CHAPTER V

RELIGIOUS ORGANISATION

In the present Chapter an attempt is made to study the religious organisation of Lamans. Following aspects of Lamans religion are covered in this chapter.

1) The general description of Lamans religious life.
2) The mode of worship.
3) Festivals and fasts.
4) Description of deities of Lamans.
5) Ideas of pollution and purity.
6) Change in the religion of Lamans.

1) The general description of Lamans religious life:

Religion is connected with different aspects of Lamans life. Their religious beliefs and observations are inter-twinned.

The Lamans are polytheist, but non-idolator and non-totemistic. They have a very clear idea of different Gods who should be worshipped and who should be served with different sacrifices for personal or social welfare.

Lamans worship the sun, the moon, and the sky.

The religious beliefs and practices among the Lamans are related to the powers of ancestors, supernatural beings and benevolent deities. The Lamans believe that these supernatural beings give life, health and prosperity to the people and look after their general welfare.
The fundamental idea of the soul and its immorality underlies the religion of Lamans. Their religion is similar to Hinduism. They have borrowed many beliefs from Hinduism.

Their conduct is guided by superstitions and omens. Lamans attribute all natural calamities and the difficulties faced by them to the influences of evil spirits. They believe in superstitions and omens. The Lamans have no idea about retribution of good and evil in future.

According to them, there are many gods both benevolent and malevolent - present in hills, flowing rivers, stones and in different objects of nature. They think that nature is alive with unseen forces and that different types of gods have different power. Some gods are regarded as more powerful than by sacrificing of goats and offering liquor. They think that social and personal calamities are due to wrath of these spirits and gods. They provoke the blessing of god for any new endeavour.

Lamans believe in Omens. On the eve of all important events, omens are taken into consideration. They believe in dreams as gift from super-sensory powers. The common way of ascertaining good or bad omen, is by throttling fowl and observing the position of the leg of the dead bird. Another way of knowing about the omen is by dropping things just like coins on the floor. Further ways of omen ascertainment are hearing the birds from the right side,
which is considered to bring luck, but seeing a cat, crossing the road brings ill-luck. The woman with pot of full water crossing the road, is considered lucky.

If the omen is unfavourable, the Lamans like to appease the hostile spirits in order to avert the luck and to be fortunate in their endeavour. In this process, various animals specially goats of specific colour and type depending on the nature of sacrifice and customs are offered.

Lamans also believe in sooth-sayers, who predict the omen and also prescribe the remedy in case of bad omen. Regarding rebirth or life after death Lamans have no clear concept but they like other great civilization believe that soul does not perish with the body at death. It is believed that soul is immortal.

Stones are important objects of worship of Lamans. They believe that spirits, reside in them and almost all the Tandas have a 'Spirit stone' called Maruti, as defender of the Tanda either near the Tanda-gate or at its boundry. The religious ceremonies are conducted by Bhagat. The Office of the Bhagat is hereditary. He is responsible for keeping the geneological and traditional facts and figures related to the Tanda.
2. The Mode of Worship

The following is the traditional mode of worship. The gods, goddesses and godlings of different Laman panth are different in various Tandas. However, they are worshipped occasionally, seasonally and annually but hardly regular. Even deities which are kept in house are not worship daily. The occasions when the deities in the house are worshipped, are the first of the lunar month of Chaitra (New year day), the bright third of the lunar month of Vaishakha and the bright tenth of the lunar month of Ashwin (Dasera). In most of the worship places at Tandas no candles or lamps are lighted in front of the deity regularly. However, there is permanent place for collecting sacred ashes of scented fire (DHUNI). A photo of 'Dhuni' is given on page . Hardly anyone visits the worship place regularly. They visit these places occasionally for fulfilling some vows or some other important religious ties.

But now this traditional pattern of worship has changed. Lamans are now worshipping in the morning and once again in the evening. The common Hindu articles of worship, such as scented wick and flowers, are offered and the family members bow down before the deity with a prayer for the general
well-being of the family or for the removal of any future or current misfortune. A light, usually of edible oil lamp is kept burning nearby. This pattern is an adoption of Hindu customs.

Many people worship the flag of Tulja Bhavani Mata or Ambabai daily. On this occasion camphor and other scented wicks are lighted and the head is bowed down. But the idol of Tulja Bhavani Mata is given bath and worshipped only once in a year at the time of Durga puja the ninth day of bright Ashwin Hindu month. People visit yearly to Sevalal deity whose temple is situated in Akola District at Pohara Devi. Ancestor worship is done yearly on the first day of bright Kartik Hindu month. The family members bow down their heads before the deity with a prayer for the general well being of the family or removal of any disastor.

The popular Hindu gods, i.e. Datta, Mahadev, Ganapati are also worshipped by Lamans at present. It is due to the continuous contact with the Hindu people that they have started worshipping the above mentioned deities and gods. They offer coconut like Hindus do.

There are two divisions of deities. Sevalal is purely Lamans God. He is vegetarian and animals are not sacrifice! to him. But they offer sacrifices of goats and animals to Tulja Bhavani Mata.
They may worship with no specific purpose and simply follow the traditional customs. Since families do worship to get rid of worries and happiness to all the family members. Some worship for mental satisfaction or to get special favour from the God, and some reportedly worship for having a child. They offer prayers with an expectation of some positive good rather than to dissuade them from doing them harm. The devotion to Hindu gods led to the loss of faith in their tribal deities. Many of them reported that their deities had lost their spiritual powers and were powerless before Hindu gods who rule over the entire spirit world. Of the most popular gods of Hindu pantheon is Satyanarayan, in whose name vows are made by the Hindus, the majority of the Lamans had taken to the worship of the latter in the lunar month of Shravan (August) in fulfilment of a vow. They invite a Brahmin priest to conduct the rites (puja). The pictures depicting Hindu Gods and Goddesses in the houses of the Lamans suggest that they have accepted Hindu religious beliefs to a great extent. Many such practices of the Hindus have been adopted by the Lamans and their beliefs had undergone a drastic change. Some of the educated Laman families were so profoundly affected by some of the Hindu ideas
and beliefs that they had almost forgotten their tribal religion e.g. in Omega Tanda, a flag of Tulja Bhavani Devi or Ambabai or Seva Bhaya was not seen which is considered as most essential in any Laman Tanda.

