



# Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Living Practices of Banjara Community

**Dr. Saraswathi V\***

Assistant Professor, Dept.of Education & HRD, Dravidian University, Kuppam-517426, Andhra Pradesh, India.

\*Corresponding Author

DoI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15706956>

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## Abstract

India is a country of unity in diversity, home to people of different castes, religions, languages, and regions, each with their own unique cultural traditions. The people of India respect and preserve their culture, traditions, and customs, maintaining a sustainable lifestyle on this land. To share the richness of Indian culture with the world, every citizen must respect, protect, and preserve these cultural traditions, passing them on to future generations while showcasing the greatness of our heritage. We should inform others about Indian music, painting, clothing, food habits, arts, architecture, literature, and values, for culture is what connects us to humanity; without it, we become like animals. In this context of cultural heritage and sustainable living, I will discuss the way of life of the Banjaras, focusing on their cultural traditions, customs, marriage system, dress, and food habits. Furthermore, I will explore the disappearing aspects of their marriage system, dress, and food habits. And I will explain the ways to preserve and preserve the traditions of Banjara culture.

**Keywords:** Banjara Traditional Practices, Customs, Marriage System, Dress, Food Habits, Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Living.

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## 1. Introduction

The Banjaras are nomadic people originally from Rajasthan, who have since settled in various regions across India, including North-West Gujarat, Western Madhya Pradesh, and the Eastern Sindh province of pre-independence Pakistan. They are also known by other names, such as Lambadi, Gormati, Vanjara, and Gor, and are now distributed throughout the Indian subcontinent. The Banjaras commonly refer to themselves as "Gor" and "Kor," while outsiders refer to them by different terms. Their language, known as "Gor boli," "Gore Wate". Banjaras, has its own distinct dialect and belongs to the Indo-Aryan group of languages. Lambadi, however, does not have a written script. Today, most Banjaras are bilingual or multilingual, adopting the predominant language of the regions in which they live.

The Banjaras are believed to be descendants of the ancient Indus River civilization, one of the world's oldest, where many nomadic tribes once lived. As part of the Indo-Aryan race, they speak a language closely related to Sanskrit and Hindi. Traditionally, the Banjaras lived in "Thanda" (temporary settlements), maintaining a distance from non-Banjara people. The community prioritized collective well-being over individual interests, with the "Naik" (the head of the community) leading the main matters of socio-political and religious life. The strong sense of kinship and the relationships between clans or sub-clans further reinforced their communal way of life.

## 2. Banjara Administrative Position in Thanda

Naik : President, Karbhari : Secretary, Davo : joint secretary, Hasabi : Treasurer,

Dawsan : Advisor, Asami : Member, Dhaliya : Thanda Musician, Sanar : Thanda Gold

Smith, Dhadi : Genealogist, Geriya : Holi Organizer

Naik- A Leader/Achie for a Governor who exercises command over a group of people.

Naik da - Group of Naiks

Thanda- Village

In the judiciary system the dispute of two rivalry group will be solved by the "Panch" comprising of Naik, Karbhari, Dawasan and they do "Hassb-Nasab" in the meeting called "Malao".

### 3. Banjara Culture

Banjara culture is diverse and unique, with distinct differences based on the regions where they live across India. Their language, food, clothing, jewelry, art, dance, body tattoos, celebrations, and overall cultural practices set them apart from other communities. Despite the challenges of modernity, the Banjaras continue to follow their traditional way of life, maintaining their culture, customs, and practices. They live in groups, and their communication with one another is primarily in "Gor boli," their mother tongue, which further strengthens their cultural identity and community bonds.



