CHAPTER - III

SOCIAL CELEBRATIONS AMONG LAMBADA TRIBES

In the early stages of the formation of society, men and women were not regarded and treated as individuals, but as members of a particular group wherein groups of men and women related by blood relationship constitute the units of early society. The most peculiar of the social institutions of India is the caste system in the sense that it is confined to India and is found nowhere else in the world and is of the extreme social segmentation which it produces, it is not a purely social system but is so closely interwoven with Hinduism as to have certain religious elements. The caste system split up society into a multitude of little communities, for every caste and almost every local unit of a caste, has its own peculiar customs and internal regulations. The fission of castes into sub castes happened due to various reasons which include adoption of different occupation, differences in social customs and membership of different religious sects.\(^1\) According to Kashyap and Raut, our societies are bound by definitive norms being followed by the set of norms which dictate the way and means of behaving, working, addressing in the society. Customs are socially acceptable norms that have been in practice over a long period that has been largely isolated from new practices and customs in rural India. However, a change has occurred during the course of time in urban India, a change that has accelerated when a generation adopts new value systems and practices in order to fit
into perceived. While this research aims to identify the causes or polices that has lead to such changes, the present chapter examines the social customs, traditions, and culture of Lambada Tribe in Andhra Pradesh.

The first confinement of a woman invariably takes place in her husband's house only. In the past, even for the subsequent confinements a woman never used to go to her parents' house. Once a girl was married, she was considered to be lost to her parents; as they very rarely could meet each other. When they meet it was only for a brief spell.²

Shedding of their nomadic habits and settling down permanently has brought about a perceptible change in this custom. Many Lambadis at present send their wives to their parents' house for subsequent deliveries. But on no account the first delivery takes place at the house of her parents; as it is a question of prestige for her husband as well as for her. Even a poor Lambadi does not like that his first issue should be born at his father-in-law's house. If this happens he and his wife are considered very mean and teased by his community people. Aiyer and Nanjundayya reported, that the Lambadis were adopting the practice of bringing their women to parents' house. During subsequent pregnancies however, the parents of the girl themselves evince some interest to take their daughter for delivery to their house. If their son-in-law agrees to their request, the father or the brother of the girl takes her to their house or village during the seventh month.³
Confinement takes place not in the living house but in cattle shed or in a hut separately built by the side of the living house for the purpose. When the labour pain start, the woman is shifted to the hut meant for her and she is made to lie down on a cot or on the ground on mattresses. A midwife called 'Lomsonil’ from their Tribe attends to the delivery. If she thinks that the delivery is going to be a protracted one, she uses some of the age old methods, to give relief. She warms the hips and waist of the woman with hot stones held in a piece of cloth, while another woman simultaneously rubs her chest. They believe that by adopting this process they generate some heat in the body of the confined woman which would make the delivery easy and comfortable.\(^4\)

On the third day after delivery they perform a ceremony called Jalva Dokhano (Taking Bath). On the morning elders of the family break coconuts in the name of the ancestors praying for the speedy recovery of health and strength of the newly delivered woman. The mother of the newly born baby, with seven kinds of grain in her hands or tied in one corner of her cloth tucked in her waist, walks to the pit dropping grains, on the way. All the womenfolk assemble there and lit apramida (light) made of rice flour and welcome her with a song, the meaning of which is "come to the pit weeping and go away from the pit with smiles". After the woman reaches the pit she is given a sweet liquid, prepared out of jaggery and water by the women assembled. The woman, while returning, gets some 'Payasam’ (sweet liquid) and the same is distributed to the children assembled there. After the ceremony is over, all the invitees are treated to a vegetarian meal when liquor is also served. These
practices make them very happy. Even now they are practicing and making family bond so strong through these cultural practices. This is also making to know that they need to fulfill their responsibility as father or brother towards their daughter or sister. Today there are number of cases about killing of girl child even in the womb of mother. Respecting one another will help to live long life without any fear.

When death occurs in a Lambadi family, the body is brought out of the hut and placed outside in the front yard on a cot. Immediately a messenger is dispatched to inform the relatives, and friends of the deceased. The body is given a hot water bath, smeared with turmeric powder and wrapped in a new cloth. Generally married persons are cremated and unmarried persons are buried.

