



## **GENDER EQUITY, WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN BANJARA COMMUNITY;**

### **Author**

**Mr.LaxmanaNaik H**

Research Scholar & Assistant Professor of Sociology  
Government First Grade College,  
Narasimharajapura. Chikkamagaluru-577134

### **Co-Author**

**Dr. Smt. ManjulaChalawadi**

Associate Professor,  
Karnataka Arts College  
Karnataka University. Dharwad

### **Abstract**

Socio economic discrimination and exploitation of weaker section by the dominant groups on the basis of factors like status , income level , race, caste , religion , nationality , gender, education etc. has been regarded as a universal future with its conspicuous presence in developing economies Asia and sub Saharan African countries. IN India people have been subject to discrimination and exploitation since times immemorial. It is a evil impeding national integrity and unity. It has resulted in conflict and friction right from local regional to international situations. Public authority in many countries has been trying to put an end to this discrimination by bringing about May policy regulation. But the crux of the issue is that unless there is attitudinal change in people's perspective it's perhaps next only to impossibility to solve the crises. This article examines various facets of discrimination as well as impact. It focuses the banjara community in Shivamogga district and exhibits silver line with the hope that there is improvement in social attitude and intensity of discrimination is gradually fading in socio economic aspect. This community has registered substantial transformation over the years to a attain and enjoy a better socio economic status. But discrimination persists in blood of human beings.

Keywords: Socio economic discrimination, exploitation, attitude, Government policy



## **INTRODUCTION**

In terms of origin and geneses all men and women are equal according to nature except for biological reasons. While birth of a child into any family or caste or community or Nationality is not the choice of the baby its belongingness to a nation or community or caste or family is determine by many factors like location, society, environment etc., Thus by birth they does not exists any discrimination among people. But after birth the baby acquires all factors that distinctively distinguish the belongingness or other wise of the child. It is the societal dogmas and such other factors prompted by dominant social system since ages that distinguish people on the basis of gender, sect, color, creed, language, nationality etc., There are historical evidences to prove that intended discrimination existed in the past at all times in all societies across the globe. Thus a broader society consists of groups of people claiming distinction or differentiation among themselves. This is a clear case of paradox.

A country or nation has come up with a claim of establish nationality with definite geographical boundary and administrative mechanism. This could be acceptable on the ground of regional variation or distant factor. We have around 200 countries in the world today in support of this argument. Each country or nation always aspires and attempts to maintain, promote, foster and sustain its independent identity as a force to reckon with for participation in international and intercontinental affairs. We can consider an example India is a country like any other in this universe. Indians have nationality and citizenship. An Indian move within the geographical boundaries of our country without any restrictions unless otherwise prohibited. But if he wants to go any other part of land (Nation) he is not allowed to move at his whim and fancy. He needs to take permission to do so. The permission could be in the form of Passport, visa or any such other requirement. It is at the discretion of the receiving country that such mobility of people is possible. These restrictions have been legalized, accepted and approved by all governments. However this limitation can be considered as a matter of national integrity without any sense of discrimination. Nationality and Citizenship become crucial factors. There are differences among countries of the world in terms of level of development or progress in



socio economic sphere. The administrative mechanism adopts appropriate policies to protect and safe guard the integrity of a country.

The basic structure or formation of human beings is determined by racial factor. In course of time, as revealed by history over the years, people belonging to a particular race openly declared and attempted to claim superiority over all the others. The reason was unfounded. Who gave the authority to do so is an unanswered question even today. But the seeds of discrimination are so strong and deeply percolate in to human minds making it very difficult to unite them as a single non discriminatory pool of population. There are instances of racial was fought in the past. However this kind of discrimination was among countries and had little or negligible impacts are internal affairs and political system within a country.

The discrimination that I would like to focus on is internal in nature and inherent within the socio economic fabric of a country. The constitution of a country professes equality of all people without giving scope for any discrimination. This is the legal frame work. But in reality the society is pluralistic and divided in nature. There are in numerable heterogeneous factors in a society that create vast differences among groups of people within the geographical boundaries of a country like India. This has been in existence since times in memorial. We claim to have unity in diversity but the factors provoking diversification always deviated or bifurcated people on various aspects. This is imminent and unavoidable. This is regarded as a universal future. How can India be an exception?

