Chapter-III
SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE
LAMBADAS
III.1. Social Structure of Lambada Community

Lambadas are divided into four exogamous groups a) Rathod, b) Pamar, c) Chowhan and d) Vadiya or JadHAV. These social divisions are split into the following patrilineal kin-groups or clans called Jats: Sathgoth Rathod (7 Gotras), Bharagoth Pamar (12 Gotras), Chogoth Chowhan (6 Gotras) and Pandragothra Vadiya (27 Gotras). All these exogamous clans are further divided into various subdivisions as follows:

- Sathgoth Rathods

Ratna was the founder member of the Rathod clan who had no children for a long time. He married again, and the second wife is Sevali Bai. After some time this couple was blessed with a son Bala and then the elder wife of Ratna Rathod gave birth to a son Bheeka. The sons of Ratna Rathod celebrated their marriages. Bala had four sons viz., Jatoth Rathod, Muna Rathod, Dharmasoth Rathod and Banoth Rathod. Bheeka had three sons viz., Muchloo Rathod, Aloth Rathod and Bhukya Rathod. These seven grandsons of Ratna Rathod became the founder members of Sathgoth Rathods.

Bala Rathod’s four sons had thirteen sons in all. They are: (1) Kanavath (2) Karnavath (3) Bojavath (4) Bandavath (5) Dhanavath (6) Panavath (7) Rupavath (8) Sabdasoth (9) Mutho (10) Lahori (11) Dheeravath (12) Kumthavath and (13) Munooth. They are all identified as belonging to Banoth Gotras. On the names of these thirteen grandsons of Bala Rathod thirteen clans emerged and they people became founder members of Banoth Gotras.


- Baragoth Pamar (12 Gotras)

The following were the founder member of Pamar clan:

• **Chogoth Chowhan (6 Gotras)**

The following were organized as belonging to Chowhan Gotras: (1) **Korra Chowhan** (2) **Sapavath Chowhan** (3) **Kelooth Chowhan** (4) **Mood Chowhan** (5) **Loudiya Chowhan** and (6) **Palthia Chowhan**.¹

Besides these three – Rathod, Pamar and Chowhan, there is a fourth group known as Vadtiya. The legend that is popular regarding the origin of Vadtiya clan as stated by Kamala Manohar Rao is as follows: “At one time the trade of Lambadas became dull and they had to cover heavy losses. They became indebted to Demaguru. Dema sent his disciple named Jaju, who hails from Brahmin community who pursued the recovery of loan advanced by him. Jeju could find the Lambadas’ hide out. But in the meanwhile, he fell in love with a beautiful young girl named Hanski of JharplaPamar clan. The poorBrahmin forgot his supreme duty and stayed among them. Somedays passed in the happy romance and consequently Hanski became pregnant. In order to hide this, Jaju and Hanski fled. Hanski was blessed with a child of whom they wanted to get rid of and tried to bury it alive. As they were about to bury the child, under Vader-Jhad (Banyan tree) innumerable ants came out from the pit. Thinking it to be a good omen, a superstitious conception crept into their minds that the child may bear as many children as the innumerable ants, so they decided not to bury the child. They named him Bhavvu (was to be buried under the Vader-Jhad—the Banyan tree in the Lambada dialect) so his clan was called as Vadtiya in the name of the tree. This indicates that Vadtiya derived from Vader-Jhad.

The descendant of Bhavvu was Lavvu, who had a son Keekh; Keekh, in turn had a son Palak and Palak had three sons viz., Kenjee, Penjee and Nenjee. Kenjee had four sons viz., Laakavath, Noonavath, Dharavath and Guglooth. Penjee was blessed with seven sons viz., Halavath, Koonsoth, Jeeth, Bharooth, Boda, Jhualooth and Tejavath. Nenjee had three sons viz., Barmavath, Padiya and Malooth.

Apart from the above, Ajmeera and Badavath clans are also included in the Vadtiya clan. There is a legend regarding the origin of Ajmeera clan of Vadtiya Gotras that Bheemla from Baramavath clan had no children. So, Bheemla and his wife Bheekri Bai planned to visit the Saint residing at Ajmeer Ghad. They left for Ajmeer Ghad. On the way they heard the crying of a child from the garden of Vooma (Ajmeer Wadi in Lambada dialect). They approached and found a male child. They thought that the child was provided to them by God. Then they returned home with the child. After seeing the child, the elders of the village suggested that his name should be Ajmeera. The opinion of the Lambadas was that Bheemla and his wife Bheekri Bai prayed the saint of Ajmeer, who blessed them with a son. The name of the child was taken after the Saint of Ajmeer. So, whatever it is in the clan of Ajmeera, it is connected to Ajmeer. So, this child

became the founder of the Ajmeera clan. He had six sons Seetha, Saama, Toota, Banda, Manna and Balla.²

The fourteen families of Kenjee, Penjee and Nenjee were together organized as Vadtiya. Besides, Badavath, Lumavath, Ajmeera, Harkavath, Hapavath were also included in Jadhav or Vadtiya clan.

The story of emergence of the of Vadtiya clan endorsed by Kamala Manohar Rao is not acceptable. He linked the Vadtiya clan with a Brahmin boy and also created the ants from the pit and he finally says that the Vadtiyas derived from a Lambada woman and Brahmin man. The author always tried to link up the Lambadas with the Brahmin. For instance, the adopted sons of Radha & Mola were married to three Brahmin girls. This shows that the origin of the Lambadas is due to the marriages of Lambada men and Brahmin women, or Brahmin men and Lambada women. This is not possible. It was a time when caste system was so rigid and the Dharmasastras, particularly the Manudharma Sastra does not permit the marriage of a Brahmin girl with many of any other castes or sub-castes. So, these are all legends. But when we refer to the clan system of Rajputs, this Jadhav or Vadtiya clan is also there in Rajputs.

Finally, the Lambadas who were descendants of Rathod, Chowhan and Paramaras (Pamar) claimed the same lineage.³ Each clan of sect is divided into a number of sub-sects. Sometimes they also kidnapped the boys and girls of another community named Korra or Koryas. Each sub-sect is an exogamous unit. A member of sub-caste can marry other sub-sections other than his own. For instance, Rathod can marry those Jadhavs, Chowhans or Paramars. The sub-group of Badavath among the Vadtiyas clan are strict vegetarians and wear Kanti sacred necklaces around their necks.⁴ Inter clan marriages are prohibited.

Besides these four clans, there are three inferior sects which are looked down upon by other groups of Lambadas. They are Bhat, Dhadi and Dapriya.⁵ Besides the above, there are the following artisans among the Lambadas:

- **Sonar** -- Goldsmith
- **Biota Kamra** -- Blacksmith
- **Khathi** -- Carpenter
- **Navi** -- Barber

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⁵*Dapriya*: Drum beaters.
These people are also called Lambadas. The instruments that are used in agriculture and as household articles could be obtained from these artisans.⁶

All the creatures in the universe crave for a social life, and man is no exception. He desires to live in a community along with others. For peaceful co-existence to happen, he has imposed certain limitations in the form of customs and traditions. C. Narayana Reddy says, “Tradition is like a perennial river. Initially it undergoes tremendous turbulence and gradually settles down in placidity.”

III. 1.1. Chichar Huyer (Birth of a Child):

Birth is the first stage in Man’s life journey. There is a variety of rituals associated with the birth of a child in every society across the world, and the Lambada society is no exception. No wealth can assuage the grief of a couple that has no offspring. According to the Aryan saying, a male offspring helps his parents escape eternal hell. The mythologies are replete with descriptions of various rituals performed to appease the Hindu pantheon to beget an offspring. The folk literature depicts the hardships women suffer to bear children. “A woman’s life is fruitful only if she bears a child” is an adage that is universally applied. The Lambadas feed their pregnant women with nutritious food that includes meat. It is their belief that the pregnant women desirous of eating meat bear sons. They do not perform any special ceremonies (called Seemantam) for the pregnant women unlike many others in the society, nor do they have the tradition of the pregnant woman’s parents bringing her home and taking care of her health during the first pregnancy. After the child birth, the mother is administered herbal medicines for recovery of health. When the Lambadas are on the move in a caravan and if the woman delivers there, the men proceed further to graze the animals and leave a trail to enable the women to reach them. They insert stones between the branches of trees on their trail or they cut down the branches.⁷

Generally, the pregnant Lambada women do not consult any doctors, but follow the advice of the midwife within the tribe and consume the natural medicines she advises. They eat the soil picked-up from the bund of the near by lake. It is not possible for these nomadic tribal’s to either serve the food the pregnant woman nourishes or to take enough care of her. She will have to toil until child birth. The delivery is administered by a Lambada midwife. Being nomadic in nature, they fetch the midwife almost a month before the date of delivery from the village she presently resides. She stays with the family taking

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⁶G. Bhadru Naik., Role of the Lambada in Telangana Armid Struggle in Jangaon Taluq 1945-1951, M.Phil, Dissertation Submitted to Kakatiya University, Warangal, 1994, p.44.
care of the pregnant woman. Such practices can also be seen some other tribes and castes too.

