Chapter-VII

CONCLUSION
The Lambadas can be found in all regions of the country. In India's system of positive discrimination, they are listed as Scheduled Castes in the states of Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi, as Backward Classes in Maharashtra, Punjab and Madhya Pradesh, and as Scheduled Tribes in Orissa and Bihar. The erstwhile state of Andhra Pradesh has classified them as Scheduled Tribes from 1956 in the coastal areas, and from July 1977 in Telangana. Attired in colourful dresses embroidered with mirrors, adorned with ornaments from head to toe, the women of this tribe possess glowing faces and impeccable skin complexion. The men are of robust physique.

There are many legends regarding the origins of the tribe. Lord Vishnu first created two Maharshis, Viz, Bhrugu and Raghu. These Maharshis created both ‘Raja Dhaj’ and ‘Amba Bai’ to whom Kowar Dhaj was born. In turn, Kowar Dhaj had Rajpal and Reem to Rajpal. Reem had two sons namely Habel and Kobal. The direct descendants of Habel were Hindus and Kobal were Muslims respectively.

Habel had a son named Wagad. He had Jogad, Jogad had Sandal and Sandal had Kasam, Kasam had Karan, and Karan was blessed with four sons namely Teeda, Cheda, Mola and Radha. The descendants of Teeda are Lambadas and the descendants of Cheda are the other Hindu communities. Teeda had Jogad, Bheemad, Radha, Mola, Nathad and Rayal. During the Ramayana period, after Sugreeva married his sister-in-law, he had a son Teeda, whom he had nominated as successor. Radha and Mola, the sons of Teeda were in the court of Lord Krishna protecting his cows. Lord Krishna assigned a Gopika to each of his servants to look after and enjoy family life. In this assignation, Mola was given Radha and Radha was given Rukma. While the latter couple remained in Dwaraka, Mola and Radha migrated to Saksuli Dharunigadh and adopted the prince of Loheda Pamar. Likewise, they adopted the princes of Udaygadh king Kasamraj Rathod and Alyapulyagadh king Mandya Chaturbhuj Chauhan. They named the three princes Pamar, Karna Rathod, and Paya Chauhan respectively. They were thenceforth known as the sons of Mola and Radha. The sons grew and when they attained marriageable age, none was ready to offer brides for them. Seeking brides for her sons, Radha performs severe penance for Lord Krishna on the banks of River Ganga. There she got acquainted with the three daughters of a Brahmin named Neelakantha Sastry. The Brahmin had a son too and his wife Aashaveni pre-deceased him, hence he had to take care of his four children.

His eldest daughter attained puberty much before marriage which led the other Brahmins of the village to outcast the family. The distraught Brahmin leaves the village and on the way the family slept under a big tree on the banks of River Ganga. Unable to digest the insults and ridicule of his community, the saddened Brahmin deserts his children during the night. The next morning the daughters wake up to see that their father is missing, which further saddens them. The wailing daughters then reach Radha who was performing penance on
the banks of the river. Upon learning their plight, she marries Kakarechi to Pamar, Medarechi to Paya Chauhan and Nagarechi to Karna Rathod. These are the three patriarchs of the three clans. Besides these three, Vaditya was the other patriarch of another Gotra.

The couple Pamar and Kakarechi had a daughter and a son - Bhavaya. It was Bhavaya who took upon himself the burden of the family after his grandfather Mola's death. His grandmother Radha advises him to go on a country-wide tour and on reaching Machchargadh to perform Legerdemain and dances for the king and accept the gifts he offers. The people of the kingdom have been suffering due to mosquito menace, which upon the king's request Bhavaya promises and with his sorcery catches all the mosquitoes. The people and the king are mighty pleased and the latter gifts him ten thousand rupees. Later, when Bhavaya was releasing the mosquitoes a village official sees him and brings him to the king, who orders for Bhavaya's execution. Learning about the execution, Radha curses the king. The king begs for her pardon and pleads with her to accept Gavaya, who is equally skillful. Accompanied by Gavaya, Radha starts her journey back home but dies out of grief for her grandson. To earn his livelihood, Gavaya with the help of Jaju Brahmin seeks Demaguru's permission to trade in ochre, and becomes indebted to him by an amount of twelve lakhs. Dema sent his disciple Jaju, who hails from Brahmin community to pursue the recovery of loan. Jaju in the meanwhile, fell in love with a beautiful young girl named Hansli of Jharpla Pamar clan, who was in fact sent to seduce him with false love. But both of them fell in love and in the happy romance Hansli became pregnant. It was planned that the community would catch Jaju red-handed while romancing, and then condemns him as a culprit. The frightened Jaju promises to act as they wish. They seek freedom from the debt of Demaguru, which Jaju promises to do when the right time comes. One day when the Guru was on his way, all the men and women of the community pray in the name of the Guru with great devotion. Finding it to be the right time, Jaju describes their devotion and pleads with him to relieve them of the debts. As an alternative to the repayment, the happy Demaguru advises them to set aside a coin during marriages as a witness and distribute offerings made to him. He further instructed them that, during the Vadai ceremonies, those who singe themselves with a needle are relieved of his debt. After some days Hansli delivers a child, whom they wanted to get rid of and tried to bury it alive. As they were about to bury the child, under Vader-Jhad innumerable ants came out from the pit. This stops them from burying the child, thinking it to be an order by the god. Since the child was saved under the Vader-Jhad he was named Vadtiya.

