CHAPTER - II

ORIGIN OF THE LAMBADA TRIBES

India, a country with diversified cultural heritage, spread widely with various cultures, traditions, castes based on their respective professions. Banjaras a tribe in India, meant for their efficient logistics is a shining beacon to the nation’s culture and are the best known for their migrating from one place to other in search of merchandise, with their Pack- Bullocks. They have shown path to various empires from north to south and are meant to be the outstanding service providers to the kings in showing path to them, as they themselves are the explorers of the places. Indian society is very carefully and dexterously stratified on the basis of castes and sects. This carefulness and dexterity are used not only to divide the society into thousands of sections but also to protect and preserve this system for ages, banning and barring mobility and interaction between castes. Each caste has a caste lower than itself in hierarchy. Even the most downtrodden and discriminated against section like “untouchables” are divided sharply among themselves according to their castes and practice untouchability against one another. Subservience to one caste and subjugating another caste will put each caste’s agenda, position and attitude in tact by making it rigid in its hierarchical behaviour.¹

The most neglected and oppressed groups in India are tribal groups. They live away from the society facing the wrath of indignity and social discrimination
for centuries. It was Mahatma Gandhi who fought hard to recognize them as free citizens of India and call them the ‘Girizans’ or the children of the forest god.\(^2\) India has 461 tribal groups with a population of 677.68 lakhs (8.08%) accounting about one – fourth of world tribal population. the state of Andhra Pradesh consists of 34 tribal groups consisting a population of 4.2 (6.59%) millions\(^3\) predominantly living in the nine scheduled districts: Srikakulam, Vijayanagaram, Visakhapatnam, West Godavari, east Godavari, Warangal, Khammam, Adilabad and Kurnool.\(^4\) Several historians have tried to write the history of Lambadas by referring to their profession, lifestyle, language, dress code, celebrations so on and so forth. What is of interest to me that I am going to discuss in this paper is how Lambada oral tradition captures all this meticulously and shares it in the community thus passing on the history from generation to generation. It is obvious that Lambadas have not learnt about themselves from history books as they were not literate until a few decades ago. It is “history” that has borrowed from Lambada oral tradition. Even without the interference of history, the Lambada history has stayed intact in the form of oral tradition.\(^5\)

Tribal peoples constitute roughly 8.2% percent of the nation’s total population, nearly 8.5 crore people according to the 2011 census.\(^6\) One concentration lives in a belt along the Himalayas stretching through Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh in the west, to Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Manipur, and Nagaland in the northeast. Another concentration lives in the hilly areas of central India Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, and, to a lesser extent, Andhra
Pradesh in this belt, which is bounded by the Narmada River to the North and the Godavari River to the Southeast. Tribal peoples occupy the slopes of the region’s mountains. Other tribals, the Santals, live in Bihar and West Bengal. There are smaller numbers of tribal people in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala, in western India in Gujarat and Rajasthan, and in the union territories of Lakshadweep and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

In the northeastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Nagaland, upward of 90 percent of the population are tribal. However, in the remaining Northeast states of Assam, Manipur, Sikkim, and Tripura, tribal peoples form between 20 and 30 percent of the population. The largest tribes are found in Central India, although the tribal population there accounts for only around 10 percent of the region’s total population. Major concentrations of tribal people live in Maharashtra, Orissa, and West Bengal. In the south, about 1 percent of the populations of Kerala and Tamil Nadu are tribal, whereas about 6 percent in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka are members of tribes. There are 573 communities recognized by the government as Scheduled Tribes and therefore eligible to receive special benefits and to compete for reserved seats in legislatures and schools.

**Social Status of Tribes in India**

K.L. Bhowmick explains social status of Indian tribes. He mentioned in his writings that, in India, tribes are living in their present locations for many years with
exception of a few migrating and transhumance groups. Over 63 per cent of these people live in hilly and forest-terrain while 1.6 percent lives in semiarid region and 2.2 percent in Islands. They live in small habitations, which consist of single or double-roomed huts, often in irregular clusters, or wagon type, arranged in two or four opposing rows, in a grove of trees. Domesticates (cattle, sheep, goat, swine etc,) also share the habitation. Most of their houses have stone paved and plastered floors, mud walls on wooden frames with thatched roofs. They procure basic food needs through traditional “shandys” (weekly markets) and petty trade activities. They practice a wide range of economic pursuits such as hunting, forest produce, fishing, cattle breeding and plough cultivation. They have developed an inseparable bond with every type of resource and they consider their environment sacred.

The tribes developed an organization in the social sphere with intricate networks pertaining to group solidarity in relation to their environment. The endogamy principle at group level, exogamy at population level was the two characteristics in operation in the tribal habitats, and in fact, this character keeps them distinct from the rest of the Indian population.

Generally, Tribes are at the lowest point in every socio-economic indicator. Today, the majority of the population regards them as primitive and aims at discriminating them as peoples or at best integrating them with the mainstream at the lowest rung in the ladder.
Tribal groups living in North Eastern part of our country are at present very progressive educationally and economically. However, certain groups like Chenchus of Andhra Pradesh remain more or less in the food gathering stage of economy. Kolams, Poojas of Andhra Pradesh and Bonda’s of Orissa are isolated primitive groups. However, there are certain communities like Gonds and Lambadas who largely continue to be as pastoral communities.