### **What is discrimination?**

Let us first understand meaning of the word discrimination. It implies treating one person or group worse than others. It simply means the state of being able to see a difference between two people or things. It becomes very difficult to find out whether discrimination has emerged naturally or deliberately. A set of human beings living in the same society look down upon another set of people for no reason. The peculiarity of this explanation is how is it that a



particular group of persons always attempt to establish superiority over the other groups. More over this tendency has been in vogue from a very long period of time. There are various types of discrimination found in our society. They are as follows.

1. Age Discrimination.
2. Disability Discrimination.
3. Sexual Orientation.
4. Status as a Parent.
5. Religious Discrimination.
6. National Origin.
7. Race, Color and Sex.

**1. Age Discrimination:** On the basis of age there are many classifications like super senior citizens, senior citizens, adults, teenagers, children etc., The general classification is young and old. While young claims to be more youthful and powerful, stronger and energetic, enterprising and vibrant, the old claims to be highly experienced having seen the world for a longer period of time. If the old does not have adequate resources the younger generation takes a jolly ride on the old.

Similar discrimination is found in work places as well in the form of seniors, juniors, probationers, trainees etc., Although this segregation breeds internal and invisible envious attitude it has been accepted on the grounds of administrative hierarchical system. In addition there is positional discrimination in the form of officer and worker, senior officer and junior officer, skilled worker and unskilled worker, regular employee and contract employee etc.,

**2. Disability Discrimination:** A serious kind of discrimination found in our society is on the basis of ability or disability level. There are many differently abled persons in any society. Although the government extends many protective measures to these people they are not treated



as equal by fully able persons. There could be compassion and consideration towards differently able people. But discrimination is bound to prevail. Persons with disability always tend to develop a sense of inferiority complex which could affect their performance and productivity.

**3. Sexual Orientation:** Sexually oriented discrimination can be dubbed as gender based discrimination. Although gender is a social construct since times immemorial the dominant male population forcibly establishes upper hand over feminine people. In the recent past the educated and well of women have fought for gender equality. This has assumed the form of global revolution. It's true that in western society gender based discrimination has come down substantially but in most of the Asian countries, Africa and Sub Sahara Nations gender based discrimination persists and has been accepted as more or less normal phenomenon. Another addition to gender based discrimination is people belonging to trans gender group. This group is looked down upon by both men and women with the sense of undeclared ban or prohibition.

**4. Status as a Parent:** In families in our society we have a special kind of socio familial discrimination. While man is regarded as head of the family all the others are expected to be loyal to him and follow the principles stated by him. While husband has an upper hand wife is at the receiving end. Parents and children can be considered another instance of discrimination. If children exhibit unruly behavior or do not show respect to parents it is considered as an offence and is punishable some times. Parents always desire to prove that they are dominant and their decision is final and justifiable.

**5. Religious Discrimination:** One of the major aspect of discrimination in mankind is religious discrimination. This is kind of discrimination has assumed the form of communal discrimination ending in communal riots and social discomfort as well as disorder. Nobody knows what aspect or point provokes a particular religion to claim its superiority over other religions. The followers of these religions fight among themselves creating great problems to the



administrative machinery. This has become a global phenomenon. Any attempt to curb this has become a futile exercise. Political motives, it is argued encourage religious discrimination. This has led between clash between followers of majority religion and the minorities.

**6. National Origin:** one of the problems face by the people of one country in other countries is on the basis of the origin of Nationality or citizenship. There is international mobility of persons from one country to the other for various reasons. But the natives do not like and encourage influx. The visitors are always looked at with an eye of suspicion and discrimination. If these peoples stay there for longer period of time they are treated as uninvited and unwanted second grade citizens. The natives always tried to hold an upper hand over foreigners and these foreigners tend to become victims are fall prey to the foul tricks of the natives. Officially there is order that they should not exist discrimination philosophy on the basis of nation hood but the social system has not given its acceptance. Sometimes this kind of discrimination creates international crises followed by strained international relations.