When the woman starts experiencing labour pains, she is made to sit with her back to the post that supports the hut. The woman is on all-fours when delivering. To enable quicker delivery, the midwife applies pressure on the woman’s back. Immediately after the birth of the child, the midwife severs the umbilical cord with a sickle and buries it along with a coin and a little flour in a corner where the presiding deity of the family is worshipped. She then places a boulder over the place. This act, they believe, is to ensure the welfare of both mother and child. The sickle is placed near the child’s head when it is asleep. They believe that this protects the child from evil spirits.

The midwife, also called ‘Dayi’, summoned to perform the delivery is offered Gold and Silver ornaments and also some grain. If the new-born is a boy, the birth is announced using the Nagara (kettledrum), and if it is a girl, the announcement is made by beating on a bronze plate. Use of the specific instrument reveals the gender of new-born to the people of the Tanda. Immediately after the childbirth, both mother and the baby are given post-natal Baath. The water with which the mother is Baathed is drained into a pit dug on the east side of the house to ensure that none steps on the water. The jug used for the Baath is made of brass and is decorated with turmeric, coal and vermilion powders. Turmeric, cow dung and cow urine are mixed in the water, with the belief that both mother and the new-born are protected from impurities. The mother is served meat and arrack on the first day as a tradition and with the intention to benumb her of the pains of labour. On the subsequent days up to the fifth day she is served rice, ghee, and jaggery without any spices.

The nursing mother among Banjaras always holds a sickle in her hand. Whenever she leaves her home, she wears footwear, holds a sickle, plugs her ears with cotton, and ties a rope called Badana to her waist within hours of her delivery. Tying the Badana to the waist, they believe, ensures that the stomach does not develop flab. The Lambadas, hitherto, did not have the tradition of performing the ceremonies of child-birth, nor do they have the accessibility to Brahmins to determine auspicious days to perform such ceremonies.

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10As narrated by Late. Kethavath Jagyanayak, aged 98 years belonging to Mustafanagar Tanda, Gambhiraopet Mandal, Karimnagar district and quoted in H. Kishan., Warangal Jilla Banjara Sahityam, Sanskrutika Adhyayanam, Unpublished Ph.D thesis submitted to Telugu Department, Osmania University, Hyderabad, 2007, pp. 34-35.
III. 1.2. Vekalpero:

This is a ceremony performed to appease the family deity on the day of the birth of a child or the day next. The hearth is the place of worship for them. They light an oil lamp, break a coconut, and offer Pongali (Lapsi) as an oblation to the deity. Throughout the ceremony, they sing songs on Banjara rituals related to delivery and child-birth. The ceremony is attended by mothers, newlyweds, childless women and all. They are all offered rice pudding filled with ghee and balls of jaggery. The mothers present there pray to the deity for the good health of the mother and child.11

III. 1.3. Dhaley Dhoskayer:

This is a ceremony to remove pollution related to child-birth, called Purudu in Telugu. This ceremony is performed seven days after child-birth. The Lambadas believe that performing this ceremony eliminates enmities and the sprinkling of water (Ganga) results in purity. They dig a small pit in front of the house at the place of delivery. The rims of the pit are smeared with cow-dung; a mixture of cow-dung and rice flour is placed in four directions around the pit. Some twigs are placed in the pit. Elderly women (whose husbands are alive – called Muttaiduvas) gift the mother and child with rice and clothes. They then fill three brass or earthen jugs with water. If earthen jugs are used, they are painted with lime and decorated with charcoal patterns. The first jug is filled with a mixture of water and charcoal, the second with water and turmeric, and the third with water and vermilion. Vermilion marks are applied to the jugs, and a rope weaved out of hair with a cowrie shell arranged to it is tied. Three boys and two girls all below the age of five place the jugs one over the other on the mother’s head. Holding the jugs in place with one hand and dropping grains of rice on the way, the mother slowly walks towards the pit dug earlier in front of the house. When she reaches the pit, the children put-down the jugs from over her head. She then touches the twigs in the pit seven times with her right big toe, sets the twigs afire and circumambulates the pit. She then washes the legs of the children who have placed the jugs over her head. The Muttaiduvas sing songs called Volong and offer prayers. The mother then douses the fire in the pit with water, fills it with earth, picks-up the jugs onto her head, draws seven lines with a sickle in front of the threshold of the house, and enter the house with her right leg first. Given below is the transliteration followed by the meaning of the Volong song:

“Suyidora Letani Per Jayes
Sun Sutilidora Letani Ver Ayes
Vey Mata Mavali Haribhari Rakad
Vey Mata Chala Harobaro Rakad
Veye Mata Hamsati Hamsati Ayes

“Rothi Rothi Jayes
Chyarika Chwara Chwarika Chora”

“With a smile come to us dear Mother. If coming to the home as a girl take a needle and thread and if a boy bring a rope made of jute and a bodkin (pack needle).”

The songs they sing reflect the importance they give to the birth of a boy instead of a girl. They sing that the mother shall give birth again to a boy. The offerings given to the deity called Choormo or Mooyi made of rice flour, jaggery and ghee are then distributed among the people attending the ritual.12

III. 1.4. Daagder Nokta:

The Lambadas have the custom of scalding the area around the navel of the infant on the 11th day of birth, with two marks made with a needle is heated with the flames of a lamp of castor oil. They believe that it improves the child’s digestive system. Even the rural people believe this custom. Chanting the names of the ancestors, they offer balls of pudding into fire in the belief that this would appease them. Water and fire are part of the primordial elements of earth and therefore cast away impurities.13

Similar to the Telugu people, the LamDadeis too have the custom of rocking the infants in cradle. When the infant cries of hunger, the caretaker sings the following lullaby:

“Halohaloriya Sojosojoriya
Bayiromama Komatiya
Yadigeetcha Hat, Gol Tooper Lavukeechha
Sojosojoriya
Pako Guler Kachho Gular Lavukeechha
Sojosojoriya”

“Swing and swing, sleep, sleep li’l one, elder sister’s father-in-law is a Komati / your mother has gone to the fair, to fetch jaggery and dry coconut cups, sleep, sleep li’l one, / and to fetch the fig fruit, sleep, sleep li’l one”

Living very close to forests, the Lambadas go to the near by weekly fair to fetch provisions. Of these, jaggery, fig fruits and dry coconut cups are the most liked one for them. And for this reason, the lullaby refers to the mother fetching these items from the fair.

III. 1.5. Phagalyha Paaderonoktha:

This is a custom to celebrate the infant’s first steps in walking. All the Lambada women are invited to this event. They hold both the hands of the child and help in walking while singing songs and sprinkling boiled gram along the path the child walks. After this, they distribute turmeric and vermilion powders, betel nuts and leaves and boiled gram to the women. If it is a boy, he is made to wear knickers, shirt and a kerchief and if it is a girl, she wears a long skirt and a half-Saree. The girls, until they show signs of physiological changes i.e., up to the age of 10-12 years, do not wear blouses.¹⁴

III. 1.6. Suvadi Kado:

After the delivery, the puerpera is given a soup to drink first thing in the morning for a week days. It is prepared by mixing a paste of seed of bishop’s weed (known as Vamu in Telugu), cloves, black pepper, cereals, and dried ginger with jaggery which is then cooked. The soup offered to the new-mother (Suvadi) is known as Kado in their parlance.

III. 1.7. Suvadi Khuraki (Food for the puerpera):

The Kado is mixed with a powder made by mixing black pepper fried chillies and garlic which is then mixed with oil heated with garlic. This blend is offered to the new-mother twice a day for a week to provide her the necessary energy to keep away joint pains. Even other tribes and castes too provide this type of food to the new-mother.

Among the Budige Jangalu, the practice is almost similar. Black pepper and red chillies are fried and after adding cloves of garlic, the mixture is powdered. To this powder, hot gingelli oil or safflower oil, in which garlic cloves are heated, is added to the rice offered to the mother. This type of food is offered twice a day for almost a week from the date of delivery. This gives her not only relief of any arthritic pains, but also energises her.