Among the tribal communities traditional values and social ethos play an important role and the significance of socio-cultural factors cannot be ignored in formulating schemes of their all round development. Since they are at different levels of socio-economic spectrum, there is a possibility of wide-socio-cultural variability.

To understand socio-cultural matrix one has to come across the knowledge of a family in any society. Because in the family structure we could understand one’s behavior, how they act and react in family first and society next. Especially, the tribal social factors are largely based on the economic and social factors. A woman is considered to be an economic assert. Because that if any man has more lands he will marry more women. Among these categories Raj Gonds and Bagathas of Andhra Pradesh are listed as polygamous families.

The health is an important indicator of any group. The poor health care is more critical since illness has serious economic consequences on their fragile income. The tribes, being the poorest of the poor in terms of both income and human resources
requires specialized health care that is appropriate, accessible and affordable. The 1993 World Development Report focusing on “Investing in Health” stressed the need for “investments to reduce health risks among the poor and provision of insurance against catastrophic health care costs are important elements of reducing poverty”.

The scanty data and information available on the health status of Indian tribes shows that the maternal mortality (between 8 and 25 per 1000) is more than double the rates in the advanced regions. The infant mortality rates are between 120 and 150 and they are more than double the mortality in the low performing centers of the plains. The crude death rates are also very high. These adverse health indicators are largely due to inadequate access to the right foods - iron, protein and micronutrients such as iodine and vitamins - and lack of access to health care services. Besides, the “trickle down” approach pursued in the health care system does not appear to have improved the living conditions of tribes. “The cycle between hungers – disease - low levels of productivity (measured both in terms of absence from work as well as duration) – low wages – indebtedness – reduced consumption levels – disease is reflective of how the development process has largely bypassed the tribal’s life”.¹⁰

Education is a vital factor in accelerating integration. While non-tribal societies are progressing at a greater speed, the tribal societies are moving at snail’s pace and the gap between the two societies remains as wide as ever, if not more. The economic backwardness of tribal household, non-production oriented educational system, stereotyped syllabi and curricula, disinterested teaching staff, lack of
persuasion and follow up employment programme suited to tribal conditions are some of the major hurdles standing in the way of bridging the gap.\footnote{11}

The effectiveness of educational policy likewise varies by region. In those parts of the northeast India, where tribes have generally been spared the wholesale onslaught of outsiders, schooling has helped tribal people to secure political and economic benefits. The education system has provided a corps of highly trained tribal members in the professions and high-ranking administrative posts. However, tribal schools are plagued by high dropout rates in most parts of India. Children attend for the first three to four years of primary school and gain a smattering of knowledge, only to lapse into illiteracy later. Few who enter continue up to the tenth grade; of those who do, few manage to finish high school. Therefore, very few are eligible to attend institutions of higher education, where the high rate of attrition continues. The commitment of tribes to acquire a formal education for their children varies considerably. The tribes differ in the extent to which they view education positively.\footnote{12}

Extending the system of primary education into tribal areas and reserving places for tribal children in middle and high schools and higher education institutions are central government policy, but efforts to improve a tribe’s educational status have had mixed results. Recruitment of qualified teachers and determination of the appropriate language of instruction also remain troublesome. Commission after commission on the “language question” has called for instruction, at least at the primary level, in the students’ native tongue. In some regions, tribal children entering
school must begin by learning the official regional language, often one completely unrelated to their tribal tongue.\textsuperscript{13}

The languages of the tribes appear to be either Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Tibeto-Burman or Austro-Asiatic. Other languages form only an insignificant part. The literacy status of the Tribes presents a mixed picture. In at least five states, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Kerala and Manipur the literacy level of the tribe population is higher than the national average. There are states at both ends of the literacy scale with a high proportion of Tribe population. Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh are the states with a significant proportion of tribe population with very low level of literacy for this social group.\textsuperscript{14}

The subjugated groups became castes forced to perform less desirable menial jobs like sweeping, cleaning of excreta, removal of dead bodies, leather works etc., the untouchables. Some of the earliest small – scale societies dependent on hunting and gathering, and traditional agriculture seem to have remained outside this process of agglomeration.\textsuperscript{15} These are the tribes of present day. Their autonomous existence outside the mainstream led to the preservation of their socio-religious and cultural practices, most of them retaining also their distinctive languages. Widow burning, enslavement, occupational differentiation, hierarchical social ordering, etc., are generally not there.
However, in the process of economic, cultural and ecological change, tribes attached themselves to caste group in a peripheral manner, and the process of de-tribalisation is a continuous one. Many of the Hindu communities have absorbed the cultural practices of the tribes. Although Hinduism could be seen as one unifying thread running through the country as a whole, it is not homogenous but in reality a conglomeration of centuries old traditions and shaped by several religious and social traditions. In one way, tribalisation is taking place in Hindu societies, which are cultural in their essence (that includes elements of Tribes socio-religious culture).