#### 4. Language

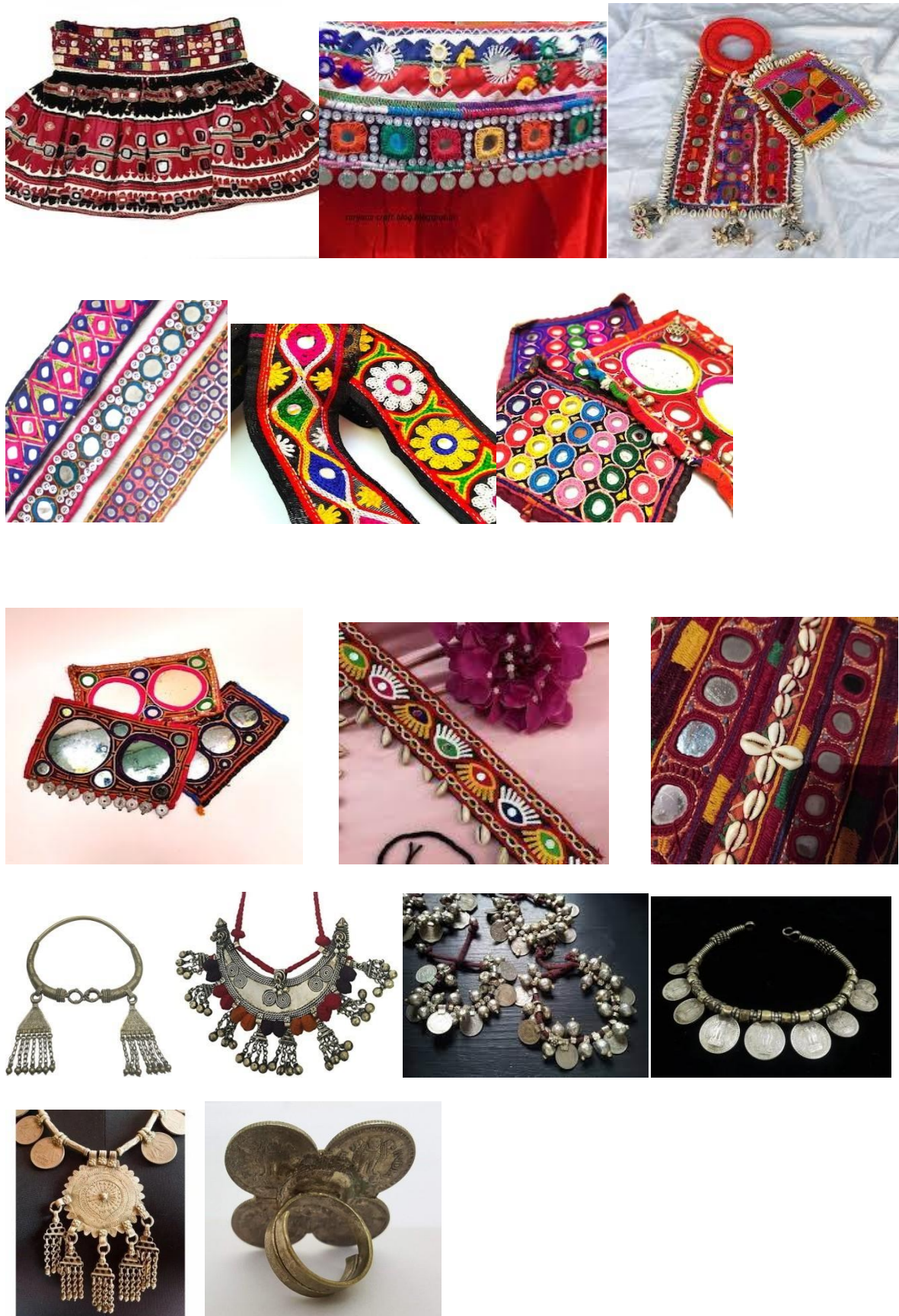
The language learned by drinking breast milk and looking at the mother's face is the mother tongue. This language, in which a child is born and raised, becomes their first language. The Banjaras live in an area called Thanda, where Gor Boli is their mother tongue. However, they express their thoughts and communicate in “GorBoli”, even though Thanda is the name of their region. In this area, no other languages are spoken. The Banjaras reside in villages far from each other, and as a result, their children also learn and use “Gor Boli” in their daily lives. They have access to education in their own language, ensuring they can learn and understand in it.

However, when Banjara students continue their education in school, they are taught in the regional official language, which is not Gor Boli. This shift to the official language poses a risk, as it might lead them to forget their native language. If this language is not passed down to future generations, there is a real danger of it disappearing. To preserve their cultural identity and language, Banjara students should be given the opportunity to study primary education in “Gor Boli”. This will ensure that their mother tongue is passed on and preserved for generations to come.

#### 5. Dress Style







The clothes and jewelry worn by Banjara girls and women are distinct and culturally significant, with noticeable differences between unmarried and married women. Banjara girls typically wear a Phetiya (skirt), Kali (blouse), and Tukre (Scarf), accessorized with various pieces of jewellery such as Gugra (anklet), Jhanjhariya (leg ankle rings), Chokdi (neck chains), Tikki (middle parting hair ornament), and Matli (bangle). Married Banjara women, on the otherhand, wear colorful dresses that are richly embroidered and adorned with mirror patchwork.