Lamans visit with a few grains of rice or flowers or at least a small coin and scented wick and karpur and place them as offerings before the image of the God or deity. It is clearly the influence of Hindu custom. The belief that one should not go empty handed to a temple is an indication of Hinduization of the Lamans.

Being with Hindus some traditional practices are being changed. Among the beliefs and practices that have affected the socio-religious behaviour of the Lamans are beliefs in prognostic the dream, vow to god and practices like first ceremonial hair-cut of a male child, priest-cum-magician's or Bhagats treatment to sick persons, beliefs in evil eye and wild sorcery happened to be prominent. Lamans also believe in different types of evil spirits, witches and black magic.

Certain other religious and semi-religious practices like going to a temple either daily or occasionally, attending devotional-song programmes
or Bhajan, daily worship of household deities, annual observance of the day in honour of ancestors, fasting on certain occasions, paying visit to pilgrim centres traditionally revered by one's family, and indulging in annual sacrifice of a goat to propitiate an evil spirit are followed. The Hindu religious practices like fasting on certain occasions, such as Ashad Ekadashi - the bright eleventh of Ashad (July), Kartiki Ekadashi - the bright eleventh of Kartik (November), Maha Shivaratri - the birth anniversary festival of Lord Shiva on the thirteenth day of the dark half of Magha - (February), Sankasi Chaturthi - Monday of lunar month of Shravan (August) and Saturday of every week and worshipping family deity or Kul Devata are observed by increasingly more Laman families. Likewise, religious practices such as going to a temple every day or at least once in a week and attending Bhajan on Monday or any other day, are observed. The Laman religious practices such as a annual offering to the ancestors, paying visits to family and Tanda deities or gods, goddesses and godlings and an annual offering of a goat to placate an evil spirit or to ensure the power of witchcraft were observed.
It shows that the traditional Laman practices are becoming weaker while the common Hindu religious practices are becoming more and more popular among the educated Lamans. The Lamans believe that all misfortunes are due to the wrath of god or spirit and hence whenever a calamity like sickness, infantile death, epidemics etc. overtake the family, they confine the treatment to the propitiation of their deities and supernatural entities.

The study shows that sometimes Lamans take allopathic medicine as well as traditional Bhagat’s treatment for overcoming illness. Now most of the educated people are turning to allopathic medicines and less followed by uneducated Lamans. There were many Lamans who did not take any treatment at all. This also may be interpreted as a traditional habit of neglecting any disease in its initial stage. Thus there was a greater number of persons who relied on tradition or showed traditional outlook. But practice of invoking the supernatural deities for recovering from the disease is still prevalent among Lamans.
2. Festivals and Fasts:

Various festivals and fasts are observed among Lamans. Many of the festivals celebrated by Lamans are group gatherings and occasions of fun and merry making. In the forthcoming pages the important festivals observed by the Lamans are described, in their chronological order.

(i) Gudi Padva: (Chaitra bright 1; April):

The Lamans do not install Gudi nor conduct any puja-rituals as the Hindus do. On that day they prepare chappatties and offer them to their gods and goddesses before consuming. On next day of Gudi Padva, the goat is sacrificed commonly by Tanda people.

(ii) Ram Navami: (Chaitra bright 9; April):

On the day of Ram Navami religious songs (Bhajan) are sung. In the evening a sweet dish made out of milk is served in food. They do not celebrate the ceremony of birth of Rama, on that day.

On the Ram Navami day, a big fair sets it at Pohara Devi. This fair is held in the name of the Maramma devi. Lamans from all over India come to attend it and they number around one to one and a half lakhs. People vow offering and sacrifices to get their wishes fulfilled. Therefore, people come to fulfil it. Thousand of goats are given in sacrifice. On the precious day of Ram Navami
goat is sacrificed. 'Bhopya' (Bhaṭaṭ) takes the head of the goat and gives the body to the one who has sacrificed the goat. A person has to pay for his sacrificial goat. Next day offering prasadas of 'Sira' is prepared. It is offered to 'Seva Bhaya' the famous deity of Lamans.

The occasion of Ram Navami brings together the Lamans from all over India. Seva Bhaya is supposed to be the incarnation of Lord Rama.

(iii) Ashadi Ekadashi : (Ashad Bright 11 ; June ) :

Although traditionally fasts on Ashadi Ekadashi was not observed by Lamans, some do, as a result of the contact with Hindus. They visit Pandharpur as the Hindus do.

In the month of Ashad 'OOR' kar is performed. That is, money is collected from the members of Tanda and a goat is brought for feast. This is known as 'OOR KAR'.

(iv) Nag Panchami : (Shravan bright 5 ; July ) :

Traditionally the Lamans did not celebrate Nag Panchami nor do they have temple of Mahadev. But the Laman women go to the 'Teka' - a place where Cobra lives and put the offerings of milk and puffed Jawar for the Nag or Cobra. They sing and dance there. There is no other ritual associated with it.

(v) Gokul Ashtami : (Shreavan dark 8 ; August ) :

There is much variation in the way Gokul Ashtami
is celebrated by Hindus and Lamans. On this occasion Lamans worship Venkoba (Balaji). They offer rice and vegetable without salt. Homa-Puja is performed. There women are not allowed nor can they cook. Men have to cook.

(vi) Pola: (Bhadrapad dark 15: August):

Earlier to Pola festival they take a goat out of Tanda and perform 'Kar'. Naik is given privilege. The sacrificial goat is cooked in the earthen pot which belongs to Naik. Like Hindus, Lamans do not give bath to bullocks nor do they make offering of coconut.