Unlike non-tribal societies, the tribal societies suffer from lack of enlightened leadership to fill the political vacuum created by the introduction of Panchayat Raj. Most of the Tribal Samithi Presidents and Sarpanch’s belong to neo-traditional category of leaderships. The traditional leaders could successfully capture the statutory leadership because of their long-standing traditional hold. But, when it comes to actual discharge of their duties according to statutory provisions, these neo-traditional leaders have intricacies of the rules and regulations that come to their rescue because the former are out of context and in the latter they are ignorant. A tribal Sarpanch is more successful as traditional leader rather than as a statutory leader. At the Samithi level, the situation is still ambiguous. Plain settlers play a dominant role in the election of the Tribal Samithi President. Such a President functions without spontaneous popular support or the skill of a seasoned politician. This analysis ultimately leads us to the question whether this super structure of institutionalized leadership in tribal areas is ahead of times. Unlike castes, which
are part of a complex and interrelated local economic exchange system, tribes tend to form self-sufficient economic units. Often they practice swidden farming, clearing a field by slash-and-burn methods, planting it for a number of seasons, and then abandoning it for a lengthy fallow period—rather than the intensive farming typical in most of rural India. For most tribal people, land-use rights traditionally derive simply from tribal membership. Tribal society tends to be egalitarian, its leadership being based on ties of kinship and personality rather than on hereditary status. Tribes typically consist of segment lineages whose extended families provide the basis for social organization and control. Unlike caste religion, which recognizes the hegemony of Brahman priests, tribal religion recognizes no authority outside the tribe.

Most tribes are concentrated in heavily forested areas that combine inaccessibility with limited political or economic significance. Historically, the economy of most tribes was subsistence agriculture or hunting and gathering. Tribal members traded with outsiders for the few necessities they lacked, such as salt and iron. A few local Hindu artisans might provide such items as cooking utensils. The twentieth century, however, has seen far-reaching changes in the relationship between tribals and the larger society and, by extension, traditional tribal economies. Improved transportation and communications have brought ever-deeper intrusions into tribal lands; merchants and a variety of government policies have involved tribal peoples more thoroughly in the cash economy, although by no means on the most favorable of terms. Large areas fell into the hands of non-tribals around 1900, when many regions were opened by the government to homestead-style settlement.¹⁸
Immigrants received free land in return for cultivating it. Tribal people, too, could apply for land titles, although even title to the portion of land they happened to be planting that season could not guarantee their ability to continue Sweden cultivation. More important, the notion of permanent, individual ownership of land was foreign to most tribals. Land, if seen in terms of ownership at all, was viewed as a communal resource, free to whoever needed it. By the time tribals accepted the necessity of obtaining formal land titles, they had lost the opportunity to lay claim to lands that might rightfully have been considered theirs. Generally, tribals were severely disadvantaged in dealing with government officials who granted land titles. Albeit belatedly, Colonial Regime realized that the necessity of protecting tribals from the predations of outsiders and prohibited the sale of tribal lands. Although an important loophole in the form of land leases was left open, tribes made some gains in the mid-twentieth century. Despite considerable obstruction by local police and land officials, who were slow to delineate tribal holdings and slower still to offer police protection, some land was returned to tribal peoples.

In the 1970s, the gains tribal peoples had made in earlier decades were eroded in many regions, especially in central India. Migration into tribal lands increased dramatically, and the deadly combination of constabulary and revenue officers uninterested in tribal welfare and sophisticated non-tribals willing and able to bribe local officials was sufficient to deprive many tribals of their landholdings. The means of subverting protective legislation were legion: local officials could be persuaded to ignore land acquisition by non-tribal people, alter land registry records, lease plots of
land for short periods and then simply refuse to relinquish them, or induce tribal members to become indebted and attach their lands. Whatever the means, the result was that many tribal members became landless laborers in the 1960s and 1970s, and regions that a few years earlier had been the exclusive domain of tribes had an increasingly heterogeneous population. Unlike previous eras in which tribal people were shunted into more remote forests, by the 1960s relatively little unoccupied land was available. Government efforts to evict non-tribal members from illegal occupation have proceeded slowly; when evictions occur at all, those ejected are usually members of poor, lower castes. In a 1985 publication, anthropologist Christoph Von Fürer-Haimendorf describes this process in Andhra Pradesh: on average only 25 to 33 percent of the tribal families in such villages had managed to keep even a portion of their holdings. Outsiders had paid about 5 percent of the market value of the lands they took.

Improved communications, roads with motorized traffic, and more frequent government intervention figured in the increased contact that tribal peoples had with outsiders. Tribes fared best where there was little to induce non-tribals to settle; cash crops and commercial highways frequently signaled the dismemberment of the tribes. Merchants have long been a link to the outside world, but in the past, they were generally petty traders, and the contact they had with tribal people was transient. By the 1960s and 1970s, the resident non-tribal shopkeeper was a permanent feature of many villages. Shopkeepers often sold liquor on credit, enticing tribal members into debt and into mortgaging their land. In the past, tribes made up shortages before
harvest by foraging from the surrounding forest. More recently, shopkeepers have offered ready credit with the proviso that loans be repaid in kind with 50 to 100 percent interest after harvest. Repaying one bag of millet with two bags has set up a cycle of indebtedness from which many have been unable to break loose.

The possibility of cultivators growing a profitable cash crop, such as cotton or castor-oil plants, continues to draw merchants into tribal areas. Non-tribal traders frequently establish an extensive network of relatives and associates as shopkeepers to serve as agents in a number of villages. Cultivators who grow a cash crop often sell to the same merchants, who provide consumption credit throughout the year. The credit carries a high-interest price tag, whereas the tribal peoples’ crops are bought at a fraction of the market rate. Cash crops offer a further disadvantage in that they decrease the supply of available foodstuffs and increase tribal dependence on economic forces beyond their control. This transformation has meant a decline in both the tribes’ security and their standard of living.

