahan Asaf Jah ke ghore

Wahan Bhangi Jhangi ke Bail”

The above prescriptive rights say that Bhangi and Jhangi may freely have pots of water and grass for Chappars (roofs). Three murders a day will be pardoned because where Asaf Jah's horses (Cavalry) are, these Bhangi's and Jhangi's bullocks are present. This plate remains in the possession of the descendants of Bhangi and on the death of the representative of this family his successor would receive a Khilat from his highness the Nizam. Bhagavandas, the Naik of the Baditya Banjaras, was also said to have accompanied the army and asked for a similar right, which was refused. Based on the past identify of the Banjaras, and their wandering habits, they were classified as the gypsies of India. They are supposed to be descendants of the original Aryan gypsies of North West India, whose descendants are also to be found in various parts of central and southern Europe and America.

The Lambadas also called Sugalis and Banjaras, corrupt forms of sugawalis and Vanachars in South India, are excellent cattle breeders possessing expert knowledge of this profession. We have the authority of Orme for the information that Lambadas supplied Counte-da-Bussy, the French military adventurer, who carved out territory for his country in South India, during the unsettled times following the down fall of the Moghal Empire and its representative the Nizam, who ruled over Deccan, with stores, cattle and grain during the latter wars with the native rulers towards the close of the 18th Century. The Lambadas owing hundreds and thousands of pack bullocks, served as an efficient commissariat for the Moghul Armies in the year – long up and down marches from Delhi to Hyderabad, and subsequently settled along the Moghul Highways in regular hamlets, which they call ‘Thandas’ so that they might pursue their occupation of supplying food grains from time to time. Their original home is Rajasthan and a portion of Madhya Pradesh, where from they have found out into south India and settled there.

The Banjaras have given up nomadism and have become quite settled people. More writing about the Banjaras or Sugalis towards the close of 18th Century says that they associate chiefly together seldom or never mixing with other tribes. They seem to have no home, no character, but that to merchants, in which capacity they travel great distances to whatever parts are most in want of merchandise, which is the greatest part of Corn. In times of War they attend, and one of great assistances to armies, and being neutral, it is a matter of indifference to them who purchase their goods. They marched and formed their own encampments, relying on their own courage for protection and for which purpose the men are all armed

with swords and match locks. The women drive the cattle, and are the most robust undergoing a great deal of labour with apparent ease.

SETTLEMENT OF BANJARAS IN TELANGANA

General Briggs gives a longer period of migration spread over more than 400 years. There are certain incidents in the history showing that Banjaras came to the Deccan earlier than the Moghuls, who accompanied the army of Khilji under the command of Malik Kafur, who invaded Devagiri in 1304 A.D., and the Banjaras were the only source to supply the food grains to the army at the time of war during the reign of Allauddin Khilji. Juna Khan, popularly known as Mohammed – bin-Tuglak invaded south in 1323 A.D., and crossing the Vindhyas had become difficult for him because of the thickness of the forest. He found no means of transportation to enter into the south. Hence they required the services of Banjaras who were well equipped in moving from place to place with their pack bullocks even through thick forests and mountains. The Banjaras who employed by Mohammad-bin-tuglak in his invasion to Warangal, the then capital of Kakatiya Rulers. Tuglak defeated Prataprudra, the ruler Warangal in 1323 A.D., when Devagiri was already a part of the Delhi Sultanate.

This clearly explains that Tuglak might have come to the south Via Devagiri Sirbar(Sirpur) to Warangal. After the conquest of Warangal, most of the Banjaras stayed in Warangal and started trading in the south as it was not compulsory for Banjaras to return back to capital along with the army, since their services were required only at the time of war and during the rest of the time they were allowed to do their trade. The Banjara population concentrated in the regions where Tuglak marched to Warangal. The concentration of Banjaras is in the areas Viz., Devagiri (Daulatabad), Aurangabad and Mandvi in Maharashtra, Adilabad district of Andhra Pradesh is also more populated by the Banjaras.

The Banjaras population in Warangal district of Andhra Pradesh is more in the Telangana districts when compared to other districts of Andhra Pradesh. When the Moghal emperors consolidated their position in the south, the Banjaras settled in different parts and continued their trade and served as connecting links between the south and the north. It is believed that Banjaras acquire their criminal habits when they provided commissionerate services to the Moghul and British armies. The Lambadas are aware that their forefathers were migrants from North and but they were not definite whether they came along with the Moghul armies or not. Many households in the Banjara Thandas possess old swords.

They may be some truth in their assumption, but the swords armour, shields and other material cannot completely prove their participation in the wars as regular soldiers. Even the people who followed the armies from place to place supplying grains during the war required some equipment to protect themselves from the enemies who might try to disrupt the commissariat services which were as important as any other war for efficient functioning of the army. It is interesting to note that the Banjaras of Telangana are quite aware that they were migrants from north. The Banjaras of Telangana are always in the picture even during the time of Nizam providing commissariat services to the Nizam armies and they were better known in Telangana due to their criminal activities than in Andhra. In Telangana they were moving with Nizam's armies. In Hyderabad where one of the colonies, Banjara Hills was the one of the Banjara settlements spread over five main Thands, called Erna Thanda, Seethya Thanda, Bhukya Thanda, Amaraiah Thanda and Ajameera Thanda, two additional thandas Jhangi and Bhangi Bhukya Thandas located in the city of Hyderabad. All the Thandas were forcibly evacuated by present residents and were developed into luxury residential colonies.