While returning from the cremation or burial ground they do not go to the Tanda through the same path by which they had come. They take a zig-zag route, sometimes going round and round a few bushes and trees. It seems that there is a traditional belief that the spirit of the dead may return along with them to the Tanda if they go directly, so they resort to this kind of tactics to mislead the spirit. While returning from the cremation ground they take bath in a nearby well or hill stream. They keep a pot of water at the spot where the person breathed his last. It is explained that there is a belief that the spirit of the dead in case it feels thirsty, can drink from the pot. Even now they have fear about death. They believe in ancestor’s sprits and they worship their forefather’s sprits believing as sacred.
The obsequies are performed on the third day after the death. L.A.K Iyer says that Lambadis conduct some tests to see whether the deceased has gone to heaven or has been reborn somewhere. According to him when the elders go to the cremation ground on the third day they examine the ashes. If there are no foot marks they presume that the deceased has gone to heaven; if they see any foot mark they presume that he has been reborn and if the foot marks belong to animals they believe that he has taken the form of an animal. If the marks are indistinguishable they presume that he has turned into a ghost. They believe in rebirth as Hindus believe in their religious life. It is the influence of Hindu religion upon them. These Lambada tribal people wherever they go they adopt other religions and other cultures. This is major change in their life which is going to be discussed in the latter part of this chapter.

**Language of Lambadas**

Lambadi the word falls into main dialects of Punjab and Gujarat. The word Banjari possesses the characteristics of an old form of speech, which has been preserved unchanged for some centuries. It may be said to be based partly on Marwari, and partly on Northern Gujarati. This information was given by Mr. Grierson, a tribal researcher. He says that the dialect of Southern India is mixed with the surrounding Dravidian languages. Now in Telangana they communicate with Telugu, Urdu and Hindi language. They also use Ghorbholi language as their traditional one which does not have script.
**Dress and Apparels**

Banjaras dress is a peculiar type of dress. Women had their body ten pounds weight in metal or ivory round their arms and legs. Among them the favorite ornaments appear to be rings of ivory from the wrist to the shoulder, regularly increasing in size, so that the ring near the shoulder will be immoderately large, sixteen inches, or more perhaps in circumference silver, lead, copper, or brass in ponderous bars, encircle their shines, sometimes, round others in the form of festoons, and truly have seen some so circumstanced that a criminal in irons would not have much more to incommode them these damsels deem ornamental and agreeable trappings on a long march for they are never dispensed with in the hottest weather.9

They wear earrings, necklaces, rings on fingers and toes. They pay little attention to cleanliness. Their hair once plaïted will not be combed or opened perhaps for a month. Their bodies or cloths are seldom washed. Their arms are indeed so encased with ivory that it would be no easy matter to clean them. The same dress they maintain even now and it shows their strong belief in their cultural behaviors but now some educated Lambada women adopt normal way in dressing in those modern times.10

They have no written language and speak their ancient dialect handed down from generation to generation. They prefer blazing colors and their women steadfastly adhere to their ancient dress style, which is perhaps the most colorful and elaborate
compared to other tribal groups in India.\textsuperscript{11} And matching their gala dress, they wear an elaborate ghagra (skirt). The mantle, which covers the head, is long enough to drape down their backs, touching their feet. Their hairstyle is unique and typical – the hair is bound upon the top of their head, plaited around a piece of bamboo, which is held upright on the head. While the women dress gorgeously their men folk are dressed in a simple dhoti, a kurta or shirt and often a turban, like any other villager from Telangana. But today they adopted normal and any other western dress in their cultural life.\textsuperscript{12} As M.N.Srinivas stated in the method of Westernization these Lambadas are adopting the latest dress pattern of the western world. Very pathetic to mention that they afraid of wearing normal dress, if they wear normal and modern dress the plain community in olden days the kings chased them to spoil their character which in human in the life of people.

\section*{Family System}

In the olden days the joint Family system prevailed, but later on this system had been broken into nuclear and some are still flowing joint family systems. The Lambadas live in detached settlement of “Tandas” usually of some distance from the main village of other communities. In the past Lambadas practiced nomadic life, but nowadays they are giving up their nomadic habits trying to settle on one particular land. They have very good family relations maintaining from the ages past. Even though they fight with each other they come together whenever they meet for marriages and festivals. Misunderstandings are common in any community. But
coming together is great thing in the human relations which need to follow every one in their cultural life.