In previous generations, families might have purchased silver jewelry as a form of security; contemporary tribal people are more likely to buy minor consumer goods. Whereas jewelry could serve as collateral in critical emergencies, current purchases simply increase indebtedness. In areas where gathering forest products are remunerative, merchants exchange their products for tribal labor. Indebtedness is so extensive that although such transactions are illegal, traders sometimes “sell” their debtors to other merchants, much like indentured servants.
The affect for some tribes has come when non-tribals, through political jockeying, have managed to gain legal tribal status, that is, to be listed as a Scheduled Tribe. The Gonds of Andhra Pradesh effectively lost their only advantage in trying to protect their lands when the Banjaras, a group that had been settling in Gond territory were classified as a Scheduled Tribe in 1977. Their newly acquired tribal status made the Banjaras eligible to acquire Gond land “legally” and to compete with Gonds for reserved political seats, places in education institutions, and other benefits. Because the Banjaras are not scheduled in neighboring Maharashtra, there has been an influx of Banjara emigrants from that state into Andhra Pradesh in search of better opportunities.

**Discrimination among Tribes**

Around 67.7 million people belong to “Scheduled Tribes” in India and are generally considered to be “Adivasis”, literally meaning “indigenous people” or “original inhabitants”, through the term “Scheduled Tribes” (STs). But it is not in line with the term “Adivasis”. Scheduled Tribes is an administrative term used for the purposes of “administering” certain specific constitutional privileges, protection and benefits for specific sections of peoples considered to be historically disadvantaged and “backward”. However, this administrative term does not exactly match all the people called “Adivasis”. Out of the 5653 distinct communities in India, 635 are considered to be “tribes” or “Adivasis”. In comparison, one finds that the estimated number of STs varies from 250 to 593.
With the Scheduled Tribes population making up the 8.08% (as of 1991) of the total population of India, it is the nation with the highest concentration of “indigenous peoples’ in the world. The constitution of India, which came into existence on 26 January 1950, prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth (Article 15) and it culture and education (Articles 29-30). STs are supposedly addressed by as many as 209 Articles and 2 special schedules of the constitution – Articles and special schedules, which are protective and paternalistic.

Article 341 and 342 provides for classification of Scheduled Castes (the untouchable lower castes) and STs, while Articles 330, 332 and 334 provides for reservation of seats in Parliament and Assemblies. For purpose of specific focus on the development of STs, the government has adopted a package of programs, which is administered in specific geographical areas with considerable ST population, and it covers 69% of the tribal population. Despite this, and after the largest “modern democracy” of the worlds has existed for more than half a century, the struggles of the survival of the Adivasis – for livelihood and existence as peoples – have today intensified and spread as never before in history.

Over the centuries, the Adivasis have evolved an intricate convivial-custodial mode of living. Adivasis belong to their territories, which are the essence of their existence; the abode of the spirit and their dead and the source of their science, technology, way of life, their religion and culture. Back in history, the Adivasis were in effect self-governing “first nations”. In general and in most parts of the pre-colonial
period, they were notionally part of the “unknown frontier” of the respective states where the rule of the reign in fact did not extend, and the Adivasis governed themselves outside of the influence of the particular ruler.

The introduction of the alien concept of private property began with the permanent settlement of the British in 1793 and the establishment of the “Zamindari” system that conferred control over vast territories, including Adivasi territories, to designated feudal lords for the purpose of revenue collection by the British. This drastically commenced the forced restructuring of the relationship of Adivasis to their territories as well as the power relationship between Adivasis and “others”—the predominant external caste-based religion sanctioned and practised a rigid and highly discriminatory hierarchical ordering with a strong cultural mooring.

This became the natural basis for the altered perception of Adivasis by the “others” in determining the social, and hence, the economic, and political space in the emerging larger society that is the Indian Diaspora. Relegating the Adivasis to the lowest rung in the social ladder was but natural and this formed the basis of social and political decision making by the largely upper caste controlled mainstream. The ancient Indian scriptures, scripted by the upper castes, further provided legitimacy to this.

The subjugated peoples have been relegated to low status and isolated, instead of either being eliminated or absorbed. Entry of Europeans and subsequent
colonization of Asia transformed the relationship between the mainstream communities and tribal communities of this region. Introduction of capitalism, private property and the creation of the countrywide market broke the traditional economy based on useful values and hereditary profession.

All tribal communities are not alike. They are the products of different historical and social conditions. They belong to four different language families, and several different racial stocks and religious moulds. They have kept themselves apart from feudal states and brahminical hierarchies for thousands of years. In the Indian epics such as Ramayana, Mahabharata and Puranas (folklore) there are many references to interactions and wars between the forest or hill tribes and the Hindus.