A childless couple Bharmawath Bheemla and Binkri worshipped god for a child. One day on their way to seek the blessings of a sage in Ajmergadh they hear an infant's cry from a near by garden of Bishop's weed. They go there, pick-up the infant as a divine blessing and named him as Ajmera since he was found in Ajmergadh. He belongs to the Vaditya Gotra.
The Lambadas originated first in Rajasthan and later due to circumstances have migrated to various places. After the victory over Muhammed Ghory in the first Battle of Tarain, king Prithviraj Chauhan forcefully marries king Jayachandra's daughter. During the second Battle of Tarain, because of the non-cooperation of Jayachandra, Prithviraj Chouhan had to suffer defeat. In 1194, even Jayachandra had to suffer defeat at the hands of Ghory, and subsequently he started attacking the Rajput families. As result of these attacks, the Lambadas had to flee Rajasthan and migrated to various regions. Some of them started trading on caravans, thus leading a nomadic life. Those who have gone into hiding in forests had to ultimately return to the towns. These are the Marwada Gharjars. Those who continued wandering in the forests taking care of their animals and subsequently settling in various regions of the country are the Lambadas. They had also led a nomadic life. Prominent among the goods they traded in caravans are salt, saparis, rice, and pulses.

There is a reference to the cock-fights held in the Lambada Tanda s in poet Dandi’s Dasakumara Charitra. This evidences that the Lambadas have migrated to the south in the 11th century itself. There are historical evidences to show that the Lambadas have transported food supplies required by the armies of Allauddin Khilji and Mohammad-bin-Tuglaq during their invasions of South India. Thus, the Lambadas followed wherever these armies have gone. When these sultans turned to go back to north India after defeating the rulers in the south, some of the Lambadas remained in the south. Such Lambadas who stayed back in south India are in large numbers in the Kakatiya kingdom. These are the same Lambadas of the present day Telangana.

Before the advent of the Mughals, the Rajput kings were ruling small kingdoms. Among these, the rulers of Mewar did not yield to the Mughals. Rana Sangram Singh fought a pitched battle with Babar in 1527 at Kanwa, and Rana Pratap Singh with Akbar in 1576 at Haldighat. Though both have lost in these battles, they were valiant enough to surrender. The kingdoms lost in battles are to be regained only through another battle was their motto. However, there were some other Rajputs, who have surrendered to the Mughals even without any battle, have secured themselves with powerful positions in their courts.

The Lambadas carried provisions for the armies of Shahjahan too. Asaf Khan, the Vazir of Shahjahan came to the Deccan along with Bhangi and Jhangi Naik s who had with them 1,80,000 and 52,000 bullocks respectively. They accompanied Asaf Jah carrying his provision during his raid to the Deccan. It was an object of Asaf Jah to keep these bullocks well up with his forces and he was induced to give an order to Bhangi and Jhangi as they put forward difficulties of obtaining grass and water for their cattle. This order was engraved on copper which allowed them to utilise water and grass wherever they are found; they are even condoned from committing three murders a day. Thus the Lambadas have migrated to various regions. Since there were not many transport
facilities during those days, their business flourished, but with the development of transport facilities like railways by the British, they gave up their nomadic life and habituated themselves to settled lifestyle. They started agriculture as their main occupation. Those owning large tracts of agricultural lands have become economically sound secured themselves the basic amenities and could afford education their children to schools and colleges. Such children have grown up to start working in various government departments. Those who do not have any agricultural lands are pulling their lives with daily struggles. Even to this day, there are some Lambadas who carry bundles of firewood on their heads to sell them in the near by towns, and with the meager amount so earned are carrying on with their lives.