**Lambada Marriage Systems**

Each portray is an exogamous unit, and one has to marry outside his portray. Clan follows the patrilineal kin group. The girl looses the name of the clan of her parents as soon as she marries and acquires the clan of her husband. Traditionally, joint family was playing a dominant role in choosing the mates, determining the residents, controlling the property, watching the morals and managing the affairs of the youngsters. The joint family was the norm in the early days among Lambadas but now it is breaking down gradually into nuclear families. Marriage by negotiations is the only accepted way of performing marriages and sometimes marriage by service is also practiced which was the practice of Israelite community in Old Testament.13

Among the Lambadis marriage within the same gotra or clan is prohibited. Cross cousin marriage is practiced in all the parts of Andhra Pradesh among Lambadis. No restrictions or taboos are placed regarding marrying inside or outside their Tandas or villages. Marrying one's own sister's daughter is also becoming more common now-a-days. According to the Lambadis in the past consanguineous marriages were not allowed in their community, but during the last three or four generations, they have adopted the customs of their neighbors among when they have
permanently settled down. It seems that now not only have the adopted practices of the neighbours, but also they have absorbed the value system.\textsuperscript{14}

Monogamy is the general rule in the community but a few Lambadis go in for polygynous marriages. Though there is no customary bar against the number of wives that a person may have, in practice none is found to have more than two wives at a time. If a person marries two women no separate accommodation is provided to each of them. They have to settle and live in cooperation in the same house. The most important cause to induce a person to acquire a second wife is said to be the barrenness of the first wife. In such cases sometimes a person marries one of the sisters of the first wife.\textsuperscript{15}

Girls are married usually after they attain maturity. The age at marriage may be between 16 and 18 for females and 18 and 25 for males. Though after a girl reaches her puberty, the parents are eager to marry her off, they never take the initiative to seek a bridegroom. The proposal must always come from the boy's side.\textsuperscript{16} Oil or bride fee was prevalent in the earlier days. Each Banjara youth had to pay both in cash and in kind to secure the hand of a girl. A couple of milch animals often served as bride fee.\textsuperscript{17}

Marriage by negotiation among the Lambadis is the popular mode of acquiring bride though, now and then, love marriages and elopements take place. Love marriages are popular with the educated Lambadi boys. According to the elderly
Lambadis, previously they used to celebrate marriage for about eight days and sometimes it used to extend up to 3 months.\textsuperscript{18}

Mr. Stuart informs us that the marriage system of Lambada takes place in 3 days.\textsuperscript{19} On the first day intoxicating beverage Jaggery (sugar) and other things are mixed and drunk. In olden days the bridegroom’s parents bring Rs. 35 and four bullocks to those of the bride, and after presenting them, the bridegroom is allowed to tie a square silver bottu or tali to the bride’s neck and the marriage is completed. After marriage and upon the first male child, a second silver bottu is tied to the mother’s neck, and when the third son is born the third bottu is tied. In this three bottus are wielded together, after which no additions are made.\textsuperscript{20}

Francis gives an account of information wherein he says, that the bridegroom arrives at night to the bride’s house with a cloth covering his head, and an elaborately embroidered bag containing betel nut slung from his shoulder. Outside his house, at the four corners of a square, are arranged with four piles of earthen pots – five pots in each. Within this square two grains – pounding pestles are stuck upright on the ground. Then the bride is dressed with the cloth peculiar to married women, and taken outside the house to meet the bridegroom. Both stand within the square of pots, and round their shoulder is tied a cloth, in which the officiating Brahman knots a rupee. Then they walk seven times and they will say to each other while walking, “I am yours and you are mine”. Then the couple will sit on the blanket on the ground for marriage ceremony. The same marriage system is prevailing in the modern days.\textsuperscript{21}
Divorced women and widows were permitted to re-marry in their society. In such cases, the second husband, under the award of caste arbitration, is made to pay a certain amount to the first husband. The woman is then readmitted into society.\(^{22}\)

The custom of widow marriage was called “Valli Sukkeri”. According to G.N. Thomssen, “If an elder brother marries and dies without offspring, his younger brother should marry the widow, and raise up children, such children being regarded as those of the longer living elder brother. If, however, the elder brother dies leaving offspring, and the younger brother wishes to marry the widow, he must give fifteen rupees and three oxen to his brother’s children. Then he may marry the widow. The custom here referred to is said to be practised because the Banjaras ancestor Sugriva married his elder brother Vali’s widow.\(^{23}\)