Eminent historians who have done detailed research on the epic Ramayana (200 B.C to 500 B.C) have concluded that “Lanka”, the kingdom of the demonic king Ravana and “Kishkinda”, the homeland of the Vanaras (depicted as monkeys) were places situated south of Chitrakuta hill and north of Narmada River in middle India. Accordingly, Ravana and his demons were an aboriginal tribe, most probably the Gond, and the Vanaras, like Hanuman in the epic belonged to the Savara and Korky tribes whose descendants still inhabit the central Indian forest belt. Even today, the Gond holds Ravana, the villain of Ramayana, in high esteem as a chief. Rama, the hero of Ramayana, is also known for slaughtering the Rakshasas (demons) in the forests!
The epic of Mahabharata refers to the death of Krishna at the hands of Bhil Jaratha. In the ancient scriptures, considered to be sacred by the upper castes, various terms are used depicting Adivasis as almost non-humans. The epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata, the Puranas, Samhitas and other so-called “sacred books” refer to Adivasis as Rakshasa (demons), Vanara (monkeys), Jambuvan (boatmen), Naga (serpents), Bhusundi Kaka (crow), Garuda (King of Eagles) etc. in medieval India, they were called derogatorily as Kolla, Villa Kirata, Nishada, and those who surrendered or were subjugated were termed as Dasa (slave) and those who refused to accept the bondage of slavery were termed as Dasyu (a hostile robber).

The Lambada tribe is one of the oldest tribes, also known as Banjara, Boipari, Sugali or Sukali, Vanjari, Brinjari, Labani, Labana, Lambani, etc. in different parts of India. The Banjara tribe in Deccan claims to be the descendents of two brothers Mota and Mola, who tended the cattle of Lord Krishna. However, other historians disagree to this claim and believe that they are migrants from Persia or from European countries or Romany gypsies. Other source says that they hail from the Middle East, North Africa and Russia. The name Banjara was given to them during the period of colonial rulers. They were also known as ghor (name of the language) community. However, the Lambada tribe can be seen mostly in the districts of mahabubnagar, Warangal, Khammam, Adilabad, Ananthapur, Cuddappah, Krishna, and these areas are called as Telangana. As per census, the lambada tribe consists of 5.5 millions in the state of Andhra Pradesh.
The Lambada tribe in Telangana region lives in ‘Thandas’ (tribal hamlet) one or two kilometers away from the main village and nearer to the forest working together in groups (10-15 families). All disputes, conflicts tried before the naik and elders, whose judgment is final on all matters. The eldest son of Naik succeeds the father as headman. The customs of marriage, the religious life, beliefs, worship, festivals and their traditions are different from other civil society. The change and continuity among lambada tribe is still unable to bring them out of their social evils and folklore due to various myths. Some of them can be quoted as celebration of ‘Teej’ (fertility) festival for nine days to goddess Maremma, Sheetal Bhavani festival (protective cattle), Tolja Bhavani celebration, omen & ceremonies and community festivals, etc for which every individual irrespective of his financial status shall contribute and obey the village headman. They still practice ‘Dharumata’ (goddess of liquor) celebrations in which they offer country-made-liquor to the goddess and make the children also to consume the same as a community celebration in order to get the blessing of dharu mata.

Communities in Lambada Tribe

The Lambada tribe is also known as ‘Sugalis’. It is a scheduled tribe inhabiting throughout the state of Andhra Pradesh. According to 2001 census it is the largest tribe in Andhra Pradesh. They live in exclusive settlements of their own called ‘Thandas’, usually away from the main village, tenaciously maintaining their culture and ethnic identity.
Lambada community comprises of five main clans viz., 1) Bhukiya, (Rathod), 2) Vadhitya (Jadhav), 3) Chauhan, 4) Pamar and 5) Banoth (Ade). They are further divided into Patrilineal kin groups called Pada or Jath (sub clan). Bhukya Phratry consists of 27 Padas while, Vadhitya 52, Chauhan 6, Parmar 12 and Banoth 13.

**Location of Lambada Tribe**

Lambadi are considered as a scheduled tribe in Andhra Pradesh. They are also found in other states and important cities like Bihar, West Bengal, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Mysore and Orissa. The Lambadas also called as Sugalis Labanis and Banjaras. Thurston treats Lambada as synonym of Brinjari or Banjari, Sugali or Sukali. According to him, "The Banjaras are the well known Tribe of carries who are found all over Western and Southern India. One of their principal sub-castes is known under the name of Labhani, and this name is often applied to the whole Tribe. The two names appear each under many variations, such as Banjari, Vanjari, Brinjari, Lambhani, Kabani, Labana, Lambadi and Lambadr." Hutton also agrees with Thurstan and treats "Lambada as synonym of Banjara". Etythoven is of the opinion that Lamanis, Vanjaris, Banjaras, Banjaris, Brinjaris, Lamanas, Lambadis, Lambaras and Sukalis are one and the same.

Various explanations are given about the names of Banjara, Lambada and Sugali. Elderly persons of Chapancheruvu, Pattegadda and Jadavaraopalle thandas of
Mahaboobnagar District in, Andhra Pradesh believe that the name 'Banjara' is the correlation of the 'Vanachara' which means those who live or roam in the forest. Some of them contend their origin of their name with Prithviraj Chauhan who was defeated by Muhammad Ghori. Subsequent to this defeat most of his soldiers (Raj put) hibernated to forests which became their abode, and thus they are called 'Vanacharis'.

**Myth of the Lambada Religion**

The tribals do not cut some of the trees because they understand that these trees are also taboos for them. Wherever such kinds of trees are found, they are considering them as sacred shines. Lambadas consider the papal tree as sacred. A history of sacred tree according to Moor is that they choose papel tree on which they hang several bells taking from the necks of their sick cattle. Through this they believe that their cattle will be free from several diseases and dangers.