Some of the youth of Dammannapeta Tanda have gone to foreign lands working as labourers facing innumerable troubles and bearing the burden of the family. However, many of the Lambadas of Telangana state are engaged in agriculture either as farmers or as farm labour. Some others have migrated to the near by towns and cities to work as labourers. Yet some others, shuttle between the towns and their homes daily. Some of them are engaged in selling fruits and peanuts in trains. Thus, the Lambadas are engaged in various occupations. They are hard workers. Majority of those engaged in agricultural works consume arrack as a means of relaxation from their hard work. However, if they consume sufficient enough food when drunk, no health issues arise, but some of them consume arrack in large quantities and regularly but neglect their food intake, leading to various health related problems. There are quite a number of men in the age group of 30-40 years who have suffered and lost their lives consequently. When N. T. Rama Rao as Chief Minister of the state imposed a ban on sale of arrack by private individuals, and government took over the sales, many Lambada families brewed the country made liquor. Thus by brewing illicit liquor and selling it some of the families though have made money and constructed good houses, few of them in the process have got addicted to the same liquor the extent that they have died of excessive consumption much before they crossed 40 years of age. At the same time, women selling this liquor, under the lure of money, entered into illicit relationships with men. The cancer called arrack wreaked havoc in many Lambada families. Such instances can still be seen today, although reduced in number because of education which brought in a sense of social consciousness within the Tanda s.

Telangana has a magnificent culture, for it was a melting pot of various cultures, kingdoms and races since ancient times. It is in fact, the gateway to North India. Telangana is situated on the ancient Deccan Plateau, in the central stretch of the Indian Peninsula. The study of the history of a region is incomplete unless its geographical conditions too are studied. The history of every nation is influenced by the country’s contemporary geographical conditions; at times, it even controls the history. The history, culture, traditions, and customs of a region are all dependant on its physical features, climate, and such other geographical
conditions. Even the life-styles of the people living in the region or country are influenced by these conditions. The history of Telangana is no exception to this. The study of the geographical conditions of Telangana is, therefore, pertinent to study the history of the region.

The geographical conditions prevalent in Telangana have had a profound influence on the lifestyles of the Lambadas. Being closer to the tropical line – the Tropic of Cancer – the climate here is predominantly hot and dry. Because of the climatic conditions and depending upon their economic status the Lambadas cover their bodies partially. The state is irrigated by River Godavari in the north, River Krishna in the south, both of which happen to be the main rivers of the state. These apart, their tributaries Indravati of Godavari, Manjeera, Pranahita, Musi, Dindi, Paleru, Munneru, Wyra and Kinnerasani have all been sources of water for the state. In Telangana, there are dense forests along the catchment area of River Godavari in Adilabad and Khammam districts. The variety of fruits and vegetables besides wood and other natural produce available in these forests offer livelihood mainly to the tribals and landless poor.

For their daily needs, they use the plants and trees like Tangedu, tamarind, Moduga (Flame of the forest), teak, neem etc. that are natural to the region. With the leaves of the Moduga tree, they made leaf plates and cigars. The Lambada men and women are addicted to smoking these cigars. In the Telangana region, palm groves flourish along the banks of rivers, rivulets, and streams. The Lambadas use the palm leaves for the roofs of their houses and cots, the coir from the palm trees to secure the beams of the roofs, the midribs of the palm leaves to weave mats. Besides, the freely and cheaply available palm wine is their favourite drink. Both men and women drink the wine.

The second chapter dealt with the geographical conditions in the state, their influence on the population. These apart, the chapter also dealt in detail with the Scheduled Tribe population in the ten districts of the state of Telangana. In the undivided state of Andhra Pradesh, there were in all 35 Scheduled Tribes, but after the formation of the separate state of Telangana in 2014, there are 33 of them. The state has registered a population of 3,51,93,978 out of which the STs are 32,86,928, which 9.33% of the overall population. The chapter has dealt with in detail about the distribution of the ST population across the districts, the percentage of ST population vis-à-vis that of the district and the state, the distribution of each tribe in the districts, and the ratio of female and male ST population. The Lambadas, one among the 33 ST has registered a total population of 20,46,117 or 62.25% of the overall ST population of the state. In the undivided state of AP, they were 40.68% and the percentage increased after the formation of Telangana. This was due to the fact the Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema regions had lesser number of Lambadas. They are 5.81% of the overall population of Telangana.
The third chapter dealt with in detail the social structure of the Lambada community, the rituals they performed at the time of child-birth, a girl's attainment of puberty, rituals in the event of marriage, deaths, divorces and widow remarriages. The Lambada community has primarily four kinship clans or Gotras - 1. Chauhan, 2. Rathod, 3. Pamar, and 4. Vaditya or Jadhav. Paya Chauhan and Modariche are the primordial couple for the Chauhan clan. They had six sons; thus lending their names to the six Gotras or Chougot Chauhans. The second clan was that of the descendants of Karna Rathod and Nagarechi. Ratna Rathod, one of the patriarchs of Rathod clan had no children for a very long time. He, therefore, marries again. The second wife followed by the first then gave births to Bika (Bhukya) and Bala (Banoth) respectively. Their descendants Bhukyas and Banoths are considered to belong to Rathod clan. The Rathod clan has seven sub-clans which are collectively known as Sathgot Rathods. The third clan is that of the descendants of Pamar and Kakarechi, who had 12 sons, there by lending their names to Bharagot Pamars. The fourth is that of Vadtiya, the son of a Brahmin and a Lambada woman protected from being buried alive under Vader-jadh. Because of this he was named Vaditya. Teen takteer chaudah ghar means the three patriarchs had 14 successors; Ajmerati pandraghar means including Ajmera they came to be identified as 15 clans. These four clans are further divided into sub-clans. People belonging to the sub-clans of a Gotra are considered to belong to the same Gotra and hence marriages with in these sub-clans are not performed. They are considered to be brothers and sisters. They can marry those belonging to the other clans.