There are traditional magicians and bards to Lambadas called ‘Dappans’. Dappans depend mainly on the gifts presented by Lambadas on various occasions and also work as manual labourers. There are three divisions among dappans viz. 1) Bhat, 2) Dhadi and 3) Dhaliya. Bhats and Dhadis sing songs of family history by playing musical instruments called ‘Jange’ and ‘Kinjiri’ during marriage ceremonies. Dhaliya or Dapdiya plays dappu (Rattord, 1984)\(^{24}\). There are traditional barberers to lambadas called ‘Navi’. There is another endogamous sub-division called ‘sonar lambadas’ who manufacture silver or gold ornaments. All these groups are endogamous sub-division of main lambada tribe. These groups also adopted the clan organisation of main lambada community. But, inter group marriages are strictly prohibited. All these sub
divisions are considered inferior in social status to main group. Again divisions in the name of groups or clans are strange development in this tribe. The Indian society is divided in the name of caste system which is called as Varnadharma, Bramhana, Khatriya, Vaisya and Sudras. In fact this division was made only for the sake of good of society. But in the course of time some people they discriminate people thinking that they are superior to lower castes. In that line the pathetic development was untouchability which is shame on the part of Indian oneness, dignity and integrity.\textsuperscript{25}

**Festivals of Lambadas - Folk Songs and Dances**

Lambada religion is a nomadic religion. They are animists, believe in spirits. They worship their Forefathers; ancestors worship is prevalent in their religious life.\textsuperscript{26} They are influencing other religions where ever they live. In this section the festivals of Lambadas, some folk songs, what are the goddesses by name they are worshiping are going to be seen.\textsuperscript{27}

The festivals of Lambadas have three types of implication i.e., productive, protective and seasonal. The Lambadas rituals are obviously intended for the propitiation of appeasement of the various supernatural powers which are believed to mould the material, social and physical welfare of the community and individual as well. The rituals connected with the agricultural cult of Teej goddesses provide for pomp and decoration blended with folk dance with folk song. Further, these rituals are intended to perpetuate the fertility of women and fruitfulness of the soil on which
they depend for their livelihood certain rituals of Teej symbolically express the function of a man and woman in the procreation of the race and livelihood.\textsuperscript{28}

The Lambadi women known as different kinds of dances, in which they perform on ceremonial and other social occasions. These dances are always, accompanied by songs in their own language. They sing different types of songs of different occasions. The following are some of the songs sung during the festivals to the accompaniment of dances.

\textit{Jag-Jagri-Jag Bhavani:} a song on bhavani goddess sung during the dussera festival

\textit{Gag-Jagri-Ag-Bhavani:} Wake up-wake up Bhavani

\textit{Chandsuratnblackhara:} The Moon the Sun and nine lakh stars

\textit{Tare Poaro Biatay Ay:} Are guarding you

\textit{Ganga Jhoo Ratri Oontay Nay:} Ganga and jamuna are with you

\textit{Mohay Nay Ay Mai:} You are embodiment of love, O! Mother.

A song on Balaji Lord Venkateshwara of Tirupathi. This song is sung during the worship of the deity

\textit{Tol Bala Brahmachari:} Tell Balabrahmachari

\textit{Balaji Kala Dhari:} Balaji is very mighty

\textit{Bala Tarj Paday Perjhaoo Kasyro - Kasay Ro - Ray?:} Balaji - what trees are these on your mountain?
*Jhao Chandnay Ro, Nover Chand Nay Ro: These are small wood trees - sandal wood trees.*

*Chand Nay Ro Tuka Chadray Bala Devanay Ray: Sandalwood paste is smeared on Balaji God’s forehead.*

*Hatiramaynay: Even to hati Ram.*

With the rapid growth of their population, shift in their occupation and change of habitation, the Lambadas belief and ritual have also undergone considerable changes. The regional variation in the observance of Holi and other festivals by Lambada can be safely attributed to the impact of the surrounding cultures on the changing culture of Lambada which amply illustrates their great receptivity to change. The original variations in their ritual practices have been described at the end of the description of each festival.²⁹