(vii) Navaratra: Dasara: (Ashwin bright 9: Sept.):

Only those Lamans, who have the idols of goddesses like Durga, Maramma, Tulja or Hinglaja can install the 'Ghata' of Navaratra. Similarly a family of Bhagat can install 'Ghata'. Every night for nine days (till the day of Navami) Bhajans are recited in front of 'Ghata'. On the last day of Navami a goat is sacrificed and the people in Tanda are given food. Throughout the night the Bhajans are sung. In the morning, Bhagat gets possessed. He carries in his hand Neem leaf and termeric. During possession he answers all the questions asked by Tanda people concerning their calamities. The men and women of the Tanda bow down and pay respect to the Bhagat.

On the ninth day (Navami) goddess is decorated with flowers. Five sticks of sugarcane and Jawar are
arranged in the form of hut. Inside it, square and triangular designs are made out of red and yellow temperic. On these designs are placed the heart, liver etc. of the sacrificed goat as offerings. Similarly other offerings are prepared out of wheat or rice flour mixed with sugar and jugary.

During Navaratra a week is devoted to the worship of goddess. It is known as 'Saptah' or 'Khand'. During these days religious songs are sung. Members of a Tanda collect donations. Singers from other Tandas are invited to sing. All their travel and other expenditure is done through the donations collected. There is competition of Bhajans, and chronologically it is sung. First the Bhajans are related to Saints like Tukaram, Namdev, Mirabai etc. are sung. After that, Bhajan based on the life of 'SevaBhaya' followed by spiritual songs. There are also Bhajan depicting the changing social situations. At times competition between Bhajani groups are held. There is competition of quiz in the form of question-answer and the winners are given prizes. These groups are given feasts which may include sweets or goat meat.

According to Laxman Jadhav of Mulaj Tanda, on the first day of Navaratra, goddess is taken out in procession. The procession goes from Tanda to Tanda and returns to his Tanda. Except for these nine days of Navaratra and idol of goddess is kept covered in cloth and there are no ritual when the idol is covered. As procession goes
from Tanda to Tanda everywhere it is welcomed. The people in the procession are looked after by the Naik whose Tanda they are visiting. Everywhere the idol is worshipped and some donations (money) are given. After the procession returns to Mulaj Tanda, a feast of goat-meat is arranged. The expenditure of the feast is done from the donations gathered. How and where the procession is to be taken is guided by the Bhagat. At times, people just for fun and to judge the power of the Bhagat, play mischief. The deliberately tell the Bhagat about the existance of a ghost. If the Bhagat really has the power, then he will not be afraid to come and fight the ghost.

On its visit to different Tanda, the people in the procession take a overnight halt if wished by Naik. This procession lasts for six days and returns after a visit to Tulja Devi. The procession returns on the day of Navami and after Dasara, the goddess goes to sleep. The Bhagat can get possessed only till the procession lasts and not when the Goddess in sleeping stage. When the Bhagat gets possessed, the goddess which has entered into his body tells who will be his successor. Then whoever has promised offerings (Navasa) fulfils by sacrificing goat.

On Dasara day there is 'Simolanghan'. As stated
by a Bhagat Jadhav, 'Simolanghan' is done by Bhagat and Bhajani people, taking the 'Deities stick' to the river side or wherever the Bhagat says. Bhagat enters into the water with Lamon, bettlenut, five covaries, a Rupee coin and drops them in river. The other Bhajani people then have to search and to get them back. Bhagat would not allow them to come out of water unless they find the things. Then they give bath to the goddess and returns the Tanda. On returning journey, a condition is to be fulfilled, that is they should find or see a 'Nilkanth' or other bird. Bhajani people cannot return to Tanda unless the bird is found. After return they take food and go to rest.

(viii) Deepawali : (Ashwin/Kartik : November):

Diwali is celebrated with great pomp and show, by Lamans. It is celebrated according to their own custom. On the first day of Diwali, i.e. on the fourteenth day of dark 'Ashwin' Hindu month, they get up early in the morning and take bath. The last day of Aswin month is called 'Kali-Ammas'. On that day Lamans collect money to buy the sacrificial goat. The goat-meat is divided in equal parts and distributed among the houses of that Tanda. On the eve of Diwali, the unmarried girls in the Tanda are known as goddesses of Diwali. Girls wear new clothes and go dancing from hamlet to hamlet in Tanda. These girls gather at evening at the Naik's house, and ask him
to celebrate the Diwali. Then, Naik orders the Karbhari
to light-up the lamps in Tanda. After that lamps are
lighted-up in other houses of Tanda. Girls of Tanda
gather and take lamp in hand and go to each and every
house in Tanda. They are given money and jaggary by the
Tanda people. Girls praise Diwali through songs and wander
around the whole Tanda. It is called 'Mera Manger'. In
this way the day of Amavasya (Diwali) is celebrated.

On the next day of Diwali i.e. Kartik bright first
day of Hindu Calendar, Lamans worship their ancestors.
There is custom to remember ancestors on the eve of Diwali.

On this day nobody sweeps their varandhas and do not
remove the animal dung. All the girls in Tanda fast on
this day. They gather together at the Naik's house. The
idol of Diwali deity is made up of cow dung. Girls worship
this Diwali idol. It is called the 'Godhan Puja'. The
following folk song is sung at this time:
'Ooren oon gaiye= godhan puj,
Kewadya Mewadya dir malava", 1.

.......

On the day of 'Godhan puja' three separate Homas
are arranged. Out of these one is in the name of Diwali,
one for the dead ancestors and one in the name of mother-goddess.

1. "Rathod Motiraj, (Banjara Sanskriti published by :
(ix) Sankrant : ( Poush : 14 January ) :

On this day, Lamans go to the Tanda deity early in the morning carrying sesame mixed with Jaggery. They offer it to the Tanda deity. Afterwards a little of it is exchanged with others by greeting each. On the next day of Sankrant all the males go for hunting to the forest. This day is earmarked specially for hunting.