**7. Race, and Color:** Racial discrimination is a serious issue and have given rise to international feud. People belonging to a particular race historically claimed that they have been the most superior without any kind of infiltration or degeneration. In fact, a war was fought in the past on this ground. Puritanism is the basis for argument which does not sound sensible at all. At the same time there are people who encourage and recognize discrimination on the basis of racial factor. It has been seriously criticized and admonished by international organizations. Added to this is discrimination of people on the basis of color and appearance. There is hatred between the whites and the blacks. The blacks were once upon a time regarded as uncivilized, less cultured, and unsophisticated and were fit to the slaves. Many clashes have taken between two groups to establish supremacy. The fight continues even now and hatred persists all over.



8. The discrimination between the haves and the have not's or the rich and the poor is basically socio economic in nature. This gave scope for slavery and bonded labor in the past. The rich consider themselves as the blessed once and they look down upon the poor. The rich believe that the poor are meant to serve them. They believe so strong that even if there is any emergence of leadership among the poor it is not easily accepted or recognized by the rich. This has combine with discrimination based on caste factor and level of education. In other words people want one reason or the other to promote or encourage socio economic discrimination. According to Dr. Gowdagere N.Rao this is nothing but a great social divide leading to disunity and dis-integrity

### **Effects of Discrimination.**

There are many evil consequences of discrimination mentioned above. Discrimination affects unity and harmony. It may affect national integrity. It leads to social group clash on the basis of caste, gender, possession, religion and communal factors. It creates a big obstacle to administrative machinery in maintenance of internal law and order. It breeds hatred. It creates a opportunity or scope for exploitation of all kinds. The exploited or the oppressed size is very larch and it might create a big obstacle to the process of socio economic development by proposing constant demand for provision of social justice and economic equality. There are instances of the dominant group imposing social ban on the weaker groups coupled with ill treatment, vulgar language admonition , physical assert, sex abuse etc., Therefore there is need for putting end to discrimination, which of course looks impossible.

Case Study: Here is a reference to two localities in which the Banjara or the Lambanis are the largest group of people as dwellers. These two tanda's are Biliki in Bhadravathi Taluk and Abbalagere in Shivamogga Taluk. These localities are called Lambani Tanda's and they have been in respective tanda's for decades. These people enjoyed the reservation facility and protection measures granted to Scheduled Caste People in the state of Karnataka. There are 172 Banjaras families in Biliki Tanda and 207 families in Abbalagee Tanda. These people share common tradition, speak common language and have similar food and life habits typical to



Banjara people. Although they belong to scheduled caste category they consider themselves superior within the group and they do not associate themselves with other communities in village as for as housing is concerned. It implies that in a Tanda only lambani people live together and there is no entry to others. However in the recent past some families belonging to other scheduled caste have created dwelling facilities for themselves a bid away from the Tanda in the same village.

**Table No 1**

**Number of families and size of population in Biliki Tanda in 1960 and 2018**

Sl. No	Description	1960	2018
1	Number of families	17	172
2	Population size	96	918
3	Number of males	61	503
4	Number of Female	35	415
5	Matriculate	01	204
6	Graduates	00	89
7	Average income(PA)	720	41680
8	Numbers of Schools	00	03
9	Employees	07	631
10	Water facility	00	04
11	Panchayath office	00	Yes
12	Toilets	02	869
13	Number of women employees	00	207
14	Elected members	00	04 of 09
15	Street light and roads	NA	YES



Table No. 2

Number of families and size of population in Abbalagere Tanda in 1960 and 2018

Sl. No	Description	1960	2018
1	Number of families	23	207
2	Population size	131	1462
3	Number of males	61	703
4	Number of Female	70	759
5	Matriculate	02	637
6	Graduates	00	357
7	Average income(PA)	680	43862
8	Number of Schools	00	02
9	Employees	01	859
10	Water facility	00	04
11	Panchayath office	NA	Yes
12	Toilets	02	
13	Number of women employees	00	389
	Elected members	00	05 of 13
14	Street light and roads	NA	YES

In order to examine transformation that took place in socio economic status of banjara people in these two taluks, the author visited the Tandas, lived with them for a couple of days to develop familiarity. Subsequent visits were made to gather information and response regarding progress in Tanda life. The author confesses that data pertaining to 1960 may be far from accuracy as people could respond to this as it came to their mind. The older generation is in very small number to recall living conditions. But the position in 2018 in these two Tandas gives us an impression that considerable progress has been registered thanks to government efforts and financial support. These two Tandas are close to urban places like Bhadravathi (taluk and



Shivamogga) district head quarters respectively. Quite naturally the impact of urbanization is quite evident on these Tandas. The situations could be slightly different in remote Tandas.