**Festival of Seetala**

Seetala is another important annual festival of Lambadas performed in the month of Ashada. This festival is unlike the festivals of Teej provide opportunity for mass observance of rites. While Teej is performed for perpetuation of fertility of maidens and mother earth, Seetala is only a protective cattle festival. This festival also is called 'Festival of sacrifices as it involves too many animal sacrifices and free flow of blood. The Lambadas believe that Seetala, the eldest of the malignant seven sister-deities who is believed to control postural and endemic diseases, alone protects
their cattle. She is propitiated reverentially lest her wrath way upon their cattle. She is propitiated reverentially lest her wrath way turn upon their cattle and children.\textsuperscript{30}

The seven malignant sister-deities are known by various names depending upon the locality. Generally the seven sister-deities are 1). Seetala, 2). Tolja, 3). Hingla, 4). Masoori, 5). Dholangar, 6). Amba and 7). Meramma. On the eve of Seetala festival the Lambadas propitiates all these seven sister-malevolent-deities. But Seetala being the eldest of them is propitiated first. Seetala, as the Goddess of small-pox, is often represented as naked women, painted red and mounted on an ass with a bundle of broomsticks in one hand and a winnowing fan upon her head. During propitiation, Seetala is represented by either a clay figure or a stone, or by a piece of screw pine. She is believed to belong to Chandal or sweeper caste. In the Banjara tribe all the seven Goodesses are symbolically represented by seven stones, kept under a 'Bauheniaspicate' tree called 'Jeenizer-jhad' in their dialect and 'Arechettu' in Telugu language, which has long leaves and fruits like Cranberries. This festival is celebrated on the outskirts of the 'Tanda'. If the 'Bauhenia spicata' tree is not available on the outskirts of the 'Tanda', they bring a branch of that tree and plant it in a field and perform the ceremony under it, as they believe that 'Seetala was born under the cool shade of this tree hence, the name 'Seetala'.\textsuperscript{31}

\textbf{Festival of Holi - Folk Songs}

Holi is the most attractive and colorful festival of all Lambada festivals and ceremonies which also celebrated number of Indian especially North Indians. It is
unique occasion for both sexes to gather for fun and frolic generating 'we' feeling and a sense of group solidarity which is the hallmark of Lambada 'Tanda' life. One very interesting features of Holi is that no specific deity is propitiated on the festival day. While the Lambadas play 'Holi' any outside observer, in fact, forgets himself in the mirth of unsophisticated behavior and emotions exhibited by both sexes in performing their superb traditional dances. This happy atmosphere nurtures intra-community relations and community solidarity.32

During the Holi festival, the women play 'Kolatam'. This is played by a group of Lambadi women with two small wooden sticks in their hands and beating the sticks in the hands of the women opposite. Combined with the sound of the sticks, the sound produced by their leg ornaments due to quick movements of the feet will produce a melodious and rhythmic sound. Their movements are very graceful and pleasing to the eye. For the understanding of their happiness they sing songs and dance with one another. The following song during the kolatam is one the famous songs goes like this:

1. **Chorasamia, Ray: Oh; Samia boy**

   *No Tare Maya Bap Ray: You have mother and father*

   *Chora Bhooria Lay Ray: Oh; lad get a nose ring*

   *Badi Melayre - Ayki Owalayro: One very costly and of a good design*

   *Bhooria Nav Ghalam Chalo Taray Sath: After wearing the nose ring I shall follow you.*
Ho Wado Halan, Nakay Nay Mackhar: Shaking the body and nose;

To Par Sajan Ghomaodayti - Ghumao Dayji: I love you most; I love you most

- Oh; dear

2. **Hamalo Yan Ramere Nam Jura Pachbolian Geeth: We would first take the name of God and the sing**

Hamelu Yandhar Terenam Jura Pachbolian Geeth: We would take the name of Earth and then sing

Hamelu Yan Bapurje Nam Jura Pachbolian Geeth: We would take the name of father and then sing

Hamlo Yan Mathare Jura Pach Bolian Geetha: We would take the name of mother and then sing

Hamelu Yan Nayrakiro Nam Jura Pachbolian Geetha: We would take the name of Nayak and then sing

Hamelu Yan Sevabaya Nam Jura Pachbolian Geeth: We would take the name of Seva Bhaya and then sing