(x) Holi :

The holi festival is very important in Lamans. It begins on the first day of Phalgun the last month in the Hindu calendar, (March), and continuous upto 5th day of the dark half of the month. During this period games, particularly outdoor games are played by men and women. This is an occasion for revelry not for only Tanda people but other than Tanda people also. Non Lamans are also attracted largely towards this festival peculiarly celebrated by Lamans. Holi fire is not kindled at every home. It is a community affair. All the Tanda families has one common holi. It is celebrated by full spirit by all the persons of Tanda. Due to the Holi festival all had and good emotions come out. Before fifteen days of the holi festival, dancing and singing is started. All the nights arerowned in noise of duff (Musical instrument).

Young boys and girls become mad by dancing. They
dress by colourful clothes. They drink country liquor. During this period old persons in the Tandas also become young.

The peculiar characteristic of celebration of Laman Holi that, where their any son born at anybody’s in Tanda, the Holi is celebrated at the home of that person specially. The birth day of the son is celebrated on the eve of Holi festival, is called 'Dhund'. The groups, of young boys and girls are formed which called 'Garia' and 'Gerani' respectively. They reproduce their joyness through the dancing and singing all the night. The person belonging to 'Dhund', the sweets and chapati prepared at night by him. Males and females goes to -- every hut in Tanda by folk dancing and singing by group-wise. The boy who is to be married became the leader of young boys, who called 'Gerin'. All the night they dance and sing and kindled the holi at morning.

At morning, female worship holi. At whom house the birthday of the son is celebrated, at infront of that home, two wood pillars erected. These pillars are under the watch of female. These women prohibited the males by removing it, but according to custom the pillars should be removed by males. Males come with dancing and singing to remove the pillars. At that time women restrict to males from removing
the pillars by beating them. Geria feels happiness of Gemini's beaten. There is rule that the pillars should be removed by male even after severe beating. The win is depended on this only. Males try to remove it and at the same time women beat them. They mocked each other on the nudity level. At the last, males removed the pillar after too much beaten. Then the birthday of son is celebrated and name ceremony is done. At this time peculiar folksongs are sung which called 'Mantra'. Male-female folk collect the money which called 'Ger'. They use this ger for drinking purpose only. During this period any alien or non-laman persons come at Tanda, the Ger is collected from him.

On the second day there is 'Phag', the old persons of the Tanda represent phag. Firstly, they worship holi Goddess. The ash is mixed in the water and sprinkled to each other, and by this all the persons phag, all huts and clothes and the ground become colourful. Singing and dancing is going on by emptying liquor bottles.

At evening, there was programme called 'Dhamali Bhandhar', Women folk tie to the men by the rope by being considered the animals. At this time women beat by stick to the males.
On the third day, by collecting money, two-three goats are sacrificed, called Cer. In this way the holi festival celebrated by Lamans with full joy and gay.

3) **Description of Deities of Lamans** :

Lamans are mainly the worshipper of goddess. They do not worship Hindu Gods such as Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh, Rama, Krishna and Ganapati. They believe that Goddess always help them in the time of distress. They worship and seek blessing of Goddess on the occasion like birth, death, marriage, illness or dispute and conflict. Certain Goddesses are worshipped only by particular families of Tanda. Some of them are Marramma, Matharal, Ambabai, Durga etc. Instead of the idol a flag symbolizes the Goddess which is worshipped.

(1) **Flag of Durgadevi** :

It is red in colour and is located at the centre of the Tanda on a bamboo tied to a iron bar. The figures of Goddesses engraved on a small tin sheet is called as 'CUTT'. The ornaments etc. of the Goddess are put on it. In the flag-stick the cloth and green bangles are placed as the symbol of Durga Devi.
Goddess Flag with background a Hut in which Musical Instruments for Banjara are kept.

( Chunkhadi Tanda )

Holi.

(ii) Maramma or Mari Aai :

The flag of this goddess is white. There is the 'cutt' of the goddess and the green cloth. Flag is cleaned with water and worshiped by sprinkling the urine of cow. Coconut is offered to her on the full moon day. Newly married couple comes to seek her blessings. On the Dasara day Maramma Devi is offered a
goat while Durga Devi is offered Ghee, milk chapati etc. Women do not touch the goddess but seek blessing from a distance. The Bhagat posts himself nearer to Goddess. Upon getting possessed he suggests solution to the problems of people.

(iii) Ambabai: The flag is again white in colour but there are no bangles. Ghee is burnt and coconuts are offered. On the Dasara day goat is offered to Ambabai.

Next to flag of goddess there is a small hut. It is supposed to be as sacred and is not used for residential purposes. In front of the hut there is a fire in the name of Sevabhaya. This fire is called as 'DHUNI'.

(iv) Goddess on Tiger:

In Mulaj Tanda a flag of the goddess is observed during the survey by researcher. The Bhagat of the Tanda told an incident about the flag of this goddess, which is known as 'Waghavarchi Aai'. Once the mother-in-law of Bhagat Ratansing packed the food for him as he was going on a travel. When on his way Ratansing opened the pack of food, he found flag instead of eatables. In his dream goddess told Ratansing that she herself has send there flags. On those flags there was a picture of tiger after which the goddess is known. At the top end of the flag there is a Kalasa. There is a stick (known as 'sota') of great person
Hâmubhukya. There is also a hut nearby in which the musical instrument for Bhajan are kept. Women are not allowed to go near to the flag or hut.

(v)  **Tulja Devi** :

Tulja Devi is considered very sacred. If the goddess gets angry she inflicts small pox on the young in the family as a punishment. She is feared and worshiped. In her praise the following prayer is sung.