Prescribed diet for the new-mother: After delivery, the mother is fed a soup called Lapsi prepared by cooking rice flour, ghee and jaggery. It is their belief that feeding her both Kado and Lapsi cleanses her of impure blood and affords her energy and good health. If she is unable to lactate sufficiently, she is fed with food seasoned with a ground paste of red chillies and onions. This practice confirms the adage “the good that an onion does cannot be paralleled even by mother”.

The new-mother is, for a few days after delivery, not allowed to come to the hearth. Women in the family cook the food. Initially, she is given only warm

¹⁴B. Chinya Nayak., Banjara Charitra, Samskruti, Pragati Op cit, p. 179.
water to drink and hot water to Baathe. It is only after the passage of certain time that she is allowed to do her regular household chores.\textsuperscript{15}

### III. 1.8. Lattakaader (Tonsuring ceremony):

Every society has its own custom of tonsuring the head of the infant to shave the hair growing from the time of birth. The Lambadas have the custom of tonsuring the heads of two children – two daughters, two sons, a son and a daughter – at a time. The ceremony is performed in front of Goddess Tulja Bhavani – the presiding deity of their community. They light oil lamps, incense sticks and offer Naivedyam and then shave the heads. If they have only one child, the hair is cut such that two tufts are left at the back. Childless couple sometimes makes a vow to Lord Balaji of Tirupati that they would make the first offering of hair to Him if a child is born. Though they fulfill this vow if a child is born, on returning home from Tirupati, they offer lighted oil lamps, incense sticks and Naivedyam to Goddess Tulja Bhavani and then shave the infant’s head once again.

### III. 1.9. Motiyar Ver (Rituals when a girl attains puberty):

When a boy attains adolescence, tender facial hair starts appearing and like-wise for a girl, her physical appearance undergoes change. Usually girls attain puberty between the age of 12 and 18 years. This period ushers in new experience in her life. It is said that a pubescent girl is eligible to marry and lead family life. On the day of a girl’s attainment of pubescence, people living in both urban and rural areas consult an astrologist to know auspicious and inauspicious times. The girl is sequestered for a period of five or nine days and on the last day (the fifth or ninth day) they celebrate the Coming of Age of the girl. However, among the Lambadas, the mother does not inform the men folk of the household about the girl’s menarche, but only the neighbouring women. In certain regions, people feel that it is not wrong to sequester the girl nor do they celebrate her menarche, since they do not believe in any such impurities.\textsuperscript{16}

### III. 1.10. Jhangadena Belero:

This is a ceremony organised to recognise the untouchables among the Lambadas as Lambadas. An adopted son among the Lambadas is known as Jhangad or Poloposso. To ensure that the adopted boys are recognised as members of the community, the Jhangad families adopting them spend extravagantly to appease the community heads. The head of the community is offered two Tolas (one Tola is equivalent to 10 grams) of gold, and the entire community is feasted with meat, liquor and sweet dishes. Non-Lambadas are recognised as Lambadas only after five or seven generation’s lapse, until such time they are treated as untouchables and are not allowed to approach the community wells or into the

\textsuperscript{15} As narrated by Boda Dwali, aged 75 years, Dated, 02-06-2013, Beriwada Tanda, Kesamudram Mandal, Warangal District.

agricultural fields. During marriages, the Jhangads are barred from eating food served in a metal plate but are served on leaf-plates. They live secluded from the community and are subjected to discrimination. In the feasts that a Jhangad family hosts for being recognised as part of the Lambada community, other Jhangad families contribute their mite. As part of the Recognition Ceremony, the Supreme leader of the community heads – Sardar Nayak – heats a string of gold and places it on the Jhangad’s tongue, there by sanctifying him and invites him into the fold.17

III. 1.11. Gwarmatir Vaya (Marriage system among the Lambadas):

Marriage and family are two aspects of the physical and social needs of man. More importantly, it ensures the survival of both the group/clan and its culture. Marital bonds, although are formed between two individuals, bring together two families or clans, and foster social solidarity.

Marriage among the Banjara is based on the principles of community endogamy and clan exogamy. There is a matrilineal system permitting cross-cousin marriage. The Banjara community is divided into too many clans and each clan has many Gotras. Gotra has a social significance in so far as the members of the same Gotra, even if they have never known or heard of each other nor related by blood, cannot inter marry.18

Family life being a significant aspect in the Banjara culture, marriage rituals acquire immense importance. Hitherto the Banjaras led a nomadic life being on the move for almost six months to a year. As a result, many a horde (Tanda) never lived a settled life at a single place. Consequently, they faced difficulties in settling inter horde marriages. The Banjaras build their own settlements -- Tanda s away from the cities and villages. Although the Tanda s are geographically independent they are considered to be hamlets.

The Banjara marriage system is very much unlike the present-day one-day affair. Selection of the bride and groom is totally the prerogative of the family heads and neither the groom nor the bride has a say in this. The elders of both the Tanda s meet and decide the alliance. During the meeting the information about the traditions and customs is exchanged with the heads of both the Tanda s, since the culture, traditions and customs of each Tanda is dependent upon what the head dictates. If a Tanda head is found to be cultured and good mannered, they are reflected in the members of the Tanda, and hence the alliance would be agreeable. The uniqueness of the Lambada marriages is that the Tanda head himself officiates during the ceremonies as the priest. Family life plays an important role in the Banjara culture. For centuries they have preserved the marriage rituals, and for this reason these rituals seem to be unique.

18As narrated by Battu Samya, Aged 75 years, Manchya Tanda, Kuravi Mandal, Warangal District.
Furthermore, the Lambadas do not inter-dine with people of other communities. The Banjara marry people with in their own tribe.\textsuperscript{19}

For marriage alliances between two Tanda, they first approach and consult the Tanda head. The head hands over the details of both the bride and groom through Baat and Dadee and also speaks to the parents of the other side. The Gotra or patrilineage of both the families is referred, and only if they match, would the activities related to the marriage be initiated.

A Banjara man cannot marry outside the sub-caste nor with in the section to which he belongs. He is also forbidden to marry a woman belonging to his mother’s side, paternal or maternal grand-mother’s side and Paternal or maternal great grand-mother’s side. A man may marry two sisters. Two brothers are allowed to marry two sisters. Polygamy is permitted to any extent, but rarely is practiced.

Banjara girls are not usually married under twelve years of age. Sexual license before marriage is tolerated on the understanding that if a girl becomes pregnant her lover shall come forward to marry her. The bride’s price varies according to the means of the bridegroom. Half of the amount is paid at the betrothal and the remaining half is paid when the bridegroom comes to the bride’s house for the marriage.

Generally, among the Lambadas, with in the same Gotra, they have sub-sects called Upa Gotra. They are not considered to be of the same lineage. Those belonging to the same Gotra – Swagotrikulu – are deemed to have a fraternal relationship – Bhaipana and hence there would be no marital relationships with in the Gotra. For the marriage to be approved the groom and bride must belong to a different Gotra.\textsuperscript{20}

The Dhalias, Dadees, Baat, Sonar and Janged are treated as low and out castes by the Charan Banjara.\textsuperscript{21} Matrimonial relations are prohibited with Dapparia, Dadees, and Baats because these people are considered as low and out castes. While the Dadees are a sub-group who recount the family links of the Banjara and sing in praise of the Banjara heroes, the Dhalias are musicians or drum-beaters-cum-messengers; Dadeis are group singers accompanied by an orchestra.

The Pamar clan has twelve Gotras, and hence the people belonging to these Gotras are deemed to be off spring of brothers, thus ruling-out matrimonial relationships with in the clan. Marital alliances for the brides and grooms of this


\textsuperscript{20}As narrated by Bhukya Umla Nayak, aged 80years, dated 26-03-2016, Linganapeta Tandavillage, Gambhiraopet Mandal, Karimnagar District.

\textsuperscript{21}N. R. Cumberleg., Some Accounts of the Banjara Class, Education Society’s Press, Byculla, Bombay, 1882, p. 48.
clan are made with those belonging to Banoth, Bhukya, Chowhan and Vaditya Gotras.