Hemelu Yan Dandiyadiro Nam Jura Pachbalian Geeth: We would take the name of Dandiyare and then sing.\(^{33}\)

People of Lambada tribe lead peripheral lives in thandas (hamlets) sprinkled across Andhra Pradesh. Some of them still follow a nomadic lifestyle. But whether they are on the move or settled in a hamlet in the poverty-ridden Telangana region, life has always been harsh for them Lambadas hardly own anything in terms of land
or property. Their culture is different from the mainstream cultures. Lambada rituals have nothing in common with the rituals of the plain people. These folk songs and dances make them very happy in their community life. Even now they are following the same pattern in their community life.

**Lambadas Worship the Goddess**

One of the popular deities of the Lambada is Devi, Lambada hose shrine is usually located in the forest. It is often represented by a heap of stones, a large stone smeared with vermilion being placed on the top of the heap to represent the goddess. Another deity is Mithu Bhukia, an old freebooter, who lived in the Central Provinces he is venerated by the dacoits as the cleverest dacoit known in the annals of the caste. A hut was usually set apart for him in each hamlet, a staff carrying a white flag being planted before it. Before setting out for a dacoity, the men engaged would assemble at the hut of Mithu Bhukia and burn a lamp before him and ask for an omen. If the wick of the lamp drooped the omen was propitious and the men present then set out at once on the raid without returning home. They might not speak to each other nor answer if challenged for. If anyone spoken the charm would be broken and the protection of Mithu Bhukia removed and they should either return to take the omens again or give up that particular dacoity altogether.

Russel and Hiralal State that, another favourite deity is Siva Bhaia whose story is given by colonel Mackenzie as follows. The love borne by Man Mata the
goddess of cholera, of 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 earthy bride was smitten sick and died, and the hand of the goddess fell heavily on Siva himself, thanking all his schemes and blighting his fortunes and possessions until at last he gave himself up to her. She than possessed him and caused him to proper exceedingly, gifting him with supernatural power until his fame was noised abroad, and he was venerated as the saintly Siva Bhaia 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 Pohur in Berar. A temple was erected over him and his kinsmen 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". 36 If a Banjara Swearas by Siva Bhaia placing his right hand on the bare head of his son 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 a murrain on his cattle.

Naturally also the Lambadas worshipped their packcattle. 37 "When sickness occurs they lead the sick man to the feet of the bullock called Hatadyia. On this animal no burden is ever laid but he is decorated with streamers or red - dyed silk, and tinkling bells with many brass chains and rings on neck and feet, and silken tassels hanging in all directions he moves steadily at the heat of the convoy, and at the place where he lies down when he is tired they pitch their camp for the day at his feet they
make their vows when difficulties overtake them, and in illness, whether of
themselves or their cattle they trust to his worship for a cure".

The Lambadis mostly claim themselves to be Hindus and worship many of the
deities of Hindu Pantheon. Many of the Lambadis returned themselves as Hindus in
Andhra Pradesh and only few returned themselves a Christians. The Lambadis of
Andhra Pradesh show special reverence to the deity Lord Venkateshawara whom they
call as 'Balaji'. Most of them have infinite faith in him and keep a picture of Lord
Venkateshwara and worship him every Saturday by offering him fruits and milk.
Besides Lord Venkateshwara, they also keep the pictures of Lord Kirshna/Rama and
Siva. They show some special reverence to Lord Krishna; Many Lambadi houses are
having pictures of Lord Krishna decorated with garlands and vermillion.

Besides the Hindu Pantheon they also worship local Gods and goddesses for
different purposes. These deities are also worshipped by other local Hindu Castes.
Following are some of the deities propitiated by the Lambadis.