Jai Bhagwati Jai Bharwati Jai Bhagwati,
Jai Sagalti, Jai Sagalati Jai Sagalati jvala
Mukhi Jagdamba Maramma haten k'hadga cha
    trishul cha,
Tara namiti bhut ghas shir cha, asaman
    rage cha dhartipar,
Trikunthepar nam cha bhagwati pita mata
    hamar zakada zole,
Hazar kos tal pati roti khadi kar papi
    pakhand dur kar bhulen tal,
Bhulen zhubet kar ichavalen icha purna
    kar annyewalen anna de wajatan
Beta de jiv jandhavir sainha shishapar
    peti hui shanti rupi bhavani,
Bhaktir arja kabul kar brahma deu
    Padwache rate dwar shivshankar
    dhayan kar

..
Indrakrashna tar arti kar tin bhuwaj
raj kar bhul chuk maph kar
dhoop dhyan rajwan kar ee puja wate
Whole devalen rajwas kar,
Jai jai tar tari.

The flag of the goddess is known as Aaichi kathi (stick). The top of the stick is decorated out of metal. Along with the flag five rupee coins, white cloth etc. are tied. It is cleaned on on no-moon and full moon days. There is a cross, made out of gold, fixed to the stick. Since people are the devotees they do not try to steal it. A goat is offered as sacrifice. Neem leaves, which are considered sacred, are placed near it.

On the Dasara day the head of the family gets up early and takes bath. He fasts on that day till the Sunset. That day a butcher is called with a goat. Neem leaves and holy powder 'Bhandara' is placed in the goat's mouth. It is applied red and yellow termeric and its puja is performed. Then water is sprinkled on it. At this moment because of the water the goat should shake off its head which is known as 'Dhadadhadi Layer'. If the goat does not shake off, it is believed that the sacrifice is not acceptable to the Devi goddess. If acceptable the head of the goat is separated from its body and its fresh blood is sprinkled on the flag. The meat of right leg of the goat is devided into seven parts and cooked separately only with salt and yellow termeric. The
cooked meat is placed near the flag and the following prayer is recited.

Mari yadi Bhavani bani Rakodas,
Nangar-Nama ro saives
Zakad-zol hazar kos tales mari yadi

Meaning: Oh, Mother Bhavani keep us happy.
Keep everyone in the Tanda happy
and push all the dangers thousands
of miles away.

They also pray for their children and ask the Goddess to keep their child happy and away from all illnesses. They tell her to keep away the famine.

Afterward the part of the cooked meat is put in holi-fire, a part is eaten by him and the rest is distributed among the children and people in Tanda as prasad.

The Photo of the sacrificial goat standing in front of Bhavani Devi is suffixed below:
(vi) **Pohara Devi** :

There is a temple of Devi at Pohara Devi in Akola district of Maharashtra. On the day of Chaitra bright 9th, there is a fair of the Devi. It is a big affair. Laman from various parts come to participate in it. From every household a couple of member goes to Pohara Devi.

After reaching at the place people take bath before entering the temple. Offering of the wheats are made. They join the singing of Bhajans. They also collectively or individually offer the goat sacrifices. They cook and eat collectively. All the expenditure is managed through the donations collected. After their return from the Pohara Devi fair people come back to their own Tanda, where they are welcomed and everyone touches their feet.

(vii) **Earth Goddess** :

Earth goddess 'Dharti mata' is worshipped among Lamans. She is responsible for the growth of their occupation of transportation of pack-bullocks. She is offered sacrificial goat. When the Lamans used to wander from one place to another, they had to halt for many days in one place; specially in rainy season. At the end of rainy season, they had to move to another place. After coming to another place, first they had to sacrifice a black goat for the propitiation of that place i.e. Dharati. They used to say the following prayer as follows :
"Ye Dharti Mata, haam tare balak chha, yee bhog too kabul kar ".

Meaning: 'Oh', Dharati mata, accept this prasad. (Sacrificial goat is called as Kali-pat).
The Lamanas believe that with the blood of this kalipat to the Dharati goddess, would be propitiated and no calamity or difficulty would be faced to them during the stay on that place. Now no longer they worship the " Dharti Mata " as they are settled in one place.

(viii) **Cow Worship** :

The worship of cow is very important among Lamanas. The cow is the producer of Ox, the backbone of the Laman economy. They prefer brownish coloured cow for worship. In one folk song the description of cow is as under:

"Oore ham gaiie godhan puj, Aan dhan des yedi mabali".

It means come, friend, we do the worship of goddess cow. Oh, cow goddess give ample wealth. On the eve of Diwali the unmarried girls worship cows.

(ix) **Ancestor Worship** :

The ancestors' worship is prevalent among Lamanas. On the eve of Diwali and Holi festivals, the ancestors are worshipped first. The prasad is made as the out of the food liked by ancestors. The food is given as prasad which was given to fire goddess for seven times.
(x) **Worship of Seven Goddesses:**

The Lamans worship the Seven Goddesses. They are as Maramma, Tulja, Hingla, Huliamma, Sati, Asavari, Nagarsi. The clan goddesses are also pre-eminent among Lamans. Tulja is one of the Hindu goddess which is also worshiped among Lamans.

(xi) **Satwai:**

Only some Lamans worship this goddess. A goat is sacrificed by a family where a woman is pregnant. It is believed that the child will not live if the sacrifice is not offered.

(xii) **Seva Bhaya:**

The favourite deity of the Lamans is Seva Bhaya, whose story is given by Russel and Hiralal (1916 - 177) as follows:

"The love borne by Mari-mata, the goddess of Cholera, for the handsome Siva Rathor, is an event of our own times. She proposed to him, but his heart being pre-engaged he rejected her, and in consequence, his earthly bride was falled sick and dies, and the hand of the goddess fell heavily on Siva himself, thwarting all his schemes and blighting his fortunes and possessions, until at last he gave himself up to her. She then possessed him and caused him to prosper exceedingly, gifting him with supernatural power until his fame:"
was noised abroad and he was venerated as the saintly Siva Bhaya or great brother to all women, being himself unable to marry. But in his old age the goddess capriciously wished him to marry and have issue, but he refused and was slain and buried at Pohara in Berar. A temple was erected and his kinsman became priests of it and hither large numbers are attracted by the supposed efficacy of vows made to Siva, the most sacred of all oaths being that taken in his name. If a Laman swears by Siva Bhaya, placing his right hand on the bare head of his sons and heir, and grasping a cow's tail in his left, he will fear to perjure himself, lest by doing so he should bring injury on his son and a murrain on his cattle.