A door in Golkonda towards Hyderabad had been named as 'Banjara Dharvaja'. Bhungeons of women's college residence, Hyderabad (koti), were looked after by Banjara warehouse men. Surplus food grains amination, weapons were stored by Banjara in those Dhungeons along with the prisoners, horses and cattle. Most of the moving guards appointed by the local nawabs were the Banjaras to watch the prisoners and stored surplus commodities. Banjaras also served as the main

messengers for the army chiefs. When the services of Banjaras were discontinued due to the development of road transport and railways, the Nizam took many welfare measures to rehabilitate them away from criminal activities. So they have got a tradition of continuing the occupation of their forefathers, where as in Andhra once they settled no demands were made on them for commissariat services.

Kamala Manohar Rao says that with the advent of the British rule, the Banjaras gradually lost much of the trade because of the introduction of the Railways. The Railways had destructive repercussions on their trade and livelihood. Further, he states that they were forced to abandon their professions and seek fresh means of livelihood. They adopted agriculture as their occupation. The Southern environments had a conspicuous effect on their manners, customs and practices. They began consciously or unconsciously to copy the local people. Gradually they lost their nomadic Character. (Kamala Manohar Rao p. 1950 p.18).

TRIBES OF THE MODERN PERIOD

The Modern Period starts with the advent of the British rule in the country. When the Britishers first entered Chotanagpur they had to face fierce opposition from the tribals. Subsequently the tribals exposed to atmosphere and had to face many conflicting situations of a tensional nature, as a good many neo-settlers like money-lenders, users, etc., gradually came in and tried to exploit them in various ways. Encroachment of forest by alien groups and the Government led to the cessation of the right of sole occupation. The forest contractors began to carry away a part of the forest produce. The land settlement policy of the Britishers also affected the system of tribal ownership.

Oppression of the usurpers and Mahajans, grasping enhancement of the rent by landlords, etc., ultimately led to a number of disturbances and uprisings. These were started in 1772 by the Mal Paharias and there followed a series of disturbances in 1795, 1800, 1801, 1807, 1808, 1816, 1821 and rebellion in Bengal between 1787 and 1830. In 1831-32 followed the great Kol rising. The rising was suppressed regulation XIII of 1833 was passed and Chotanagpur was declared non-regulating areas. This was the beginning of the isolation policy of the Britishers. The Khond rising in 1846, the Santhal rebellion in 1854, the unrest in Dhanbad in 1869-70, etc, extended the non-regulating system. In a due course, idea of a district and special arrangement for isolated areas got acceptance.

In 1874 the Scheduled district Act was passed under which the Executive was given wide powers. Still a few rising like Sardari agitation in 1887, Birsa movement in 1895, Tana Bhagat movement in 1914, etc. came up and were quelled by then, the tribals started taking part in the National Freedom Movement launched by Gandhiji. The tribals in different regions of the country were not satisfied with the rulers who wanted to protect them as well as themselves. As a result the Government of India Act 1919 was passed and two types of exclusions came into force, viz., 'Wholly excluded Area' and 'Area of Modified Exclusion'. The growth of freedom movement was a hindrance for the rulers. The Simon Commission (1928) also suggested two categories for the tribal tracts and in 1935 an Act was passed to incorporate 'Excluded Areas' and 'Partially Excluded Areas'. Reservations were made for the tribals and a few other sections of the Indian population. No act of the then Federal Legislature of the Provincial Legislatures would apply to these Scheduled areas.

The tribals are a freedom loving people. They defy restrictions and frown at any impositions. The British in their zeal to spread their tentacles throughout the length and breadth of the country also began to interfere with some of the tribals. The missionaries penetrated through the hospitals and schools with the active support of the Governments. From time to time the tribal people began to resist the interference of the missionaries or the Governmental authorities and began to assert themselves. There are several instances where they organised themselves properly and were determined to

challenge the authorities from their hide-arts and also with their bow and arrow. They began their invisible war against those who were trying to interfere with their culture and manners and freedom. In the British period the tribals faced another encroachment in the form of conversion to Christianity by the missionaries who accompanied the rulers, in the name of serving the tribals. This helped the tribals in their education and health but created factions among the tribals of different regions who were now divided into two sections, i.e. tribals and Christian tribals. In the North-Eastern Himalayan regions the major tribal population was converted. In the pre-independence period of the national movement social workers penetrated deep into the tribal areas and got an encouraging response. Among them the Bhil Seva Mandal of Thakkar Bapa is pioneer. The tribals reposed confidence in Mahatma Gandhi and other national leaders. They also took part in the national freedom movement.

The tribals also did not escape the attention of a few ethnographers, historians and anthropologists among the learned British administrators who were the first to study these people. After fetching independence in 1947 our national leaders have concentrated much on the upliftment of the tribals. Many all India Organisations of the tribals were formed. The Bharatiya Adimajati Sevak Sangh was also established to help the tribals. Article 46 of the constitution of India bestows special care on the welfare and upliftment of tribals in our country. The isolation policy was rejected outright and instead a policy of integration of the tribals with rest of the people was adopted. Huge amounts were earmarked in different five year and yearly plans for the welfare of the tribals. As a result the tribals are now passing through a phase of development with the rest of the country. The development works and industrialisation have helped the tribals get alternative jobs. They have further created an atmosphere of higher aspirations.

CONCLUSIONS

To conclude that Banjaras or Lambadas are the most efficient among the tribes of Andhra Pradesh. Among the other tribes which are numerically small and scattered over different areas of Andhra Pradesh, the Banjaras occupy a significant place. As the unlisted tribals of the adjoining states, many of the Banjaras or Lambadas migrated into the bordering districts such as Adilabad, Karimnagar, Warangal, Nizamabad and Nalgonda.

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