The Lambadas are classified even based on their occupation. There are two inferior sects - Dadees and Baats - with in the Lambadas, who narrate the genealogies of the Lambadas during marriages or other auspicious occasions and seek money from the audience. They are also involved in fixing marriage alliances and after the alliance is settled, they lend their helping hands to both the parties. The Daphtiyas, another such inferior sect with in the Lambadas, were involved in beating drums during various cultural programmes organised with in the Tanda. Today they have given up their traditional occupation, and are still treated as an inferior sect in the Tanda s of rural areas. However, those living in urban areas are being treated without any such prejudices.

The Lambada society of those days had its own artisan and occupational sects like Sonal (goldsmith), Baita kama (blacksmith to make agricultural implements), Katti (carpenter to make agricultural implements in wood), Navi (barber). These are all part of the larger community. The structure of the Tanda s of those days is such that all the articles required in the community are made by the people belonging to it, thus helping each other in the process. As a result of modernisation of lifestyles, the occupational sub-sects have vanished, there by leading to the collapse of the Tanda culture itself. However, some of the Tanda s seem to have given some breathing space to this culture. Some of the Sonars have migrated to cities these days and have started their own jewellery business. In
some of the Tanda s, the Lambadas themselves are working as carpenters. As stated earlier, in some remote Tanda s these occupational sects continue to thrive.

The traditions and customs of the Lambadas are intertwined with the lifecycle of humans. If a boy is born, they blow trumpet and if it is a girl they beat drums on a bronze plate. Upon the birth of a child, on the same day or the next day the family performs vekalpero to appease the gods. On the seventh day Daleya Dokayer is organised. When the child starts its little steps, Pagalya Pader is organised. Tonsuring of the child’s hair for the first time is done along with another infant of the family. This ceremony is called Lattakader. After the delivery, the neo-mother is offered Suvadi Kado on empty stomach. This is a food prepared specially for the neo-mother. She is not allowed to enter the kitchen to cook for some days after the delivery. All these traditions were hitherto followed in all the Tandas, but today these rituals are performed only in remote Tanda s that are away from the influences of urban life. Today’s Lambadas have also started taking exceptional care of the would-be mother during her pregnancy, delivery and post-delivery stages. As a result, infant mortality has reduced considerably. Five decades ago each Lambada woman gave birth to 8 to 12 children, but only half of them used to survive; the other half suffered many illnesses, or due to congenital diseases and died with in a few years of their birth. With the availability of modern technology and advanced surgeries, the Lambadas could successfully reduce infant mortality. The Lambadas of the olden days considered their children to be their assets; they were either sent for work under others or were used in their own works, but were not sent to schools for education. With the establishment of schools with in the Tandas, every child is afforded the opportunity to study; thus majority of these children are, these days, getting the education. Such educated men and women have started reducing the size of the family and are limiting the number of children to one or two, to whom they are able to afford good education. Many such enlightened Lambadas are at present in state and central government employments. These days they are able to utilize all the education and health related schemes to their benefit and are on the path of development.

Among the art forms that the Lambadas are good at are dance, music, lyrics, drawing rangoli patterns, tattoos and embroidery. These arts serve as a means of relaxation for the hard working Lambadas. Wearing colourful clothes with mirrors embroidered on them and a variety of silver ornaments, they dance in tune with the music. They dance during festivals and marriages. Matching their steps to the drum beats, they dance in a circle.

The Lambadas use natural resource like herbs and minerals available in their surroundings for treatment of illnesses. The women of the community are adept at treating pregnant and infants. They recognize the labour pains early on and make necessary arrangements. The woman in labour pains is administered a concoction made by boiling curry leaves, cumin, dry ginger, and rock sugar to
alleviate her pains. For faster delivery, they administer a concoction of leaves of drumstick plant boiled in water and mixed with salt. To extract a stillborn baby, the woman is made to drink the sap of bamboo leaves. If the limbs twist, a cast made of jaggery and castor oil is wrapped around the location. Bamboo leaves are used for treatment. The bark of Pongam oiltree (Kanuga) is boiled in sesame oil which is then massaged in case of body pains or pain in the knees. Niruri or Bhumylaki (Nela Usiri) is ground to paste and administered as a cure for yellow jaundice. For the treatment of stones in the bladder or kidneys the leaves called kondapindaku are used. Neem leaves are used for skin diseases and lice in the hair.