The Banoth clan has 13 Gotras, thus people belonging to these Gotras are considered to be descendants of brothers. They marry into the clans of Pamar, Vaditya, Chouhan clans. Rathod clan has 27 Gotras and has marital alliance with those of Chouhan clan, which has six Gotras. The Vaditya clan has 14 Gotras, while the latest of the clans – Ajmeera has 15 Gotras. The Pamar, Banoth, and Bhukya clans intermarry with those of Ajmeera clan.22

To marry a Lambada girl, the groom has to offer the bride a young bull and at least Rs. 25/- as dowry. The marriage ceremonies last at least for six months. The groom has to spend this period at the bride’s residence. He has to offer cigars and tobacco leaves to the visitors to the bride’s home, and in the evening toddy (palm wine) to the bride’s father after consuming some for himself. During this period of six months, he has to drape himself with a five metre long red blanket. When Tanda heads visit the bride’s family, the groom has to remain standing, draped in the blanket and can sit only when advised to do so. Throughout the period, the bride’s family offers him with a variety of delicious food, and also dry coconut soaked in ghee and mixed with jaggery, so as to ensure that his attention towards the bride and her parents does not waver.

The marriages among the Lambadas are usually performed at night. The reason for this, according to some scholars, is attributed to work and business for livelihood during daytime and while the night affords them some leisure. While according to some others, there is historical significance to this. They opine that the Mughal soldiers searched for the Lambadas every day from dawn to dusk and butchered them, and to avoid being sighted, the Lambadas performed marriages during the night.23

III. 1.12. Sagai (Prospecting the alliance):

Although the Tanda s are geographically independent and away from the villages, they have their own culture and traditions and give greater preference to joint family system carrying the ups-and-downs in their stride. The first step in the marriage process, for the propagation of the lineage – fixing-up the alliance, known in their parlance as Chwari Chwarar Sagai – is initiated ceremoniously. The centuries old customs practiced during marriages have been perpetuated till recently, thus attributing certain unique features in the marriage ceremonies. These rituals are not usually completed with in a day. It was a year long event during the olden days, and the narrations of old men and women stand as evidence to this.

During the olden days, the alliance was arranged by the elders upon the suggestion of Baats or Dadees, but neither the groom nor the bride see each other. When the match is agreeable to both the families, the custom of groom’s parents looking at the bride’s palms and placing money in it has started.

III. 1.13. Karar Dharar (Bride price):

The Lambada society had the tradition of the groom – Karar –paying the bride price to marry. However, this is not a monetary transaction, but in the form of offering cows. Dharar is the custom of the bride’s parents offering gold jewellery to her on the occasion of her marriage. The groom’s father, in turn, pays for the jewellery. Puroo Paurokarar Dharar is another system of bride-price where in the groom’s father offers an uncast rated bull along with Dharar amount of Rs.116/- towards jewellery to the bride’s father. However, these offers vary according to the economic status of the groom’s family.


When the alliance is fixed, during the early days, the Engagement ceremony is performed, without the involvement of priests. On an auspicious day, this event is preceded by the ritualistic eating of jaggery (Golkhayer) is organised usually at the bride’s home. At the agreed auspicious time, guided by the Baats and Dadees, the groom’s family together with the Tanda head and other leaders arrive at the bride’s home. Both the parties mutually introduce themselves and after enquiries of each other’s welfare, they assemble at a convenient place like in front of the Tanda head or on the outskirts of the hamlet under the shade of a neem tree or a banyan tree and sit there forming a circle.

The material like dry coconut kernels, betel leaves and nuts, beedies, cigarettes, toddy, arrack, and jaggery are arranged by the groom’s party, depending on the number of people attending the event. With the Tanda head’s permission, the Baat, Dadee or the Navi (barber of the Tanda ) carries a coconut in his hand and announces Narello Narello – instruction to the assembled people to touch the coconut. After the entire assembly touches it, the coconut is handed over to the groom. The groom’s father then gives a coin of Re. 1/- to the Tanda head, who gives it over to the Baat or Dadee. The latter handles it with great reverence and announces Sakshyalo, Sakshyalo – connotatively implying the assembled people to be witness to this engagement by formally accepting the rupee. He then addresses the heads of various Gotras assembled there – Nayak Thaar Hatema Sakya Che – “Hey, the head of various Gotras, we are handing-over the representation of witness.” This address signifies that all the heads of various Gotras present there are witnesses to the event. The coin is then handed-over to the bride’s father. Thenceforth, the groom gets overall authority over the bride. If the bride’s party, at a later date reneges from the engagement, they will have to pay a penalty of Sakyar Saath, Ghungater Pachchees – an amount at Rs.
60/- per each rupee of witness, besides Rs. 25/- towards the cost of the veil of a married woman.

The Navi (barber) then distributes a leaf each of flame of forest tree and places jaggery in them uttering Bhang Lo, Bhang Lo (telling them to accept their share of jaggery). The people respond saying Angde, Angde (asking him to serve it further up). When the turn of the first person comes up, he advices them to first offer it to their respective deities. After offering to the deities of both the parties, jaggery is offered to each one of the assembled people, who in turn advise the barber to proceed further up the circle until the entire round is completed. When the first man’s turn comes, he points out at an elderly person, who is first offered the piece of jaggery and then distributed to all others. The same procedure is repeated first with dry coconut kernels, betel leaf and nuts, and tobacco leaves.

After distributing the items to all the people assembled there, the Baat or Dadee recite the Hachchar Pachchar – the announcement permitting them to eat the items. If the Baats or Dadees are not available any of the heads with the knowledge of Hachchar Pachchar recite it. Given below is the transliteration and meaning of the recitation:

Samlor Nayak Bhahin Saga Punch Punchiyari Raja Bhojari Kadi
Pachare Lak An Pachare Savalak Kakotima Ganga Manvego Changa
Tokan Pade Tinsse Sat Korchoj Pado Vat
Kuvari Kuwarer Gol Khaayen Sage Amrat Karlor Nayak

Listen Brothers, parents of the Bride and Groom, and Nayaks! Let us once recollect the discussion held in the Royal Court of King Bhoja. There may be a hundred thousand words spoken and many more unspoken words, but Baathing while standing on Kakoti plank is equivalent to a Baath in the River Ganga. It takes just an hour to serve the food prepared in 360 cauldrons. All of you attending this betrothal ceremony may happily consume the food served here.

After recitation of the mantra (Hachchar Pachchaar), the jaggery is consumed as Prasadam – an offering made to deity and the Balance of it is offered to the bride and groom, which they distribute door to door in their respective Tandas and seek elders’ blessings. The gathering then playfully throws coloured powder on each other, and then happily consumes toddy and arrack. They indulge in jest and raillery. On the occasion, the Baats, Dadees and Navees receive money in the form of gifts. They seek charity – Dharmam – from the parents of groom and bride and are adequately and happily remunerated. The expenses incurred for organising the event is borne equally by both the parties. The

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24 Interview with Vankudoth Lakshman, aged 45, dated 01-02-2013, belonging to Marri Tanda under Penugonda village of Kesamudram Mandal in Warangal District.
auspicious time is also decided during the event. What is unique about this event is that it is organised one to two years before the marriage.

III. 1.15. Saadithaner (Readying the groom for the marriage):

After the Engagement, an event called Vadai is organised. Although an analogy can be drawn between Vadai and the Thread Ceremony performed in some communities, the rituals are far different from the latter. The Lambadas commence the works related to the marriage duly avoiding impediments to their agricultural works because of them during the summer. During the ceremony, while the groom is attired with Dhoti and other clothing, they sing the following song, describing his good looks:

\[
\begin{align*}
Chwara Dhoti Bhandatu Vyelalagi \\
Chwara Hubarare Nanjare Dekhu \\
Chwara Tumane Pyaratu Vyelalagi \\
Chwara Hubarare Nanjare Dekhu \\
Chwara Pakadi Bhandatu Vyelalagi \\
Chwara Hubarare Nanjare Dekhu
\end{align*}
\]

“Hey Groom! There has been considerable delay in draping yourself with a Dhoti, stand still and allow us to look at your beauty; you have taken long to wear the Tuman shorts, stand still just for a little while as we look at your good looks; you have also delayed tying the turban, just wait and allow us a visual treat of your glamour!”