There is a legend in connection with matsya gundam (fish pool), which is situated in Yendrika hill in the Vishagkapatnam district. The fish therein are protected by the Madgole Zamindars. “Once the story goes like this, a Lambada caught one and turned in into curry, whereon the king of the fish solemnly cursed him, and he is seen there to this day”. These myths are making them to respect ecological and geographical balance.
Legend: The Origin of Lambada Tribe

Mr. G. A. Grierson states that the Lambadas are well known tribe of “carriers of salt” found all over western and southern India. For the clarification of the word “carriers” there is a need to see the meaning of the word Banjara with this name too they are calling. The word Banjara probably would have been inherited from the Sanskrit name Vanijya in Karanataka, a merchant lived in olden days. The meaning of the word Lambani or Lambhani in Sanskrit means salt carrier which derived from the root word ‘Lavana’ means salt.

Another legend for the origin of Banjars goes like this that Vali and Sugriva were two great personality of Ramayana, from whom the Lambada claims to have descended. According to Mr. F. S. Mullay with the resource notes on criminal classes of Madras Presidency College says, “There were two brothers, Mota and Mola descendants of Sugriva. Mola had no children and along with his wife Radha performed an excellent show of playing of Nagara (Drum) in front of King. One day before three Rajas to permitted him to adopt three children namely Chavia, Logiapanchar, and Ratada as a gift granted after his prayer. These boys in course of time grew up and married. From Bheekya the eldest son of Ratada, started the clan known as the Bahtyas, and from these clan three minor subdivisions known as the Maigavuth, Kurumtoths and Kholas developed. The Bhtyas are considered to be the principle class among Lambadis. This information makes their history as kingly history.
Migration and Brief Historical Background of Lambada

The origin and history of Lambadis are very vague and ambiguous. There are many legends, which explain their origin. They themselves claim that they are of Rajput origin and are Kshatriys. Lambadis of Telengana claim that they are from a warrior race and have fought against the Muhammadnas. Rooplal of Mehboobnagar and Linganaik of Chapancheruvu Tanda and many other elders claim that their forefathers were the soldiers who withstood the onslaught of Mohammad Ghori, the invader from Afghanistan, during the 12th Century, under the able leadership of Prithviraj Chauhan the then ruler of Delhi. Ghori defeated Prithviraj Chauhan, in collusion with the treacherous Jayachandra, who ordered the wholesale massacre of the Rajput solders. The solders to escape the wrath of Ghori ran to hide themselves throughout India and some went into hiding in forests also. Then changed their name as Banjara and Lambada so that. Ghori may not find out their identity, which explains their migration to the Deccan. Thus, they have clan by name Chauhan which shows their connection with Prithviraj Chauhan.

Enthoven states that "the Lambada Tribe clearly has been recruited to some extent either from Rajput sources or from followers of Rajput clans who have adopted the clan names of their masters". Crooke states that, the Rajput origin is admitted in their traditions. Enthoven himself feels that the Tribe, besides Rajputs sign, may also consist of other castes like Marathas, Maharas, and a number of other well known tribes. But Lambadis are vehement in denying the mixed origin of their
community; they say that they are Rajputs without any admixture of other caste. Basing upon the information given above these Lambadas belong to kingly family and in the course of time due to problems they have become nomads, forest people ultimately tribal sect.

The migration of Banjaras to the south can be traced out during the period of sultanate and during the invasion of Mughal on Deccan as well. Allauddin Khilji became the sultan of Delhi in the year 1296 A.D., he thought that he would become Alexander the second in conquering the world. In this adventure, he thought of taking the help of Banjaras, who could move fact along with their pack-bullocks and quick supply of rations to the armies of sultan. This system of speedy transportation in those days was difficult in trackless terrain and Banjaras stood in high esteem in the eyes of the sultan and his generals. Banjaras kept the well stocked provisions required by army. For their services in transporting ration to the armies they were granted many privileges, such as advancing money for their trade and asked to supply food grain whenever the state needed. There is no unanimity among the historians about the exact location or exact place from where this tribe spread to other parts of the country. Mythological and historical accounts suggest that their homeland was somewhere in North-Western India and more likely in the Marwar region of Rajasthan, from where they spread in the historical past, in all directions to Kashmir in the north, Deccan and beyond in the south, and in the east to eastern Uttar Pradesh. It appears to be a mixed ethnic group and owes its origin to the wars in the southern India of the Delhi, emperors, both Afghan and Moghal. When the Banjaras carried the commissariat of
the imperial armies, they helped the imperial armies fighting in an exhausted country far from their supply base, by conducting a fearless and reliable transport service. In view of their occupation the Banjaras may be referred to as non-pastoral nomads or service nomads. The association of the Banjaras with Muslim imperial Army can be traced back to the time of Sikandar Lodi’s attack on Dholpur in 1504 A.D., from then onwards they supplied on the eve of every campaign in the south with grains and provisions. The armies in the war fields are fed by the Banjaras and they are never injured by either army. The Banjaras of Deccan often mentioned by Mohammedan and British historians have a long history of migrations. What distinguishes the migration of the Banjaras from the migration of other tribal groups is the fact that they never shifted their habitat as aimless wanderers rooted out of their native habitat by the invasions of a superior people or by the exhaustion of natural resources or livelihood in the original homeland. The earliest recorded evidence regarding this nomadic trading community is available in the personal narration of Mohd Fershta Bilgram’s “Tarikh-e-han-Jahan Lodi-e-Niamutullah” about 1612 A.D. According to Mohammad Kasim Ferishta in his work on ‘History of the Rise of the Mohomedan power in India’ in the year 1417 A.D., large convoys of Banjaras bullocks were seized by Khan Khanan who rebelled against Feroz Shah Bahamano to occupy the throne of Gulbarga. As carriers of grain for Mohammedan armies, the Banjaras figured in the history from the day of Mohammad-bin-Tuglak to Aurangazeb. They also supplied grains to the British army, British army under the marquise of Carn Wallies during the seize of Srirangapatnam in 1791-92 A.D.
According to the opinion of Kaul that Banjaras migrated to the south with the first Mohammadan armies, which invaded the south in 14th Century. Cumberlege, British historian, opines that Banjaras first came to the Deccan with Asaf Khan in the campaign which closed with the annexation of Ahmednagar and Berar by the emperor Shah Jahan about 1630 A.D. He further mentions that the immigration which settled the Banjaras upon the Deccan soil took place when these grain carriers came down with the Mogul armies early in the 17th Century. Syed Siraj-ul-Hussan was of the opinion that the Banjaras came to the Deccan with the armies of Asaf-Jah, the Vazir Shahjahan, Prof.Haimandorf and Russel and Heeralal also have expressed the same supporting opinion that the Banjaras came to Deccan along with the forces of Asaf Khan.