The shrine of Seva Bhaya is erected at Pohara Devi, (Mangalore Peer), Dist. Akola. Now a days this place is known as the main Centre of pilgrimage. Not from the Maharashtra but from the whole country and even some Laman's migrated come here on the eve of Chaitra Navami in April every year.

Laman's worship some saints. Sevabhaya is ranked highest among them. He is considered as the incarnation of Shankar. The folkstory about Sevabhaya runs as follows.

Goddess Marramma made a small ball out of the dirt of her body. She gave it to a Laman woman Dharmani and told that out of it a great person will be born. Accordingly Dharmini gave birth to Sevabhaya. Goddess Marramma was in love of Sevabhaya but he could not marry her as he was already married. But his wife died at young age and so Sevabhaya devoted himself to the worship of Marramma. She got pleased with him and gifted him with supernatural power. For his devotion to the goddess Sevabhaya is known as a saint.

Laman women consider Sevabhaya as their brother. There is Sevabhaya's 'Samadhi' (shrine) at Pohara in Akola district of Maharashtra. There is a temple now and Laman from all over India visit it. Sevabhaya is considered sacred and holy. Therefore people are made to swear by Sevabhaya. The privilege of worshipping Sevabhaya goes to Jadhava clan as Sevabhaya is supposed to be born in Jadhav clan.

(xiii) **Worship of three and half goddesses** :

Laman women worship certain goddesses known as Nagarsi, Asavari, Khogarsi and Pibbalavari. Each of these are associated with one of the four clans, the last belonging to the Vadatya clan, being considered to be a half goddess. These deities are commonly spoken of by Laman as three and half goddesses (Sadi tin devi) and
the members of the caste generally decline to pronounce the name of these goddesses and to disclose a mystery of the rites connected with the puja.

(xiv) Balaji

Balaji is considered as the incarnation of Vishnu. Balaji temple is situated at Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh. Laman do not worship Vishnu but believe in Balaji. They promise offering in return if, their wishes are fulfilled. It is known as 'Navasa'. Once a year they visit the temple and offer their hair on the head. Animal sacrifice is not acceptable to Balaji. The food that is offered contain fruits rice etc. Food is cooked by men in front of their houses on Shravan bright Navami. In the food salt and chillies are not mixed. The part of the food is put in holy fire for five times along with ghee. Ghee, coconut, scented sticks etc. are used in worship. The Laman on this occasion wish to know from Balaji the auspicious time to start or work to know whether the task to be undertaken would be successful or not. So they take five chauries in hand and frop them on the ground. If they all fall with their backside up, it is taken that the task will be fulfilled.

With the Kauries in hand the devotee says the following prayer four times by facing the four directions.
"Jai bolo Balaji balabala ghatem pharat,
thumhara bhala sankade sakhak sakhak kare,
bhaji sama karot jai bolo balaji kan,
prasad man woprasad adras kamras guru ke,
pas bolo wisangat ba guru ram laxman bete,
ganga jamna thumhare hath me sone ki dadi,
tamso do todjadi jai bolo balaji panch,
ro prasad pachis roprasad prasad kamras,
guru ke pas bolo visangat wagru "

(xv) Hanuman:

In all Tandas Hanuman is worshiped. Stone pasted with 'Shendur', symbolizing Hanuman is placed at the boundary of the Tanda. It is believed that Hanuman protects the settlement from all the dangers. The idol of Hanuman was not observed in any Tanda. On Saturdays and Tuesdays people fast in the name of Hanuman. He is offered the prasad of chapati and jaugary.

(xvi) Mhasoba:

The Lamans worship Mhasoba. Generally the Bhagat used the name of Mhasoba in magical mantras. The Mhasoba located in farm.

(xvii) RamKrishna:

Laman do not actually worship RamKrishna but sing their Bhajan. Like Hindu they do not celebrate RamNavami or GokulAstami.
SAINTS

i) Sevabhaya:

Sevabhaya is known as great saint among Lamans. The detailed description is given on page under the Gods and Goddesses.

(ii) Mithu Bhukya:

Mithu Bhukya is also considered supernatural and is worshiped as if he were a God.

It is believed that earlier the Lamans who were robbers would seek blessing before starting for their adventures. Whether it would be auspicious or not was decided before going for robberies. It was done by lighting a lamp. If the flame would go straight way up it was considered auspicious to start the venture. The robbers would not talk with each other throughout their venture. If they talk, it was believed that Mithu Bhukya would withdraw his protection. Part of the loot was offered to Mithu Bhukya and the people in Tanda were given feast. The remaining part of the loot was shared by the robbers.

(iii)Ramrao Maharaj:

Ramrao Maharaj comes from Sevabhaya's clan. His spiritual power was great and Lamans not only from
Maharashtra but also from other states respect and believe him. Since the age of 40 Ramrao Maharaj lived only on milk. He started travelling at the age of seven. He also refused the invitation of Nizam.

Shri. Durgadas Jadhav of Mulaj Tanda told an incident to the researcher which is as follows:

Late Mrs. Indira Gandhi was travelling towards her destination in a Helicopter but Ramrao reached to ahead of her. Once in Karnataka, Ramrao could make a vehicle run 10 K.M. without a drop of petrol. It is believed that if you go to Ramrao with a wish in your mind it is fulfilled.

**Sadhu and Bhagat:**

In every Tanda there is a Bhagat - the worshipper of gods.

The Photo of Bhagat is suffixed as below.