The date of Vadai ceremony is decided at the time of Engagement, and is usually a Sunday. The house is beautifully decorated and a canopy is erected in the forecourt embellished with greenery. Parents of both the groom and the bride along with their respective relatives attend the ceremony. Early in the morning that day, the groom’s mother goes door-to-door with their Tanda and invites the households to attend the Vadai ceremony while fasting. In the evening around 4’O clock they are invited again to participate in the Pisipasi Lapsi Raandena “Natharer Tokano Chadama ceremony, which involves placing a utensil with rice flour for cooking. Once the entire Tanda assembles there, they all sing addressing thus the groom’s mother:

\[
\begin{align*}
Jhomekiye Malavo Balale \\
Jhomekiye Tokano Sodarale
\end{align*}
\]

“Hey Jhumkee! Invite all the guests and place the utensil on the stove to cook the porridge”

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26Interview with Boda Dewla, aged 70 years, dated 20-04-2014, Gudi Tanda (Beriwada Village), Kesamudram Mandal, Warangal District.
After cooking the *Pisipasi Lapsi* (porridge), a part of the front yard of the house covering the area required to seat a person is decorated in a circular shape with cow-dung and over this a quadrilateral is drawn using *Rangoli*. This pattern is known as *Chakwopujer*. On either side of the pattern, *Guner Dharo* – a pair of jute bags filled with grain – are placed. A small earthen pot called *Koroghudiya* is placed in front of the *Chwako*, which is then filled with water and then a coin worth one rupee – *Kalser Rapya* – is placed in it. The earthen pot is then covered with a new cloth *Gonno* – embroidered with cowries (*Kwadi*) and mirrors (*Arshi*). The head of the marriage party then lifts the *Kalser Ghudiya*, shows it to all around and enquires *Pancho Vachan* – if this marriage agreeable to five heads of families. The assembled people respond saying *Vachan, Vachan Guru Bawa Sodar Sodar*, in essence they express their wish that the promise made by Guru Baba must be fulfilled. The earthen lamps and incense sticks placed in the *Chwako* are then lighted. The porridge cooked earlier is served in a leaf-plate and respectfully offered as an oblation to Gosai Baba, followed by offerings of coconuts and an enmasse prayer to Gosai Baba. The one rupee coin placed in the earthen pot is then tied in a corner of the kerchief held by the groom. The water in the earthen pot, considered sacred, is poured on the posts to which the cattle are tied. The offering made to Gosai Baba is then distributed among all. The groom is then dressed-up with wedding attire. He is offered *Chantiyar Jangya* to wear, which he will have to wear again on the day of marriage and the day of return to his home. A belt called *Penta* is tied tightly around his waist. A turban that is approximately 90 feet long is tied around his head. In effect, he is dressed-up as a warrior. The same way of dressing-up is repeated on the day of the groom’s return to his home along with his newlywed.

There is a traditional narrative prevalent among the *Lambadas* about Gosai Baba. During those days of yore, the *Lambadas* traded in red ochre and incurred losses. Gosai Baba helps them in covering the losses but they fail to repay his debt. As an alternative to the repayment Baba advises them to set aside a coin during marriages as a witness and distribute offerings made to him. The *Lambadas* have, thenceforth followed his advice during the *Gol khayer* (Engagement) ceremonies. He further instructed them that, during the *Vadai* ceremonies, those who scorch themselves with a needle – *Daag* – are relieved of his debt. The *Lambada* elders state that this tradition is also followed without fail.\(^{27}\)

*Vadai* in *Gooarboli* dialect means ‘growing’. A child growing up to become a man performs the ritual in honour of his manes seeking their blessings before entering into marital life. The ritual is performed even when *Jhaangads* (non-*Lambadas*) are being recognised as *Lambadas*. The *Tanda* head burns a needle red-hot and makes a scorching mark on the groom’s right shoulder and then

\(^{27}\)Interview with Guguloth Sakriya, Aged 75 years, dated 20-04-2014, Beriwada *Tanda*, Kesamudram *Mandal*, Warangal District.
instructs the *Guru Mantra* into his ears. During this ritual the people of *Bhukya* clan prepare a sweet-dish called *Moyi Bhunjore* made with rice or wheat flour, jaggery and ghee. The Jhats sacrifice two goats and cook the meat without salt. The central area of the groom’s house is decorated with *Rangoli* patterns over which a jute bag is placed. The groom and his brothers or his male paternal cousins are seated or in the absence of brothers or cousins a wooden plank called *Okra* (*Peeta* in Telugu) is placed beside the groom. On either side seven balls of *Maldi* – a sweet dish made by mixing *Chapatis* and jaggery – are placed. An earthen lamp is lighted in front of the groom and the sweet dish is served to all. Finally, the elderly women (*Muttayiduvas*) sing the *Volang* songs in praise of the Goddess.

The priest of the *Tanda* then distributes the *Maldi* balls to the groom and his brothers/cousins and then singes their right shoulders with a red-hot needle and recites the *Guru* (*Gosai Baba*) *Mantra* for seven times. If the groom has no brothers and the *Okra* is placed beside him, the priest singes even the *Okra*.

*Kwali Awa*Kwali Jave  
*Dhvalo Ghodo*  
*Hamslo Lunge Atra*  
*Dayelo Gali Hiwadero*  
*Har Mayij Puja*  
*Maij Bathi*  
*Gosai Baba Sada Sada*

“You are a *Kshatriya* (warrior) and do not sweat over earning your food; we are reining the white horse like lusts in you. We are handing-over the sword to you. Consider the *Baattles* to be of little effect; they are not singeing than the hot-needle marks on your body. It is your bounden duty to *Baattle*. Hence, respond to the call of duty. May Gosai Baba be with you.”

The assembled friends and relatives of the family bless the groom, which culminates the activities of the day.²⁸

Early next-morning the front yard of the house is smeared with cow dung and *Chwako Pujer* is drawn. In front of this pattern jute bags that are used for their trade, and lighted earthen lamps are placed. Rams are brought and made stand in front of the *Chwako*; they are then decorated with turmeric and vermillion and arrack is poured into their mouths. The arrack is then poured across the floor in front of the *Chwako*. This is called *Dhardher*. Water is sprinkled on the rams until they start shivering. They pray to gods to ensure that the rams shiver. As soon as they start shivering, they are killed and their meat is cooked and offered to Gosai Baba as an oblation. All the family members, friends and relatives reverentially pray (*Vinti*) to Gosai Baba. All are then invited to dine. As

soon as all sit down to dine, one among the elders present there starts reading *Hachchar Pachchar* – the hymn recited to permit eating food. It is only after the recitation that the assembled people start eating.

The next morning after the groom *Baathes*, sandalwood paste is anointed all-over his body and is given the wedding dress to wear. The attire consists of a full-sleeved shirt, a *Dhoti*, a 4-inch embroidered *Gadi* that covers the legs up to the ankles, is tied to his waist. To this embroidered *Gadi* a dagger sheathed in a yellow cloth is tied. The hair is covered with a red cloth, over which a red turban is tied. A red cloak covers the groom’s back from shoulders to the knees. On the left-shoulder hangs a bag called *Vyar Kotali* and contains betel leaves and areca nuts. He holds a *Hookha* or a sword with a hand. Thus attired, the groom is brought out of the house under the shade of the new *SareeNavalerir Sado* brought for the bride, held up on four corners. The groom is brought up to the temporary pavilion (*Mandapam*) for the marriage, erected during the previous night. Water mixed with ground jaggery (*Panakam*) is fetched in five utensils and they pay obeisance to the deities. First they pray to the Sun God, followed by the family deity, and then they go to the shrine of Sevabhaya located with in the *Tanda*. After offering the *Panakam* to the gods, it is served to the the village head and secretary first, followed by the relatives of the bride and finally to all those assembled there. The wedding dinner is provided to all the residents of the village that day. The Best Man (*Leriya* or *Todi Pendli Koduku*) has to remain by the side of the groom holding the *Hookha*. Made-up as a warrior, while bidding the groom adieu to the bride’s home the

*Muttayiduvas* sing the following songs:

*Taari Daale Vyara Cire Bapero Beta Taari Daale Vyara Cire*
*Tari Bare Pularire Tare Tere Naksari re*
*Hwalayamkane Chalare Taari Daale Vyara Cire*

O Befitting Son of Father, there is none to suit your valour. Fully armoured are you, walk without haste.

Singing such paeans to his valour, and at the same time they advise him on the manner in which he has to behave his in-laws and their relatives.30

*Angachataro Sasarero Malavo*
*Hathajodan Hookha Delare Panchmero Pantiya*
*Angachatarare Saveluro Malavo*
*Hathajodan Rami Rami Karalare Panchmero Pantiya*
*Angachatarare Sasu Vuro Juralo*
*Otak Byasak Rami Rami Karalare Panch Mero Pantiya*

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30(1) Interview with Bodasali, Aged 75 years, dated 20-04-2014, Beriwada *Tanda*, Kesamudram *Mandal*, Warangal District.
This song is all about the elders’ advice to the groom about the behaviour that is expected of him vis-à-vis his in-laws. They advise him thus: “Ahead of you is the group from your in-laws; greet them with folded hands and offer them the hookah. Behave with them with due reverence and respectfully.”