Their attire includes Phetiya, Kali, and Chantiya (veil), and they wear more elaborate ornaments, including Baliya (bangles), Kasautiya (armlets), Gagri/Topli (clips worn by married women), Pawlar Haar/Haasli (necklaces made of coins), Bhuriya (noserings), finger rings, Kolda (leg ankle rings). These items are unique to the Banjara community and distinguish them from other groups.

Banjara men typically wear a Dhoti, Kurtha or long shirt, and a Pagadi (turban) with multiple rounds. However, with the influence of modern trends, their traditional attire is gradually changing. developments, there has been a gradual change in the traditional dress and ornaments of Banjara women. The clothes worn by Banjara girls and women are made from glass beads, and their ornaments are crafted from silver, gold, and rupee coins. The intricate embroidery on their clothing is a testament to their skill and craftsmanship,

The Banjaras depend on agriculture for their livelihood and are often found roaming and living in the forests. The design and materials of their clothes serve a practical purpose as well. The reflective glass beads on their clothing help protect them from wild animals by

allowing the animals to see where they are coming from, as the glass reflects light. The mirrors in their attire also offer a form of protection by providing visibility.

The influence of the modern era and advancement in science and technology have significantly impacted the lifestyle, cultural traditions, and attire of the Banjaras. The Banjaras, who interact with non-Banjaras through education, work, and business, have started to adopt different styles of clothing compared to their traditional attire. As a result, there is a growing shift away from traditional Banjara culture, with many opting to follow the customs of non-Banjaras. This change is particularly evident among the younger generation, including young men, women, and adults, who no longer wear their traditional clothes. Instead, they are increasingly seen wearing the clothing commonly worn by non-Banjaras, while the elderly in the community are among the few who continue to maintain their traditional attire. If this trend continues, there is a real possibility that the traditional costumes and jewellery of the Banjaras will disappear within a few years. To prevent this, it is essential for the government to step in and provide support to help preserve their unique cultural heritage. By enabling the Banjaras to maintain and pass on their traditions, the government can play a crucial role in ensuring that future generations continue to connect with their cultural identity.

The government should provide market facilities for the goods produced by the Banjaras, similar to the support extended to handloom workers. By doing so, it can ensure that the products they create are used in various sectors, allowing the Banjaras to have access to broader markets and opportunities for economic growth. This support would help preserve their traditional crafts while also promoting their economic development.

If the government provides its encouragement, Banjara culture can be preserved and passed on to future generations. With the right support, the traditions, attire, and customs of the Banjaras can be safeguarded, ensuring that their unique heritage continues to thrive and remain a part of cultural history for years to come.

## 6. Food



The Banjara people primarily reside in forest and plain areas, where they depend largely on agriculture for their livelihood. The main crops they cultivate include pearl millets, (sajja), sorghum or millet,(jowar) finger millets,(ragi), black eyed peas, (alasandulu),Green gram (pesar), groundnut, horse gram, ( uluv),(korra), samu, red gram, (kandlu), as well as various vegetables like cucumbers, and others. These crops provide the essential produce that sustains their way of life, with the harvest from their



fields being a primary source of food.

Traditionally, the Banjaras consume foods such as Daliya (mixed cereal), bati (roti), saloi (made from goat or sheep intestines), and Ghuggari (boiled red grams).bajra, is typically eaten with chicken curry or greenleafy vegetables,forming an important part of their traditional diet.

## **7. Vegetarian**

Bhaji, Bhati, Lapasi, Kheer, Bhujma, Llapasi, Khadaho, Rabdi, Churmo.

## **8. Non-Vegetarian**

- Boti-bati
- Saloi
- Khariboti

## **9. Drinks**

- Dudh
- Gota
- Bhang
- Daru
- Sindhi

## **10. Marriage system of Banjara**

Social life holds significant importance in Thanda culture, particularly when it comes to marriage traditions. The Banjaras, an nomadic community, have historically traveled from one place to another for business, which led to the establishment of "Thandas" that were not fixed in one location. Despite their mobility, there was a strong sense of mutual cooperation between different Thandas. As a result, marriage relationships were formed between different Thandas, often involving individuals from the same Thanda.

Banjara weddings are unique and quite different from typical celebrations. Unlike the

usual three- or five-day weddings, a Banjara wedding can last for about 15 days and sometimes even extends over six months. In the Banjara marriage system, the selection of a partner is not based on personal choice. Instead, it is decided by the parents of the individuals involved and the Thanda leader. In this culture, the concept of a boy and a girl meeting and expressing their mutual interest is not practiced. Instead, four elders come together to choose the couple, considering various customs and rituals, and paying special attention to the character of the Thanda leader. The leader plays a central role in Thanda culture, as their reputation for good manners is highly valued. If the leader is known to have good manners, it is assumed that the entire Thanda community shares similar values, and thus the girl from that Thanda is considered an appropriate match.