**Goddess Maramma**

She is considered a malevolent deity and is supposed to have powers over
epidemics like cholera and small pox. Unless she is appeared once in a year she may
ravage the Tandas by spreading epidemics. Lambadis look at her with fear and
reverence. They sacrifice a goat in the nature in the name of this deity during the month of May.\(^40\)

**Goddess Tulchamma**

She is considered as a benevolent deity and is believed to have power over crops and welfare of the Tanda.\(^41\) They worship her in the month of September by sacrificing a goat.\(^42\)

**Goddess Maisamma**

She is worshipped and a goat is beheaded in her name in the month of December. They believe that she controls natural calamities like cyclones, fires etc., and if she is appeased once in a year she protects the Lambadi community from snake and scorpion bites and wild animals like tiger, cheetah and lion and other natural phenomena like fires and cyclones.\(^43\)

**Bhumi Lakshamma**

She has powers over the fertility of land. If she is worshipped once in a year, they believe, she increases the fertility of land. She is strictly a vegetarian deity and is worshipped in the month of December. On the day of worship the Lambadis take bath early in the morning and put on washed clothes. The women prepare puri and moi, go
to their respective fields and put puri and moi on all the four corners of the field. They partake puri and moi in the field itself and return home.

Besides the above important deities, they also show reverence to the deities (1) Gangamma (2) Paddamma (3) Elaramma (4) Huliamma, (5) Mallalamma and (6) Ankalamma. These deities are more popular with the people of other castes of the region and worshipped once in three or four years regularly.

Maramma, Tulchamma and Maisamma are represented by stones at some distances from the Tanda. Before the worship they whitewash these stones and put vermilion marks on it. Whenever they make a sacrifice to a deity all the people of Tanda together purchase a sacrificed animal and offer it. The meat is distributed among all the families of the Tanda. Each Lambadi family in the Tanda must contribute for purchasing the sacrificial animal whenever the Naik and elders of the Tanda decide it. Only after contributing to it, the individual households are free to sacrifice their own birds or animals individually.

Also, Lambadis have their own caste deities to whom they show respect and reverence. People belonging to Mude clan worship three Saktis called Hunasakti, Kosa sakti and Mani sakti. Thurston has pointed out that, the Sagalis of Punganur and Palamner in the North Arcot District, Worship the Tirupathi Swamy and also two saktis called Kosa Sakti and Mani sakti. Lambadi women worship three female deities called Agarasi, Nagarasi and Khagarasi.
Bhavani is another deity which Lambadis worship. They say that their folkdances are performed only to appanse the Goddess Bhavani. They feel that if they stop their traditional dancing, the Goddess may be angry, and with the result that the Lambadis believe that they may be afflicted by natural calamities and epidemics. They also say that they appeal to the goddess in time of difficulties and dangers and the appeal never go unheard. The goddess is represented by a big stone placed on a heap of stones outside the habitation area. Once in a year they worship her by sacrificing a goat. On the day of worship they smear the stone with lime and put vermilion marks on it.45

The Banjaras worship seven sisters, malevolent deities namely: (1)Tulja, (2) Dholangar, (3) Hingbhavani, (4) Amba, (5) Maramma (6)Masoori, (7) Seetala. Apart from these Banjaras worship a male deity called “Savabai Lankadiya”.46

Banjara festival is celebrated on the outskirts of the “Tanda”. Seetala din her sisters deities are considered as goddesses of small pox and rituals are performed to please them, in order to protect themselves and their cattle from diseases.47

Maramma is believed to protect their females and children and preserve the fertility of their lands. Seetala is regarded as the protector of the cattle. Mathral is a goddess for the welfare of the cattle. They also worship Kanakali and Mankali at the time of festivals like Dasara and sacrifice goats to these deities. And also they worship Rupa Sathi, Lakshma Sathi, Huma Sathi, Kosali Sathi, Sausathi and Somali
Sathi who are fertility goddesses. They celebrate Hindu festivals like Ugadi, Rakhi, Naga Panchami, Dasara, Deepavali, Sankranti and Holy. The important traditional festivals are Seetala Tulja Bhavani. The report of Mysore census 1891 says that the Lambadis are basically Vishnuvaits, and their principle object worship is Krishna. Bana Sankari, the goddess of forests, should be needed in order to bring out the facts about the origin of caste and religion.

**Lambada: Way of Worship**

Rev J. Cain says that, in some places the Lambadas “fasten small rags torn from some old garment to a bush in honor of “Kampalamma” (Kampa means thickest bush). On the side of one of the roads from Baster are several large heaps of stones, which they have piled up in honor of the goddess “guttalamma”. It is their rule that, every banjari who possess the heaps is bound to place on stone on the heap, and make a salaam (salute) to it. Banjaris carry their principle goddess “Banjari mata” on the horns of their cattle.