Like-wise the following song is all about their encouragement to the groom advising him to be free of all sorts of fears, while bidding him farewell:

_Tu Chamakesa Matare Bolikiya_
_Tu Daresa Matare Bolikiya_
_Tare Lare Tare Bhiyavuro Malavo Chalo Avacha_
_Tu Chamakesa Matare Bolikiya_
_Taarelaare Kakavuro Malavo Chalo Avacha_
_Taarelaare Dadavuro Malavo Chalo Avacha_

Young one (Bolikiya)! Fear not. All your brothers, uncles and grandfathers are accompanying you.

The groom’s mother hugs him and tearfully says:

_Ladakare Befigarero Jivada Fagarema Padago Ahiya_
_Pilare Tona Kanayi Koni Sansi Ajete Sanseedini Pila Ahiya_
_Tona Jateri Gar Meladeni Betare Haradena Tari Chatina_
_Kato Karalena Jana Ajopila Ahiya_

My child! The days of carefree life are now past; the time to face responsibilities has come. I have all the while taken care of you with great care and love, and today with a heavy heart I am sending you away to another home.31

The groom is escorted out of the hamlet to the accompaniment of the above songs by the women. The blanket (Khwal) adorning the groom is then spread and then folded from both the edges, while ensuring that it does not touch the one rupee coin (Helerrapya), and after folding the blanket, the coin is inserted in the groom’s turban. The Khwal is then spread onto his shoulders. The coin is tied in the sacred nuptial knot Gaant Chheda during the wedding ceremonies. The next day, on Maanda Rammer, the coin is dropped inside the wooden tub that is used to prepare Kakoti Chapatis. The tub is filled with gruel. Both the groom and bride compete with each other to pick-up the coin from the

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tub. This event is organised to ensure that the new couple start experiencing the touch of each other, which in turn aids in strengthening the bond. The coin is then carefully preserved until the completion of all the events related to the marriage and the arrival of the couple to the groom’s house. The coin is then used to purchase jaggery and other items for the preparation of offerings to gods, which is then distributed among all.

The groom’s party on reaching the bride’s hamlet makes a temporary stay at the house of a resident of the Tanda (hamlet), instead going straight to the bride’s home. The bride’s parents and also all the residents of the hamlet are informed of their arrival. When the groom’s party is invited to the bride’s home – Vyatrun Gharemaalamaa – the Muttajidwas of the hamlet, followed by all to the accompaniment of music emanating from trumpets (Nagara), and drums, approach the house at which the groom is temporarily lodged. Both the parties exchange pleaSantries. The guests are offered water and snacks. When the groom invites the women to sit, they start singing the following song:

\[
\begin{align*}
Jhun Kariyolal Khwal Ghalisto Byasiyam \\
Marolal Jhun Kariyolal Bayi Bayi Kissto \\
Byasiyum Marolal Jhun Kariyolal
\end{align*}
\]

Hey Groom! We will not squat as soon as you ask us to, but will do so only if you plead with us to sit. Spread your khwaL for us to sit on.

They all sit on the Khwal that the groom spreads. A sweet delicacy called Moyi cooked by mixing rice flour, ghee, and jaggery that the groom’s party brings along is distributed among all. Though the delicacy is tasty, the women find fault with its taste and the manner of its cooking by the groom’s mother.

\[
\begin{align*}
Piki Moyi Demeliye Phiki Bhosaderi \\
Tone Gheena Malonavato Chilwerer Golavariyana Gwarekani Keendiye Chhandal \\
Golena Malovato Kampeleere Komatyane Gwarekani Keendiye Vadal
\end{align*}
\]

The delicacy that your mother had cooked and sent through you has neither sufficient ghee nor does it have sufficient jaggery. It tastes bland. She could have befriended the milkman to get the requisite ghee. If she finds it difficult to procure jaggery she could have married the Komati of Kampelli.

Amid such light teasing banter the assembly completes eating the delicacy, after which the groom is invited into his in-laws’ home to the accompaniment of music. The women-folk welcome him with a lighted lamp – Haarati. The groom then respectfully greets the elders of the Tanda with joined palms, uttering ‘Ram Ram’, and reverentially offers them the Hookah. By the time the groom arrives, the bride goes into hiding in one of houses of her relatives. The groom then pays an amount of Rs. 11/-, as per tradition, to his in-laws towards rent for the mat. On payment of the rent, mats are spread to allow the visiting relatives of the groom to sit. The bride’s brothers obstruct the groom
from going inside the house unless he gives them some amount, and on receiving the amount, they touch his feet in reverence. The groom’s brothers and relatives start searching for the bride. The women sing while searching:

*Asarima Pasari Kere Ghare Jane Ghumsari*
*Asarima Pasari Motebaperi Gharema Ghunsari*
*Asarima Pasari Kere Ghare Jane Ghunsari*
*Asarima Pasari Kakari Gharema Jane Ghunsari*

Where did she hide? Did she hide in her uncles’ house? Could it be her father’s elder brother’s house or is it in his younger brother’s house? Where else will she hide?

Singing thus, they try to identify the names of various people of her clan. The groom’s party finally traces her down, but she refuses to emerge out of the house. They cajole her, coax her endearingly and finally bring her back to her home. It is customary on the part of the groom to gift his bride some amount. The atmosphere then turns gloomy, for it is the time for the bride to bid good bye to her parents, siblings and relatives. Until then she spent a carefree and playful life amid her siblings under the care of her parents, and she is now on her way to her in-laws’ home. Thinking about the difficulties she may have to face there, all her kin start shedding tears. Considering it a hard task to achieve a pleasing demeanour at the in-laws’ house, the brides of those days sought shelter (hiding) in the homes of people of her own clan, which over a period of time turned to be a tradition. The grief of separation from one’s own is a genuine and an overwhelming one.\(^{32}\)

In the olden days, the groom had to spend thus in his in-laws’ house for almost a year. If the *Saditaanear* is organised during a summer and the groom comes to his in-laws’ place, the marriage related rituals ended only during the next summer. The duration, of course, depended also on the financial status of both the parties. Through out this period the groom is expected to behave in a disciplined manner. He is expected to serve his father-in-law and the elders of the *Tanda* along with his companion – *Larya*\(^{33}\) by paying obeisance to them and

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\(^{32}\) Interview with Boda Redya Nayak, Aged 65 years, Beriwada *Tanda*, Kesamudram *Mandal*, Warangal District.

\(^{33}\) In a traditional marriage, the bridegroom who accompanied by Larya (companion of bridegroom) along with five members reaches the bride’s *Tanda*. Larya and bridegroom have to stay for a period of six months. During these six months, he is identified by a ‘Khwal’ that he has to cover himself with at all times. During these six months, the bridegroom will be tested by the parents of bride that whether the boy is suitable husband for their daughter. While he is in sitting position, he has to stand-up in honour of elders whenever they visit the residence of bride and he can sit only when he is permitted. He is supposed to cover his face and body with the ‘Khwal’ and visitors are at liberty to see his face. If the body is found suitable then the marriage ceremony will be performed. If he is not suitable, the *Mamloo* is returned. But in practice, there is no such incident to return the *Mamloo*. Generally, the bride and bridegroom must wear the dress which is worn by Rajputs on the eve of marriage.
reverentially offer them *Hookah*. On such occasions, the bride’s brothers and cousins refuse to accept the offer, there by forcing him to stay in the stooped stance. Moreover, they mockingly ask him what he wants, in response to which all those present there burst into laughter derisively. However, this mockery is done in lighter vein. Likewise, when the *Tanda* heads visit the house, the groom is expected to stand and can sit only when he is ordered to. He should always remain covered with the *Khwal*. In a nutshell, the groom is expected to behave respectfully towards the heads of the *Tanda*.