Hitherto, there was not tradition of dowry among the Lambadas. In fact, it was the other way round – bride price. The groom had to give a cow or an ox. When the alliance is agreed upon, both the parties exchange Sagainokta (Tambulam). The match was in those days finalized by the elders upon the suggestion of Baats and Dadees. Neither the groom nor the bride had to opportunity to see the other before the betrothal (Sagai). The groom then offers cows, oxen or cash for the purchase of ornaments for the bride. This ritual was known as Karar Darar. After this ritual, the groom used to come over to the bride’s home to stay there with her family for three or six months depending upon the bride’s family’s affordability. During his stay, the groom had to fetch palm wine everyday to be offered to his father-in-law to-be. The family treated the groom with utmost care to ensure his health in robust condition. The groom is accompanied by Larya or groomsman. However, because of certain incidences like the groomsman cheating the groom resulted in giving a smaller role to the groomsman during the rituals these days. A ceremony called Saditaner or readying the groom for the marriage, is performed at his home a day before proceed to the bride’s Tanda for the marriage. Although the above rituals – Sagai, Karar Darar, Sadi Taner and such others – are still being followed, all these are done just symbolically these days.

Golkhayer (Engagement) is performed at the bride’s home itself. The rituals at this event are still being followed. The groom’s party is welcomed with a drink called Ghotakadero and sprinkling of scents by singing women. The bride’s brother then applies Bottu with his right-index finger on the bride’s forehead and with the middle finger on the groom’s forehead. This is the only time that the Lambada women apply the Muttaiyidua Bottu, and never again during the marriage. Then Vaya Bander is prepared. The marriage pandal is prepared with a variety of wooden sticks and decorated with festoons of mango leaves. Kakoti is inverted and placed in the pandal, over whom the bride and groom are made to sit and given bath. Cloth curtains are held all around the pandal, and water is filtered with a cloth from above for the bride’s bath. After her, the groom is given the bath on the Kakoti. The Lambadas consider cow-dung as the divine goddess Lakshmi Devi, a heap of which is worshipped as part of the Hakoldir Dokter ritual.
The Garatani (a string of beads) tied around the ankles of the bride until then is untied amid her wailings in the form of a Dauvalo. Turmeric is applied to seven strands of thread that are coiled together. The bride fastens a part of this thread around the right wrist of the groom and another part around his neck. The groom then does the same to the bride. The Lambadas afford greater significance and sanctity to the seven knots than the traditional three knots of Hindu culture. This is known as Dora Bander. After the Dora Bhaandaer ritual, the couple ties the Kaadada to each other's ankles. This ritual involves piercing a new red coloured cloth (chantiiya) with seven needles and then wrapping the cloth around Myandal (Manga Kaaya), which is then moistened with water. The bride then fastens this around the groom's ankle and the groom fastens around the bride's ankle. Once this ritual is completed, the groom slips a bracelet (Kolda) above the left elbow of the bride. This signifies the groom's absolute ownership of the bride.

The loose ends of the couple's clothing are tied (Gaant Chheda); the groom followed by the bride circumambulate seven times. With the seven circumambulations, the couple is deemed to have been united. After the Saath Phaera, the couple commences tilling the land. While the groom starts ploughing the field, the bride carries millets in a cloth tied around her waist (Khwaal Bhandan), and starts sprinkling the grain in the loosened soil. This ritual reflects Indian tradition that considers cultivation of land as a sacred occupation. After the couple completes the ritual of cultivation (Aeruvaaka), they are seated at the centre of the marriage pandal, and a blanket is covered over them. Rice mixed with curd is placed in a small earthen plate, from which a morsel each is put into the right hands of the couple. The groom has to feed this morsel to the bride and she reciprocates. Both are given water to drink from the same tumbler. After this, both are made to sit on the Kakoti and given bath with cold water. Both are then let into the house with the wet cloths. In a corner of the house they are seated with a bag filled with grain separating them. The groom gives two kernels of dry coconut to the bride.

The Kakoti is filled with gruel and placed in the pandal. The couple is seated on either side of the kakoti with their arms stretched over it. The Helaer Rapya (one rupee coin representing as a witness to the marriage), a betel nut, a finger ring, and such other items are dropped seven times through their stretched hands. The one that picks-up the items maximum number of times is declared winner. The groom is made to stand in the pandal. His brother-in-law holds an earthen bowl upside down on the ground. He kneels down in front of the groom and moves the bowl. The groom has to break it into pieces by stepping on it with his right leg. If he accomplishes the feat in the very first attempt he is considered to be highly intelligent. As the number of attempts increase, he is considered less and less intelligent.
After the above test, the couple is given a cold water bath. With great affection, the groom’s mother-in-law, brothers-in-law, and sisters-in-law vie with each other in the activity. The mother-in-law collects water dropping from over the head of the groom into her cupped palms and drinks it. While displaying abundant affection to the groom, the in-laws mince no words in signifying the harsh treatment he would be meted out if he exceeds his limits.