Lambadas Migration to Hyderabad and Telangana

General Briggs gives a longer period of migration spread over more than 400 years. There are certain incidents in the history showing that Banjaras came to the Deccan earlier than the Moghuls, who accompanied the army of Khilji under the command of Malik Kafur, who invaded Devagiri in 1304 A.D., and the Banjaras were the only source to supply the food grains to the army at the time of war during the reign of Allauddin Khilji. Juna Khan, popularly known as Mohammed – bin-Tuglak invaded south in 1323 A.D., and crossing the Vindhyas had become difficult for him because of the thickness of the forest. He found no means of transportation to enter into the south. Hence they required the services of Banjaras who were well equipped
in moving from place to place with their pack bullocks even through thick forests and mountains. The Banjaras were employed by Mohammad-bin-tuglak in his invasion to Warangal, the then capital of Kakatiya Rulers. Tuglak defeated Prataprudra, the ruler Warangal in 1323 A.D., when Devagiri was already a part of the Delhi Sultanate. This clearly explains that Tuglak might have come to the south Via Devagiri Sirbar(Sirpur) to Warangal. After the conquest of Warangal, most of the Banjaras stayed in Warangal and started trading in the south as it was not compulsory for Banjaras to return back to capital along with the army, since their services were required only at the time of war and during the rest of the time they were allowed to do their trade. The Banjara population concentrated in the regions where Tuglak marched to Warangal. The concentration of Banjaras is in the areas Viz., Devagiri (Daulatabad), Aurangabad and Mandvi in Maharashtra, Adilabad district of Andhra Pradesh is also more populated by the Banjaras. The Banjaras population in Warangal district of Andhra Pradesh is more in the Telangana districts when compared to other districts of Andhra Pradesh. When the Moghal emperors consolidated their position in the south, the Banjaras settled in different parts and continued their trade and served as connecting links between the south and the north.

It is believed that Banjaras acquire their criminal habits when they provided commissionarate services to the Moghul and British armies. The Lambadas are aware that their forefathers were migrants from North and but they were not definite whether they came along with the Moghul armies or not. Many households in the Banjara Thandas possess old swords. They may be some truth in their assumption, but
the swords armour, shields and other material cannot completely prove their participation in the wars as regular soldiers. Even the people who followed the armies from place to place supplying grains during the war required some equipment to protect themselves from the enemies who might try to disrupt the commissariat services which were as important as any other war for efficient functioning of the army. It is interesting to note that the Banjaras of Telangana are quite aware that they were migrants from north. The Banjaras of Telangana are always in the picture even during the time of Nizam providing commissariat services to the Nizam armies and they were better known in Telangana due to their criminal activities than in Andhra. In Telangana they were moving with Nizam’s armies. In Hyderabad where one of the colonies, Banjara Hills was the one of the Banjara settlements spread over five main Thands, called Erna Thanda, Seethya Thanda, Bhukya Thanda, Amaraiah Thanda and Ajameera Thanda, two additional thandas Jhangi and Bhangi Bhukya Thandas located in the city of Hyderabad. All the Thandas were forcibly evacuated by present residents and were developed into luxury residential colonies. Kamala Manohar Rao says that with the advent of the British rule, the Banjaras gradually lost much of the trade because of the introduction of the Railways. The Railways had destructive repercussions on their trade and livelihood. Further, he states that they were forced to abandon their professions and seek fresh means of livelihood. They adopted agriculture as their occupation. The Southern environments had a conspicuous effect on their manners, customs and practices. They began consciously or unconsciously to copy the local people. Gradually they lost their nomadic Character.
Lambada Cultural Profile

The Lambadas, also called as traditional gypsy community has been changing its life pattern due to the socio-cultural, religious, political and geographical influences time and again in their history. These changes are visible at various levels. Several circumstances have made them to adopt these changes. The main task of the thesis is to analyze these socio-cultural and religious changes in the Lambada community in the context of tribal developments. Now the cultural life will be seen in the following sub headings.