As revealed in the table in the recent years there is drastic improvement in the socio economic status of banjara families. They enjoy benefits of reservation and have focused on community development. The number of education person has increased considerably. They are in no way inferior to other urban families in terms of resources and capacity. They have received modern social benefits like school health services, drinking water, better road and good power supply. Schools have been started in these Tandas and children go to near by urban for English medium learning and colleges for higher education. However in these Tandas the older generation women wear traditional robes and men wear dhoties. They have not given up their custom as regards festival and drinking of alcohol even by women. However the new generation has developed taste and inclination towards modern apparels. Some families have acquired landed property and some have started business ventures. The younger generation freely mixes up with all other community and they have not had the bitter experience of great degree of social and economic discrimination that their parents and grand parents were subjected to. Both men and women go out for livelihood and number of women working outside has gone up. The level education and awareness must be regarded as main factors responsible for the upliftment of these two Tandas. It is astonishing to note that, as confessed by Tanda people in the latest 25 to 30 years there is no single case of communal exploitation in this region. However gender discrimination persists. This information was gathered by the author during his visit and interaction with Tanda people. There could be some over estimation and over casting in response given by the Tanda dwellers. But signs of improvement are clearly visible as lambani women have a free interplay with the nearby urban people like others. However the communities have not become stronger to represent themselves politically in important elections.

### **Conclusions:**

On the basis of analysis carried out here we get a rosy picture about the better socio economic status of banjara people in our society. It may be also true that the younger generation



does not involve in socio economic exploitation and all could appear to be interacting and interplaying with one another without any feeling of inhibition or expulsion. But caste and religion base exploitation is as predominant as general discrimination in any other rural locality in India. While gender discrimination is a matter concern within banjara community socio economic discrimination based on caste and religion is general social issue of serious concern which needs to be addressed positively and effectively. The government shall be required safeguard the interest of banjara women in particular and banjara community in general. Stricter of enforcement of rules and regulation on people who practice and propagate perhaps might go a long way in mitigating the crises of socio economic discrimination based on caste and religion. Finally it can stated that according Dr. GN Roa. Education and awareness is the best remedial measures to eradicate caste – religion based discrimination. Dr. Dhananjaya goes a further step forward. In his opinion there should be no separate inhabitation for banjara people and they must be encouraged to live together with other communities in society. Let us hope for the best in the interest of nation building process.

#### Books for reference

1. Naik, Chandrashekar and ParameshaNaik D (2012) Banjara Stastical Report Karnatka State, India, [www.abbss.webs.com](http://www.abbss.webs.com)
2. Rathod, Tanaji (2012) Banjaras, The Forgotten Children Of India: Banjaras, the Forgotten Children of India: History unearthed, Karnataka Thanda Development Corporation Ltd, Bangalore, [www.banjarathanda.kar.nic.in](http://www.banjarathanda.kar.nic.in)
3. Rathod, Govind (2014) Progress of Banjara In 21st Century after Independence, Banjara, September 15, [www.m.goarbanjara.com](http://www.m.goarbanjara.com)
4. Rathod, Motiraj (2014) Ancient History of Gor Banjaras, Banjara News, August 26, [www.m.goarbanjara.com](http://www.m.goarbanjara.com)
5. Self Study History (2015) Economic Life- Patterns And Prospects, Medieval India, January 3, [www.selfstudyhistory.com](http://www.selfstudyhistory.com)
6. Singh, Vishnu Pratap (2002) Banjaras are Ancient Tribes not Rajputs, Presidential Remarks, All India Banjara SevaSangh, New Delhi, India, August 20, [www.lambadiwala.tk](http://www.lambadiwala.tk)



7. Travel (2009) Lambani Tribe (Western India), Weblog, Tribes of India, July 8, [www.tribes-of-india.blogspot.in](http://www.tribes-of-india.blogspot.in)
8. Varady, Robert Gabriel (1979) North Indian banjaras: Their evolution as transporters, South Asia: Journal of South Asia Studies, May 8, 2:1-2, [www.tandfonline.com](http://www.tandfonline.com)