The Lambadas consider ‘swastika’ symbol as one of the sacred ones representing God. Drawing of the symbol is one of the rituals in the name of Dema Guru, and the activity is called Saakhyapujero. Before the bride is sent along with him to his home, the groom hosts dinner, as a mark of offering oblation to the departed elders of the bride’s family. On the eve of the dinner, the ground in the front-yard of the house is smeared with cow dung, and a decorative pattern in the shape of a square is drawn using millet flour. This is known as Chwakopujera. Earthen oil lamps are lit and placed in front of the pattern. The Helaer Rapya – the one rupee coin fastened in the groom’s handkerchief – is decorated with vermillion powder, and placed on the pattern. A coconut is then broken, followed by pouring of toddy or arrack in front of the pattern. This activity is called Dhaardaer. The rams are fetched; obeisance is paid to them and then sacrificed. A dish – Salooyi -- cooked using the sacrificial meat and blood is served on leaf plates and placed in front of the chwako as oblation. The assembly then prays – Vinti – with utmost piety seeking the welfare of the new couple. The sacrificial meat is either cooked all at once and served to the gathering, or is distributed to every household.

The Lambada women do not wear the Mangalasutras. The Chudoti Paer is the event that follows Goot Daer. This event involves adorning the bride with jewellery. Muttayiduwas among relatives from both the sides and the families in the Tanda apply turmeric and sandalwood powder to the bride and a vermillion bottu. Amid singing, they make her wear the jewellery that the groom had brought. The Lambada women do not wear Mangalasutras, instead they wear silver ornaments covering almost their entire body. But, with the changing times, they, especially the urban women are usually sporting golden jewellery instead of silver ones.

The day after Chudoti Paer, the couple is sent off to the groom’s home. This event, in a way, marks the handing-over of the welfare of the daughter to her husband and his family, and is the culminating event of the marriage rituals. The bride expresses her grief while leaving for her in-laws’ home through a Dhawalo. Haveli is another form of Dhawalo, wherein the bride stands on the back of a bull and sings for the welfare of her parental family. Before the marriage party is sent they all sit together and Kamarirbhang is again distributed. Bhang is a mutually binding ceremony repeated seven times during a marriage.

After bringing the couple home, porridge and coconut are offered as an oblation to the God and then they are welcomed into the house with a lighted
lamp. After the bride’s arrival, an event called Telo (feast) is organised. After the feast, the women in the Tanda are invited to see the new clothes that the bride had brought. In the presence of Muttayiduvas the bride starts showing the new clothes and ornaments meant to be given away to the in-laws. After this event, the representatives of the bride’s parents who had accompanied her are seen off on their return journey.

The nuptial ceremony is a memorable event, among all those related to a wedding, for the newly married couple. This is the night when the couple consummates their marriage and unites into one. Earlier, the bride wore brilliantly embroidered traditional dress for the ceremony, but these days the brides are wearing sarees and blouzes.

All these rituals performed earlier in the Lambada marriage system are given a go-by in the urban areas. Even in the remote Tanda s that are deprived of development, some of these, if not all, rituals are performed albeit perfunctorily. Modernisation and influences of other cultures on the customs and traditions of the Lambadas seem to have had an adverse effect. This gradual downfall of the culture portends bad for the community itself. Modernisation of lifestyles, though is a good sign, must not lead to the erosion of the culture, traditions and customs, which does not augur well for the community.

The practice of divorcing the spouse is continuing since the olden days. Same is the case with remarriages, at least in some of the Tanda s. A widow can marry her deceased husband's younger brother or a man can marry his deceased wife's younger sister. Child marriages were rampant in those days, but have come down in numbers at present. The rituals followed at the time of death are not followed completely. Some of the practices are given a go-by. Some of the unheard of practices are being followed today, as part of their modernisation.