The Banjara tribe is divided into four main clans: Rathod (Bhukya), Pamar, Chauhan (Chavan), and Vaditya (Jadhav), with several sub-clans within each. These clans are exogamous, meaning members are not allowed to marry within the same sub-clan, as they are considered to be like brothers and sisters. The Banjara community also follows a system of Jaath (tribe), Gotra (pada), caste, and sub-caste classifications. Specifically, the Pamar clan consists of 12 sub-castes.

The Chavan/Chauhan clan has 6, the Vadithya/Jadhav clan includes 52, and the Banoth/Aade clan has 15 sub-castes.

People of their own tribe are called Bhai Panwawaa. People of other tribes are called Segasan. If they are from the same tribe in a clan, they enter into marriage relations with people from other clans.

## 11. Important events in the marriage system of Banjaras



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The marriage system of the Banjaras is marked by important events and traditional rituals that hold deep cultural significance. These include the matchmaking process, engagement ceremonies, and wedding celebrations, all of which are rooted in the community's customs. Key moments in the marriage ceremony, such as the exchange of vows, the involvement of family members, and the communal participation in festivities, further emphasize the importance of these events in shaping the social fabric of the Banjara community. Some of the specific events in the marriage system include **Gwalkhayoro (Sagai Karero)**, **Karar Dharare Karero**, **Sadi Thandero**, **Telopherero**, **Ya Ya Bhandhero**, **Tiko Laga Dero**, **Tangdi Kadero**, **Kamariya Nokta Karero**, and **Garema Lero**, all of which contribute to the rich cultural traditions associated with Banjara marriages. These rituals and celebrations are integral in preserving the community's customs and values.

Considering the marriage customs followed by the Banjaras, it can be said that their traditions are completely distinct. However, in modern society, they have increasingly adopted the marriage practices of non-Banjaras. As a result, their traditional marriage system has become somewhat of a mystery. It is now the responsibility of the Banjaras to ensure that

future generations are informed about their unique marriage customs, preserving these traditions for years to come.

## 12. Festivals

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The important festivals celebrated by the Banjara people include Teej, Holi, Dussehra, Diwali, Sant Sewalal Maharaj Jayanti, Balaji (Sri Venkateswara Swamy Puja), Hanuman Puja, Sita Ram Puja, Lakshmi Puja, Bhog Bandar, and more. On the day of Teej, Goddess Sitala Bhavani is worshipped, while on Dussehra, Goddess Durga and Tulja Mata are honored. Lakshmi Puja is also performed during Diwali. Holi is celebrated with great enthusiasm, with people throwing colors, dancing, wearing their traditional clothes, and singing Holi songs in their language, making it a joyous occasion. These festivals play a significant role in preserving the cultural and religious heritage of the Banjara community.



### 13. Arts



Banjara women are known for their distinctive and vibrant attire, which they adorn with colorful threads, beads, mirrors, rupee coins, silver coins, and silver beads. Their clothing is carefully decorated to reflect their cultural identity. In addition to their clothing, they also tattoo their bodies in various shapes, further expressing their unique traditions. They create beaded garlands for their necks, using a variety of colored beads, and design them in intricate patterns, adding to the beauty of their traditional look. These decorative elements are an important part of their cultural expression and identity.



#### 14. Dance and Music



Dance and music play a vital role in the Banjara way of life. They celebrate festivals, weddings, and other auspicious occasions by singing and dancing to traditional songs in their language. The most important musical instruments in their celebrations are the drum and the “Nangara”, brass plate which set the rhythm for their performances. In addition to these traditional instruments, modern musical instruments are also incorporated into their dances, blending the old and new in their vibrant cultural expressions.

#### 15. Conclusion

The Banjaras, a community living in various states of India, have a rich and diverse cultural heritage. Their settlements, known as Thanda, are led by a community head called the “Nayak”, who guides the minadhering to their cultural traditions. While their mother tongue is “GorBoli”, Banjaras communicate with each other in a common language. The culture of the Banjaras stands out due to its unique language, dress, ornaments, food habits, music, dance,

and marriage traditions, which are distinctly different from the mainstream. However, Banjara culture, renowned for its artistic skills, is gradually diminishing due to the influence of modernity, particularly evident in changes to their dress and marriage systems. It is important to preserve and pass on this vibrant culture to future generations to ensure its continuity.

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