Coming to the groom’s daily routine, he has to rise from bed before sunrise and complete his ablutions. This he should not do in full glare of the people. Besides, he should speak in a mild-tone, and opinions, if any, of his own have to be communicated only through his *Lariya*. He cannot step out of the house without the express permission of the in-laws. Even while dining, he has to eat in a corner of the house dully covering himself with the *Khwal*. For breakfast, he is offered curd-rice, or *Rotis* made of *Jowar* and soaked in curd; rice with dal and curries with ghee for lunch; palm wine around Four O’clock; and *Jowar Rotis*, rice, and any meat dishes for dinner. Every day, soaked dry coconut kernels are also offered to him to eat. Financially sound families appoint retainers to provide services like fetching palm wine, cooking delicious foods, and all such services that befit a prince. The *Lambadas* have the tradition of sending *Dasi* (a personal handmaid) along with the bride to accompany and serve her at her in-laws’ house. One of the families in our *Tanda* has a live example of a handmaid sent along with the bride some 60 years ago continuing to serve even to this day. Further, the *Lambadas*, being a princely clan, have the tradition of the father-in-law presenting a handgun to the son-in-law during the marriage.

Once the groom moves over to the in-laws’ house, the bride is not allowed to go to any other *Tanda*. She usually wears anklets and her half-Saree (*Cheda*, called *Oonee* in Telugu) is embroidered with beads and mirrors. Adorned with a variety of ornaments and glowing with her natural beauty, she is susceptible to the evil eyes of sorcerers and necromancers. And for this reason, she is not allowed to go out, especially to other *Tanda* s. The *Lambada* tradition prohibits the bride and groom either from seeing each other or conversing, although they stay together for quite a long time under one roof before marriage. Whenever, she happens to cross him, she has to cover her face with a veil. The groom tries to steal a glimpse of her following the sounds emanating from her anklets and bangles. Such incidences leave traces of sweet-memories to the would-be couple. Although they do not communicate, they are bound to understand each other’s behaviour. Moreover, the bride’s parents continually assess the groom’s attitude and demean our. They can observe his personality vis-à-vis the welfare of their
daughter, from close quarters. Besides, his patience, capabilities, conduct and such other personality traits are put to close observation.34

Before proceeding further into the main event of the marriage rituals, it is pertinent to refer to the popular legend related to these rituals. Long ago, a groom leaves for his would-be in-laws’ home accompanied by his retainer – Dadee. Both are of the same age. During the journey, the retainer makes a strange plea to the groom – to exchange each other’s dress until they reach the bride’s hamlet. The groom accepts the strange request on the agreement that they would change back to their respective attires before reaching the hamlet. The innocent groom melts and accepts the proposal and they exchange their dresses. But, Dadee reneges on his promise, does not return the groom’s dress. Upon reaching the bride’s place, Dadee behaves to be the groom and the actual groom as the retainer.

Dadee, the cheat, goes ahead to get married with the bride, but after sitting under the pandal, he suddenly dies. The real groom then reveals what has actually happened to the in-laws, performs the final rites of Dadee, and gets ready to marry. The dead-man becomes a ghost and possesses the groom and creates obstacles in the event. Finally, the frustrated relatives seek the help of Bhagat (sorcerer). Bhagat suggests that Kari Karaer (necromancy) be performed as part of the marriage to escape the wrath of the ghost, performs the same and officiates during the wedding rituals too.

It is for this reason that the marriage rituals among the Lambadas have shades of necromancy too. As part of these rituals, cowries, iron rings, unripe Manga fruits, and lemons are tied to 25 pestles that are placed at the centre of the pandal; cow dung, broken glass bangles, and nails are placed and worshipped; seven lines are drawn on the ground at the same place and the couple are made to cross these lines and go ahead without looking back. While tying the Kasada, seven needles are inserted into a new cloth in which Mangakayas are placed. This cloth is then tied to the feet of the couple. When the groom is Baathed at the time of marriage, the bride’s sisters beat him with Jilledu sticks. All these activities seem to be those performed when a person is possessed by ghosts. All the activities that Bhagat had performed while saving the groom from the possession of Dadee and while officiating the marriage have come to be followed as a tradition since then.35

III. 2. Chwari Walegara Vaya (Activities performed at the bride’s home)

In simultaneity with Saditaner that performed at the groom’s home, the bride’s party organizes Sadi Pujer ceremony. It is the event in which the bride is

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34Interview with Late Kethawath Jagya Nayak, aged 98 years, dated 03-09-2015, Mustafanagar Tanda Village, Gambhiraopet Mandal, Karimnagar District.

35Interview with Bhukya Mangtya, aged 60 years, dated 03-02-2013, Manchya Tanda, Kuravi Mandal, Warangal District.
initiated into the marriage rituals. The family invites the entire Tanda, and relatives. Usually, the men wear Dhotis, while the women wear Phetiya, Kanchali and a veil (Ghungato). However, the attire during this ceremony is totally different. They dress themselves up like the erstwhile Rajput women and men following the tradition. While the groom wears a red coloured knicker, 60 Moora (90 feet) long turbans, and a strip called Penta around the waist, the bride wears a Sadi and blouse, but the length is almost half of what they use now.

The events pertaining to the marriage begin when the groom comes over to the bride’s home. In the olden days, the bride is taught Dhawalo (various types of mourning) fifteen days ahead of the marriage. The Muttayiduvas of the Tanda encircle the bride and teach her as follows:

Puledaro Poso Kagadero Vamso, Bepigarero Jiveda
Pagherema Math Galo Yadiyo – “Ahiya”
Suyi Atara Sumvato Cache Atara Vajalo Jivedani
Jalo Janjalema Math Galo Yadiyo – “Ahiya”
Pale Posetu Dadelage Panen Sansadetu Dade Konelage Yadiyo – “Ahiya”

This is the lamentation of the bride with her mother pleading with her not to push her into hardships after bringing her up for so many years in a carefree environment. She laments that it did not take much time for her parents to perform her marriage and send her off to a new home.

III. 2. The activities performed at the bride’s home are of six types:

✓ Ghotakaderoo and Tikkolagadero (event marking the application of cosmetic mark on the bride’s forehead)

36 The Dawalos reflect the lifestyle of the Lambadas. It is a custom for the women to express their love, affection, happiness, and grief in the form of songs. They sing the Dhawalo when they meet friends and relatives after a long time. During fortnight preceding the marriage the bride is regularly taught the various modes of reciting Dawalo from the time the bridegroom reaches the brides house till she is sent off to her husband’s house by senior women of the Tanda. This is a custom peculiar only to the Lambadas. This custom is as old as the origin of the Lambada tribe itself because it is not merely an expression of sorrow due to the separation of the bride from her parents for long years. The erstwhile Lambadas were nomads and carried their trade from one place to another. Dawalo is a kind of training imparted at the time of marriage to a Lambada bride. She is taught special modes of weeping to be sung on different occasions such as marriages, greeting the kith and kin, deaths of relatives, expression of prayer and vows etc during her married life. After the bridegroom reaches the house of the bride, the bride is initiated into the training at an auspicious moment during the night by an elderly woman in the presence of the wife of the Naik of the Tanda, Karbhariini and Daisani and other women of the Tanda. There will be at least are one or two women in each Tanda who are expert teachers of Dawalo. The bride is entrusted to the care of this teacher for training. The duration of the training lasts from the Nokta day of Bhaang and ghota, when the groom reaches the house of the bride till the day the bride is sent to her husband’s house. At the time of her departure to her husband’s house she is made to recite the Dawalo all by herself standing on a Deju or decorated a bull. This in a way can be called a test to know if she has learnt the art of reciting the Dawalo. This final act is called Haveli.
✓ Vayaa Bandhero (marriage event)
✓ Doran Bandhero (tying thread)
✓ Gotdero (venerating the elders)
✓ Chudotipero (event performed by the Muttayiduwas)
✓ Navalaerin Olayeroo (bidding good-bye to the bride)

These events spread across from a week, to two or three months, or even half a year depending upon the affordability of the families.

- **Ghotakadero** (preparing soft drink)

After the groom moves over to his in-laws home, an event to prepare Ghota is organised on an auspicious Sunday. The bride’s mother despatches Dadee and the Navi (barber) and other servants to all the families in the Tanda to invite them to the event. At the same time, even the groom accompanied by his Larya, brothers-in-law or friends goes to every home in the Tanda, offers Hookah he is carrying and then invites them for the programme. The event begins approximately around 8.00 PM.

**Ghotakader** is the act of preparing a soft drink my mixing jaggery in water, which is then spiced-up by adding the pastes of poppy seeds (Gasagasalu), dry ginger (Sonthi), black pepper (Miriyalu), coconut, cardamom seeds (Elakulu) all individually ground on a whetstone. The drink so prepared is not just a tasty one but a very healthy one too. All the Lambadas drink this on the occasion. Just before consuming the drink they sing the hymn seeking permission to do so – Ghota. A panacea for all ills and diseases, the drink stands testimony to the Ayurvedic knowledge of the Lambadas. However, while grinding these spices, the bride with the help of other maidens in the Tanda creates any number of obstacles like hiding the spices, the whetstone, or the pestle. The elders in the Tanda coax her into handing them over. All this is done in the olden days by the bride to express her intention not to get married so early, which has now become a tradition. As soon as the event starts, the bride starts weeping, and the near and dear ones cajole her with witty, humorous and jocular songs.