The belief system that involved worship with utmost devotions gradually evolved into a tradition, which later on transformed into festivities involving frolicking. The Lambadas have the tradition of celebrating at the turn of the seasons. Animal husbandry is their lifeline, and for the growth of this wealth and their health, the Lambadas worship Seetalabhawani. It is their belief that she would protect them from diseases like Cholera and Smallpox. They usually celebrate the festival during the months of Ashadh and Shrawan. As part of the festivities, a goat is sacrificed and ensuring that the intestines are not severed, they pull them out and loop around the idol of Lunkadia erected in front of Seetalabhawani. They make their animals cross over the looped intestines in the belief that the animals would not fall sick. Today such festivities are organised in honour of Seetalabhawani only in remote Tanda s in rural areas. The Lambadas have seven motherly deities – Saptamatrikas or Saptabhawanis - (1) Meraama (2) Hingala (3) Tulja (4) Dwalangar (5) Kenkali (6) Seetla (7) Teej.
The *Teej* festival reflects the *Lambada*’s cultural life, and is related to agricultural production. It is the festival in which unmarried girls play a major role in celebrating. All the unmarried girls in the *Tanda* under the leadership of the bride celebrate this festival with utmost devotion after the arrival of the groom. The festival is organised in honour of *Meraama* and *Sevabhaya*. The maidens collect formicary, plant soaked wheat, water the sprouts thrice a day for nine days while singing for the good growth of the wheat grass, and then on the ninth day they immerse the grass in a lake. This is a unique festival organised by the *Lambadas* with the wish for good and timely rainfall, good harvest, for the health of all the people in the *Tanda*, and seeking righteous husbands for the maidens. They follow the rituals with utmost austerity throughout the period of nine days. They follow the strictures sincerely and willingly not just during the time of worship, but also those imposed on food. The festival appears to be a test of chastity too. The sprouts of the girls that grow rich are deemed to be virtuous and of good conduct. Besides, the menstruating maidens are expected to be away from the baskets; ignoring this stricture if they do, the sprouts do not grow healthily even on the ninth day. During the Researcher’s field study to the festival conducted at Lingannapeta *Tanda* in 2015, the sprouts did not grow in full strength. Upon enquiry it was informed that the girls must have been unchaste. They were made to redo everything from the first and remain chaste throughout the period and then allowed to immerse *Teej* in the lake. The elders warn the maidens to be of utmost chastity, else there is a possibility of difficulties visiting them. As a result, many of the maidens these days are unwilling to celebrate the festival, unlike those of the olden days who vied with each other to perform the festival.

Some of the *Tanda* s is still worshipping Matralyadi. Like-wise, those living in *Tanda* s away from the influences of urbal life get their infants’ first head tonsuring in the divine presence of Goddess Tulja Bhawani. They do this after offering sacrifice to appease her. A recent, yet good development so far as protecting their culture is that the *Teej* festivals are organised in cities like Hyderabad and Warangal.

*Sant* Sri *Sevalal Maharaj*, the spiritual guru of the *Lambadas* was born on 15th February 1739 in RamjiNayak *Tanda* near Gutti in Anantapur district. Being the majority among the STs, the *Lambadas* of Telangana have represented to the government to officially celebrate the birth day of their spiritual guru. The government’s acceptance of this representation augurs well for the community.

From his 12th year, *Sevalal* with the blessings of the saptamatrikas guided first his *Tanda* and later the others to lead an exemplary life. His austere celibacy and the doctrine of non-violence have attracted the *Lambadas* towards him. Accompanied by his followers, he went up to Chennapatnam (present day Chennai), thenceforth to *Hathiram Bawaji* Ashram at Tirumala, and from there
came to the area at present called Banjara Hills in Hyderabad. It is learnt that he had spent some time in Mahabubnagar too.

When he was 12 year old, Meraama asks him to be her devotee, which Sevalal refuses. Consequently, she took away the lives of thousands animals and that of his brother. After subjecting him to a number of troubles, he consents to be her devotee, but declares that he would not on his own sacrifice any animals in her honour. She then restores the lives of his animals. He gains fame and glory. Meraama asks him to marry her, but he refuses despite her request in the presence Brahma, the Creator. When Brahma tells her that Sevalal is not fated to get married, an irate Meraama asks him to stay there until her return from her friend’s place, but comes down to the earth, approaches Sevalal’s mother disguised as an old woman and tells her that Sevalal had expired three days ago. Unable to bear the loss of son, the mother approaches the lifeless body and touches it, as a result Sevalal had to leave his mortal body. The mortal remains are then moved from Ruigadh to Pauragadh. While cremating the body with sandal wood, Sevalal’s soul addresses the Lambadas not to grieve his passing-away. He promises to be with them always and advises them to consume his ashes (Bhog) while chanting his name to be cured of all ills.