Lambada – Nomadic Culture

Lambadas are landowning people depending on forest products. They make temporary tents and live like nomads enjoying their life. But they are often forced to shift their tents and places. At times they become victims of police raids because of new projects and policies of the Government and in order to preserve their identity and to protect their sustenance, they willingly join various militant groups such as Naxalism and people’s War Groups.

In this process they loot the properties and kill innocent people including Government officials. This in turn had developed tensions between communities. Eventually, the traditional cultural values like honesty in life, sincerity in work, faithfulness to one another and sharing resources have been diminishing. So also on
the religious side, many conflicts arise among the people. To add to this, the political leaders have manipulated religious sentiments just to get their vote to get into power.

**Present situation of Lambadas**

Basically Lambada tribe led peripheral lives in thandas in Andhra Pradesh. Some of them still follow a nomadic lifestyle. We exactly do not know whether they are on the more or settled in a hamlet in the poverty-ridden Telangana region. Primarily their life has always been harsh for them. Their culture is different from the mainstream cultures. Lambada rituals have nothing in common with the rituals of the plain people. Traditionally, Lambadas or Banjaras have moved in groups. They depended on forest produce and odd jobs for living their day-to-day life. Work was equally shared between husband and wife. Especially a strong family bond and a strong thanda bond were the hallmarks of Lambada life.

Oli 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. Also a couple of animals served as bride fee. Many things have changed in the last decade when thousands of Lambada families transformed themselves into agricultural workers and adopted the ways of the mainstream population. Lambada labour comes cheap and they never shy away from work. Often they take up annual contracts at low rates. Hand owners find in them a hard working and undemanding work force.
Changes in the Life Style of Lambadas

Efforts to attain social acceptability began after the Lambadas settled down in Nalgonda district. Tribal culture and rituals gave way to non-tribal and Brahmincal rituals and along with this came financial burdens. The Oli system gave way to dowry and the demands for boys, who were far outnumbered by girls, rose steeply. Dowry is in vogue now. Educated Lambadas turn away from the life style of their families and seek respectability elsewhere.

The Lambadas have been changing their life pattern due to the socio-cultural, religious, political and geographical influences time and again in its history. Lambadas like Toda tribe in Tamil Nadu have characters of pastoral life. They are landowning people depending sometimes on forest products and sometimes on cultivation. But due to the governmental programmes sometimes they lose their lands and become poor. Even though they are calm going people because of the struggle for their existence sometimes they oppose the activities of government and in return they get punishment from the State Government. So also the political life and the cultural life have been influenced through several stages.

The Lambada tribe is the largest in Andhra Pradesh and is politically neglected and economically challenged. The issues that have caused the practice of female infanticide amongst this Lambada tribe are the low status of women in society, poverty, lack of education and lack of medical facilities. Giving birth to a girl involves worry of raising the child, food security, high marriage expenses, dowry and
blot on the family prestige. Women and girls are deprived of their social, economical and educational rights. The above situation has evolved into a sense of helpless insensitivity while making a decision to kill girl child in her infancy. One needs to improve the status of the Lambada women and girl children, in order to stop, the abandoning or killing their female rights and strive towards creating a humane quality of life.

The Lambadas have benefited from very few welfare programmes implemented by the government. Neither social workers nor non-governmental organizations (NGOs) paid attention to their plight until recently. The literacy rate is an abysmal 1.8 per cent among females; among males it is at best five times that figure. This is today’s condition of Lambada tribe.

Because of the various problems like adoption of children, lack of education for female the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) established women workers to work through “Anganwadi”. But the reaction of these Anganwadis still needs to be involved actively in their thandas (hamlets) because of their suffering from sale as well as adoption of children due to lack of awareness.31

**Summing up**

Certain social evils and superstitions in the name of religion are also continuing in one form or the other suffocating the progress of tribes. The tribes are more backward not only compared with the general population, but also compared to
the Scheduled Caste, the other acknowledged backward social group with constitutional protection. Different researchers, who examined the effects of planned developmental intervention in the tribes from 1961 to 2001, concluded that five decades of intervention has not made any significant impact in improving the conditions.

Referring to the origin of tribes, there are various hypotheses which do not agree with each other. But every hypothesis agree to the point that the tribes particularly ‘Lambada’ tribe are sons of the soil who live in forests and hilly regions, faraway from normal society despite years of independence. The researches and studies conducted on tribes shows that the tribes particularly the ‘Lambada’ are peace loving, hard working and self dependent personalities believing the words of their leader in letter and spirit.

Unfortunately, the positive attitude and submissive behavior of tribals is misused by certain vested interest and made them to destroy this society by their participation in terrorism, naxalism, property offences, agitation against governments and society. It is also born on record that the tribals are mostly positive to gospel which changed their lives and which kept them from social myths and folklores that were practiced prior to their experience of born again. In view of this, there is a dire need to identify various problems, social evils, practices which are hindrance to the positive progression of tribals and to identify scientific and analytical solution, thereby to empower these oppressed tribes. There are certain concepts, methods, theories, etc. which needs to be understood before examining the problems of tribe in detail.
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