There are two types of sacrifices in them religious life. They are: -

i) They have a practice of sacrifice of a goat or a chicken.

ii) Sacrifice of a human being.

According to Rev. G.N. Thomssen the Banjara people worship the Supreme Being in a very pathetic manner. A symbol of stake, either a carved stick, or a peg, or
a knife, is planted on the ground, and men and women make a circle round this and chant or sing. Then all people bend very low to the earth, clapping them and praying them together. This whole cry is symbolic of a child crying in the night for the light. 48

Ceremonies and Sacrifices

Banjaras practices a custom of goat sacrifice or a chicken, in view of their journey from one part of the jungle to another when sickness has come. They hope to escape death by leaving one campaign ground for another. Half-way between the old and the new grounds, a chicken or goat is buried alive, the head of the goat or chicken being allowed to be above ground, then all the cattle are driven over the buried creature and the whole community walk over the buried victim. Through this sacrifice they believe that their journey and stay in new place will be safe. 49

According to Abbe Duboi’s writings, in the olden days Banjaras offered human beings as sacrifices to their gods and goddess. They secretly carried of the first person they meet, and having taken 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 sort of lump of dough made of flour, which they place on his head. Than 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 making a great noise, till he expires.
Lambada Social Profile

Lambadas are very good in their dispute resolutions. They look very rich in their social life. Most of them depend on cultivation. Today some are because of Church involvement are doing business. But one can not say they are above of the poverty line. Education, economical life or self-employment and health conditions, these three are important areas where they need to develop still more.

Lambada Council

Lambadas have their own traditional council for each thanda for the disposal of disputes originated from economic and social causes. The council consists of one headman (Nayak), one advisor (Karbari) and one messenger (dappan). All the offices of the council are hereditary. They call traditional council as Nayakar Ghar.

Profession

Lambadas are expert cattle breeders and largely subsists by sale of milk and milk products. They have settled in modern times on land and also became good agriculturists. Generally Lambadas are giving up their nomadic habits and permanently settling on land. The landless families are migrating to towns and cities for their livelihood. The migrated personnel earning livelihood as rickshawpullers, labourers, domestic workers, bag carriers in market yards, etc.
Social Custom

According to Dr. K. Mohan Rao, Director of Tribal Cultural Research and Training Institute Tribal Welfare Department, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh in 1993, Banjaras have their own way of traditional council. This council consists of one headman (Nayak) one advisor (Karbari) and one messenger (Dappan). All the offices of the council are hereditary. In the absence of the Nayak, the Karbari presides over the meetings. The Dappan, the official messenger conveys the messages to the Tanda areas on the order of the Nayak. The presence of Nayak, Karbari and Dapper are essential during the marriage ceremony. This shows their strict adherence to the law of their thandas in order to establish justice and peace among them in case any disputes were to arise among them.

Occupation of the Lambadas

They travel from one place to another especially in the areas with grain and other produce on bullock, as they keep large herds. They live in huts called thandas little distance from established villages. Recently they adopted agriculture. Banjaras are expert cattle breeders and they live largely by milk products. They have settled in modern times on land and also became good agriculturists. In the past they used to manufacture gunny bags and supply to farmers. But in modern days they are not manufacturing gunny bags as mill made bags are available at cheap rates. Banjaras are giving up their nomadic habits and permanently settling on land. The landless
families are migrating to towns and cities and making out their livelihood by rickshaw pulling and by earning daily wages in the construction work of buildings and roads.  

**Summing Up**

The origin of Banjaras from Northern India and its spread to other parts of India has resulted in change and adoption in social traditions depending on the geographical and physical circumstances. Banjaras called as Lambadas in Telangana have rich cultural heritage following customs and rituals of Hindus but totally neglected from the mainstream society. It is evident from the above literature that Lambada’s worship female deities of Hindu religion while their way of living is in complete contrast to other people. Lambadas live in thandas i.e. villages far away or disconnected from the mainstream society adopting the socio-cultural traditions passed on to them by their ancestors. However the scenario is changing which is evident from the fact that Lambada people are moving to towns and cities in search of employment and livelihood thereby resulting in awareness and inclusion in the society through education, job and this is visible in their way of living and dressing that has changed over the years. The following chapters will look into the details that have actually brought out this change.
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*Census of India*, p.41.

*Tanda* Means Tribal Village.


*Census of India*, pp.42-43.