The Bhagat is seen in front of Dhuni and the Goddess Flag at Background. (Chunkhadi Tanda, Holi)
He knows magic. One becomes Bhagat through inheritance or if a Goddess comes in dream of a person and tells him so. Not all Bhagat remain unmarried. Some have families. Some do not eat meat. They fast on certain days of a week. They may move in Tanda and cure people out of illness with their magical or supernatural power. Bhagat need not receive any education. Through his devotion he pleases the Gods and acquires his powers. When he gets possessed it is believed that the god has entered his soul. His body starts shaking. It is taken that no that person has become a Bhagat. He has the capacity to predict future.

There can be some women Bhagats too. They become Bhagats through their worshipping and devotion. They can also predict future.

Bhagat has a dual role as the priest and doctor. He can cure snake or scorpion bites.

According to Bhagat Rathod of Holi Tanda a person can get possessed by a ghost. When a person gets night dreams or is psychologically disturbed, it is considered that the person is possessed by a ghost. To drive the ghost away many things are done. To drive the ghost away many things are done. The ash is blown, sacrifices are given or the holy threads are tied to the arms or around the neck of the person. Some food items like Telchi, rice, jugarry are circled round the person and then
dropped in the river. Thus ghost is driven away.

The Lamans not only worship their traditional and Hindu Gods and Goddess but also believe in Muslim and Sikh tradition. The researcher observed some Lamans from the Shastrinagar Tanda making offering to the 'Pir' of Muslims. They wanted a son so they offered Navasa to get that wish fulfilled. Shri. Rupa Rathod offered Navasa (right in front of the researcher) to the Pir as he wished for a grandson. Some Lamans visit the Pir in Karnataka for various purposes. Shri. Harichand Pawar, Naik told that the Lamans of his Tanda worshipped five Pirs of Muslims i.e., (1) Bande Nawaj - Gulburga (2) Ghodwadi - Basavkalyan (3) Bannasahab - Jalkot (4) Murta Pir and (5) Hydra Pir. He further said that no Lamans would used new cereals prior to offer to the Pir.

Connection with Sikh:

The Lamans visit the Gurudwara of Sikhs too. Laman from all over Maharashtra visit the Gurudwara in Nanded. Lamans consider the Sikhs' Guru Nanak as their Guru too. At the time of marriage they keep aside a Rupee in the name of Guru. A folkstory suggests that Lamans came in contact with Sikhs during the period of Guru Govind Sing. The 9th Guru TegBahadur was beheaded on November 11, 1675 in Chandani Chowk of Delhi by the Muslim ruler. He declared that any discipline of Guru should dare to take away the body. He had put his guards to protect it. One Lakhi
the Laman managed it by charging with thousands of bullocks on the guards. Lakhi Shah the Laman brought back the dead body of the Guru and set it on fire in his hut at Rikabganj. Today in that place a Gurudwara is erected. The photo of Gurudwara is suffixed below.

Because of this the Sikhs and Lamans have come together and the Lamans are liked by the Sikhs. Presently efforts are made to build a Gurudwara at Pohara Devi, the holy place of Lamans.

It is said that in the past Lamans practiced human sacrifice. But at present there is not trace of it. According to Thurston, (1909: 226), "In former days, the Lamans were reputed to have offered human sacrifice, 'Whereas Abbe Dubois writes', "When they wish to perform this horrible act it is said that they secretly carry off the first person they meet. Having conducted the victim to some lonely spot, they dig a hole in which they bury him up to the neck, while he is still alive, they make a sor of lump of dough made of flour, which they place on his head. This they fill with oil, and light four wicks in it. Having done this the men and women join hands and forming a circle, dance round their victim, singing and making a great noise, till he expires". 2.

5. Ideas of pollution and purity:

Among Lamans the ideas of sacredness and pollution are deeply rooted. Reverence and respect is expressed through rituals associated with the things considered sacred.

Lamans consider the Neem tree as sacred as a plant of God. They do not use it as fire-wood nor they take false woes by holding a twig of Neem. If they do so, they fear that they will face the wrath of God.

Saturday is devoted Maruti and Friday to Balaji. Offering of meat are taboos to both. So on Fridays and Saturdays they do not eat meat. The month of Shravan is considered sacred when Balaji and Shankar are worshipped. Throughout this month Lamans do not consume meat. Some fast on the day of 'Ekadashi' and visit Pandharapur - the holy place of Hindus.

It is considered inauspicious for a man to get tattooed. Shri. Dhabra Chavan from Runna Vaik Tanda told the researcher that the men who get tattooed are not allowed to enter the place where grains are husked. But men get tattooed to cure their injuries.
Shri. Pawar a school teacher from ShastriNagar Tanda told that no-moon day and sun or moon eclipses are considered inauspicious. Similarly it was considered inauspicious to take off turban during marriage ceremony. Widow or widower was not allowed to attend marriages.

If a person was bitten by a scorpion during marriage, the remaining ceremonies were cancelled.

Shouting of fox or owl, crossing of a cat, were taken as bad omens. To drive away the bad influences a goat was sacrificed.

Food is not taken during the actual period of eclipse, but only after the period is over a bath is taken.

Meat of cow, bull, pig and crow is tabooed. Chicken is consumed but its raring is inauspicious.
4) **Change in the Religion of Lamans**:  

The foregoing analysis bring out the change that has occurred in the sphere of religion in the Lamans. The Laman community is undergoing change. The overall nature of religious change shows that it is slowly integrating with the wider Hindu culture. The analysis shows that the superficial aspects of the alien culture are accepted first and then the society turns towards the core values of their culture. The changes are mostly due to contact with Hindus and though the process of acculturation. In early times, Lamans were isolated and their life was of nomadic nature. This life pattern led to a peculiar sort of structure of religious organisation. Presently various changes are taking place in the religious life of Lamans. Following are the changes noted down in this connection.