Hathiram Bawaji is another spiritual being who is worshipped by the Lambadas. He was born in one of the Tanda's in the Tirumala Hills. Since he was blessed by elephants in his infancy, he was named Hathiram. He performed penance for many years surviving only on roots on the Tirumala Hills. One day he followed the devotees of Lord Balaji to the shrine chanting ‘Govinda, Govinda’ and remained there in trance. Concentrating his mind only on the Lord, he wandered around the shrine consuming the roots, wild-fruit and leaves and performed a penance for 14 days. Appeased by his devotion, the Lord Venkateswara appeared before him. The priests of the holy shrine did not allow him enter the temple, hence he built a hut beside the temple and stayed there. Balaji appeared in his actual form, expressed his wish to play dice with him. One day, the game went on for too long and the Lord left one of His ornaments, a necklace, in Bawaji’s ashram. When the priests opened the temple the next-day, they found that the ornament was missing, and instituted a search for it. Bawaji also realised what happened, and wanted to return the ornament to the temple. He was however suspected to have been a thief. The matter reached the Chief priest and he asked Bawaji why he had stolen the ornament. Bawaji narrated the incident of the previous night. The king expectedly did not believe the story and ordered his servants to fill Bawaji’s hut with sugarcane, and asked Bawaji to eat every bit of the sugarcane before dawn. Since it was practically impossible to eat such a large amount of sugarcane for any human in one night, Bawaji simply sat chanting the name of the Lord. After he eventually fell asleep, a huge white elephant appeared inside his home, finished the sugarcane with in moments, and disappeared. In the morning, the Chief priest was surprised to see all the sugarcane eaten. He verified with his guards that no elephant was seen the
previous night outside the locked house. He then realised that the Lord Himself had appeared as an elephant to save His devotee. Hathi means elephant in Hindi, and Bawaji frequently chanted Ram. That is how he is supposed to have gotten his name. The house in which Bawaji was held captive was converted into a Mutt, which the Lambadas call Hathiram Bawaji Mutt. When the Lord Balaji offered him a boon to ask, Hathiram wanted nothing for himself since he had the Lord Himself in his presence, but sought boarding and lodging facilities for nine days for the Lambada devotees who come to seek His divine blessings, besides, a turban for the community leaders, a pair of Namams and a pair of Nagara (drums) be given. The Lord said, “So be it”. Thenceforth, the Lambadas on pilgrimage to Tirumala visit Hathiram Mutt first, seek Balaji’s divine blessings, and stay at the Mutt.

The Tanda administration was taken care of, earlier, by the Nayak. The Tandas were far away from the villages with in the vicinity of forests. The Nayak played a major role in all the decisions made concerning the Tanda. The leader had the humane attitude towards his people and treated them as his extended family. The Naik is assisted in discharging his duties by a Karbhari. The Naik along with other elders of the community decides cases regarding inheritance and division of property, marriage disputes, and cases of divorce, clashes and conflicts. It is his duty to ensure that the traditional norms of approved behaviour in the society are observed. Disputes between wife and husband are usually settled amicably, duly warning the erring party. If between brothers, they advise them to compromise. However, the erring party is punished with penalty. Sri Sevalal Maharaj advised the Tanda Naiks not to impose penalties on poor Lambadas. Despite this, if any Naik does to the contrary, He warned that such leader’s next generation would suffer untold miseries. One such incident had really happened in the Researcher’s Tanda. When the Naik had wrongly imposed penalties upon one of the disputing parties, his son had lost one of his limbs, besides; he became addicted to arrack and died much before attaining 50 years of age. At present, in case of disputes, the Naik is lured with the bribes of alcohol, thus receiving a favourable judgement. The leaders of olden days were unbiased; they could never be lured into consuming alcohol or taking bribes from either of the disputing parties and delivered justice in the right way. Hence, there was no necessity for the people to approach either the police or courts. But, these days because of the all pervading corruption, the people had to resort to seek remedies through police or courts of law. The panchayats of the present day Tandas are witnessing the presence of even non-Lambadas, which was not the case hitherto. In those days, if the dispute needed a larger panchayat, the leaders of the neighbouring Tandas were invited. The Naiks of those days was greatly respected, since they were conscious of the welfare of the entire community and shared the people’s joys and sorrows. Naiks of such countenance is rarely to be seen these days.
It is a common phenomenon among *Lambadas* to have their settlements outside the main village which are exclusively inhabited by them. The consideration of health, convenience of grazing, housing their cattle and immunity from epidemics are other factors in their choice of residence. In most of the *Lambada* settlements the houses are arranged in rows facing each other with a street in between the two rows. Though each house is a separate structure by itself the houses are built side by side in two tiny parallel lines. The most common and traditional type of house is built of mud walls with a few stones with a thatched roof. The roof is supported by cross beams of commonly available wood in the forests. A platform is built with wood to store food-grain, metal boxes and other personal valuable materials. A sling is hung from the crossbar of the ceiling, in which pots containing milk, curd and such other dairy items are stored. The families in the olden days invariably had pestles, grinding stones, *Kakotis, Sibbi, Kanser Dhali* (bronze plate) and such others. We neither find any such constructions nor any such articles of daily use these days. Those who have economically settled well have constructed houses. However, the *Tanda* s away from the urban areas do still have those hutm ents and articles of olden days.