In the past, deities like Maramma, Huliamma, Sati etc. were held responsible for causing as well as preventing certain diseases. The Laman deities were generally concerned with daily routine. In later years, with the gradual discovery, availability and utilization of new medical facilities the old concept of disease causation and cure have been re-defined. The appointment of a health agent. The establishment of
of Health Centre and facility of regular 
dispensary nearby the Laman Tandas are popular 
among the Lamans. It has also helped in diffusing 
the scientific knowledge and explanation of diseases 
and cures. This has helped in declining the importance 
of worship of traditional deities in the context of 
prevention and cure of diseases.

Traditionally, to get rid of diseases and natural calamities, the role of Bhagat was very important. But at the present, they take the help of Doctor. They are loosing the faith in Bhagat. Today some Lamans even give scientific explanation with regards to the natural phenomena and the creation of biological explanations can be heard in support of life and death. Propoganda of Family planning and birth control has also helped to decrease the significance of religious explanation regarding the causation and cure of diseases.

Traditionally varieties of deities were worshipped by the Lamans. Some of them are Durga, Amba and Seven Goddesses as well as three and half goddesses etc. but now due to contact with Hindu this has changed. Now they are giving importance to the worship of Hindu Gods and Goddesses. Many of the Laman people reported that the Lamans' deities are powerless and their spiritual powers no longer but Hindu Gods and goddesses possess more powers.
Traditionally, each Tanda to have the flags symbolizing different deities but now the flags are no longer seen at the site of Tanda.

Formerly Lamans did not worship the incarnation of Vishnu i.e. Krishna and Rama which are supposed to be Hindu Gods but now they have started worshipping and singing Bhajanäs and Kirtan like other Maharashtrians.

The Balaji, the another incarnation of Vishnu is also worshipped among the Lamans. They visit Balaji at Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh regularly. This also shows the acceptance of Hindu ways of life.

Many of the Lamans are seen visiting Pandharpur or Vithoba, the purely Maharashtrian God. Lamans' also fast on the eve of 'Ashadi Ekadashi' which shows clearcut imp. act of Hinduism.

The Lamans worship the Hanuman, the Hindu deity, by installing it at the boundary every Tanda. Instead of Idol, they establish only stone as Hanumab. They suppose that it is the protector of Tanda. It is also useful in magical mantras.

Traditionally, the worship of Shiva (Mahadeo) was not prevalent among Lamans but now they fast on the eve of 'Mahashivaratra'. They do not worship the Dattatraya but sing songs about Datta, Pundlik, Shravan Bal
through Bhajans. The Ganpati worship was not prevalent, but researcher has observed some Lamans worshipping the photo of Ganapati at their home. Mhasoba, the Hindu deity, is worshipped among Lamans. It is installed in the field to yield more crops, they sacrifice the goat to Mhasoba.

The Lamans are not free of the influence of Muslim religion. They do worship of Muslim Marshal flag at some Laman Tandas and many of the Lamans sacrifice the goat to this flag on the eve of Moharam, the Muslim festival.

The Lamans are profoundly influenced by 'Shikh' religion too. Researcher observed and many respondents also said that all the Lamans in Maharashtra visit the 'Gurudwara' situated at Nanded. Sikhs also consider Lamans as nearer to them. The Sikhs organisations have purchased the land to erect Gurudwara at various Laman Tanda. Lamans respect the Sikhs as their Guru.

Previously, there were many saints, veer among the Lamans; e.g. Seva Bhaya, Bhagandas Vadatiya, Nanu Sad, Bhukya, Jhangi, Bhangi, Lakhri Shah, Soma Sad etc. But at present only Sevalal is worshipped.

The Lamans are influenced by the Hindu festivals. Gudi Padwa is not originally Lamans' festival but due to contact with Hindu people they have started to celebrate it with modification. They do not erect Gudi
on this eve but only sacrifice the goat.

On the eve of Ram Navami they do not celebrate the birth of Rama like Hindus. Instead, they visit to 'Seva Bhaya' their own religious deity situated at Pohara Devi. Nagpanchami is not celebrated by Lāmans as they are not worshipper of Bhagwan Shankar but the Lāman women put the milk and puff-corn near the snakes Warula.

Previously the festival of Pola (the farmers festival of Maharashtra) was not celebrated. But now due to contact with Hindus they are celebrating this festival devoted to Ox celebrated with great pomp and pleasure.

They celebrate Dāsera and Navrātra festivals, like other Hindus. They also celebrate Diwali.

Holi festival was celebrated at morning on Falgoon dark - 1. There was custom to celebrate the 'Dhund' on this occasion. Now the festival is celebrated at evening on Falgoon bright 15 as Hindus. The 'Dhund' is not prevalent.

The Lāmans have given up many superstitions and beliefs. Previously, they were used to keep the door at east side to give respect the God 'Sun'. They do not even keep the legs towards the east direction while sleeping. They were consider it as sinful. At present...
such beliefs and practices are not followed.

Their faith on Ghosts and evil are not longer on ghost and traditional faith is now losening. Cow, Neem trees, Ox considered as very pious. They were used to investigate the offender by taking oath on it. No such beliefs are loosing their importance.

Previously, there was a bull in each Tanda called 'Katlya'. It was considered very pious. At any difficulty or calamity, the Lamans pray the 'Katlya'. At present this practice of keeping Katlya is not observed.

There were many superstitions prevalent among the Lamans which are not seen at present e.g. to remove turban in marriage was a taboo but now the custom of using turban is out of order. Crossing the cat, crying the Titawi bird and Owl, crossing the empty pot were considered as bad omen. Now it is not considered strictly. Cock was tabooed as sacrifice and it was not rated by Lamans. But researcher has observed many Lamans raring the cock and eating the flesh.

Relative isolation from the outside world was responsible for the persistence of traditional beliefs.

Of late, however, the impact of various agencies of change and the introduction of new ideas have led to a noticeable differences in the traditional attitudes-beliefs and ritual practices of the Lamans.