*Gase Ghota Maro Gase Ghota*
*O Baliyari Mundepar Jadothota*
*Gase Ghota Maro Gase Ghota*
*O Chinuri Mundepar Jadothota*

The song is replete with romance and rhyming words are quite beautifully used. The rhetoric defies description. Amid such witty, jocular, and romantic atmosphere the drink is prepared. The spices ground on the whetstone are
dropped into the *Kakoti* to which water is added and then poured into two new pots. *Kakoti* is a wooden tub in which bread (*Roti*) is made.

The men pitch a tent under the pandal using either a woollen blanket or a bed sheet; erect side-walls of the tent with *Dhotis* which are tied with ropes. Inside the tent, *Muggu* is drawn over which two new pots are placed over ornately embroidered rings of hay. The pots are then used for the preparation of the drink. Jaggery, dry ginger, pepper, poppy seeds, cardamom seeds, and other spices are ground to powder and mixed with water in one of the pots. The pots are then covered with a beautifully embroidered cloth (*Pullyagonno*). The other pot is filled with water and covered with a *Pullyagonno*. The drink is then filled in five tumblers and offered as an oblation to the Sun God first, followed by the family deity, and finally to the presiding deity of the shrine in the *Tanda*. After the offerings, it is distributed among those assembled there. The groom offers the drink reverentially first to the head of the *Tanda*, and then to all the elders. Before consuming the drink, the *Bhat* or *Dadee* recite the hymn of permission. In the absence of these two, one of the elders recites it.

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*Samlar Nayak Bhayinsage Panch Panchayari Raja Bhojari Kadi*
*Danto Diya Hiyana*
*Malakajakoj Motowath Ranaki Thalavadi Gadlopani Ratan Jaleka Lot*
*Gus Gus Ghole Ghot*
*Panche Munake Melelota*
*Keni Puncho Napuncho Amrat Karlor Bhayin Sage*

Listen the parents of the groom and bride, and elders! We are all happy and friendly in King Bhoj’ s court. It is fortunate that we have all met. Even if the *Ghota* drink appears dirty, it is flavoured with the powdered poppy seeds and offered in tumblers first to the elders and then to all of us, and even if it has not been personally offered to you, feel that it is, and consumes it as an elixir.

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- **Tikkolagadero** (Event Marking the Application of Cosmetic Mark on the Bride’s Forehead)

After the recitation, all the assembled people consume it.

The subsequent day, the groom accompanied by his *Larya* goes around the *Tanda* carrying the *Hookah* and betel leaves, and invites every household to the *Tikero Nokta* event, during which *Bottu* is applied. The *Lambadas* organise this event during the dawn of the day. A woollen blanket is spread under the pandal. Two new pots or copper utensils are decorated with turmeric and vermilion powders and are placed one over the other on the ornately embroidered ring of husk (*Pulyar Gala*). One of the pots is filled with water mixed with jaggery and the other with water mixed with turmeric. A coin is also placed in the second

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37Interview with Bhukya Golya Nayak, aged 55 years, dated 04-02-2013, Manchya *Tanda*, Nerada, Kuravi *Mandal*, Warangal District.
pot. The pots are then covered with Gonno (a cloth embroidered with small mirrors and cowries). The bride is then brought after her Baath into the pandal and is seated beside the drink filled pot. A platter filled with betel leaves and nuts (Tambulam), turmeric, vermilion powder, blouse piece, and fifteen rupees is placed in front of her. The amount of fifteen rupees is used for the purchase of nose-ring. This amount is known as Naak Bandero Rapiya.

The groom then sits in the pandal with an embroidered bag called Vayaar Kotali and the bride’s brother washes the groom’s feet. The bride’s brother, elder or younger, then applies vermillion powder and turmeric on the bride’s forehead with his forefinger, and on the groom’s forehead with the long finger. This is the only time that the Lambada women display vermillion power on their forehead as an indication that they are Muttayiduvas, and it is seldom applied during the marriage ceremonies. The significance that the Lambadas attribute to this turmeric and vermillion Bottu is on par with that of the paste of cumin seeds and jaggery (Jeelakarra Bellam) that the Telugus do during their marriage ceremonies. Both the bride and groom mutually place this paste on the other’s head to formalise the marriage according to the customs followed by the Telugu people. At the time of applying this Bottu the bride holds her brother and starts weeping thus:

Bheeyare Halderotiko Manakoni Chhawabheeyaa ‘Ahiya’  
Chhandanero Tikomana Chhawa  
Veeranare Apano Bapuro Leko Chodana  
Parano Pantiyaro Leko Mat Jalavo Bheeya ‘Ahiya’  
Bheeyare Tamari Byanena Varano Mat Karo Veerena‘Ahiya’

“Brother! Do not apply the cosmetic mark of marriage rituals; I want only the one with sandalwood powder. Do not alienate me to another house (groom’s family). Do not estrange your sister.”

This is one such Dhawalo that the elderly women in the Tanda teach the bride.38

On the occasion of this Tikero Nokta the bride’s family hosts Taelo (feast), during which the following announcement is made before commencing feasting:

Ae Nayak! Pachare Lak! Unpachare Sawalak  
Sanger Bhaji, Tumbadi Ghalan, Dal Rande  
Pulwaniidhan, Champawani Dal Mothevannighee  
Kada Kadiyas Handa, Anner Rasi Padi, Kodchikadi Vat  
Phera Bete Sat, Ghota Pere, Sagata Phero Uss Bakchis Karlo Nayak

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38 Interview with Late Boda Janki, aged 80 years, dated 01-04-2016, Beruwada Tanda, Kesamudram Mandal, Warangal District.
Hey Head of the Tanda, my greetings to all those known and unknown to us. We have prepared a variety of tasty dishes and they are all ready to be served. There is even cow ghee to flavour the servings, besides the deliciously cooked porridge seasoned with expensive nuts is ready in cauldrons. Rice is cooked and available in huge heaps. Each round of diners can accommodate at least sixty people. The soft drink – Panakam – and Hookah have already served as appetisers. Please rise to start dining.

During the feast it is interesting to note that the groom along with five others and the bride with another five eat from the same plate. This practice is followed as a custom to ensure that no discrimination is shown, since all of them belong to the same caste. After this, the bride, veiled from head up to the neck, joins both her palms and pays her obeisance to her parents, brothers, sisters, and the elders in the Tanda. The groom offers betel leaves to all, touches the feet of the elders, and offers Hookah to men.

The significance of this event – Tikero Nokta – is that the Lambada women, who usually do not wear the cosmetic mark, are applied the same by the brothers during this event to initiate them as Muttayiduwus and continue to be so for a long time in life. Henceforth she is considered a Punyastree or Muttayiduva (a woman whose husband is alive).

Announcement while offering Tambulam (betel leaves with betel nuts) – Pachchaar:

Ae Nayak, Kachchi Sapari, Pakke Pan Navanari Baditi Sarangee, Rangmari Hathichunno, Pharko Kachcho Pakko Lungacha Badi Mung Vetadohubo Aneti Lo Nayak

Hey Nayak! The Dadees are playing the Sarangi to entertain all. Raw betel nuts and fresh green betel leaves, finely dried cloves and cinnamon and other spices along with lime as white as an elephant’s tusk are all ready for consumption by those assembled here. The groom is all set to offer these. Please accept these and afford us the pleasure.

Announcement while offering Hookah:

Hetgari, Umparthham, Thhanyepar Ageri Agherima Kasturi, Kasturima Lal! Lo Nayak Hokka

This is a description of the structure of the hookah instrument. It has a gold plated water base, a silver plated stem, over which is a gold plated bowl to hold the red hot embers to vaporise musk. It is ready to be offered respectfully to all by the groom.39

- **Vayabhandear (Wedding event):**

After the conclusion of the *Ghota Caadaero, Tikaero Nokta* events, the main event – wedding is initiated on a Sunday. The house is decorated beautifully. A square site in front of the house that is nine times the length of two lower arms (a measure of 18 inches or a *Moora*) each side is selected for the event. On the four corners of the selected square area, holes are dug to erect or install poles. This is symbolic of the to-be-built house of the new couple. Two more poles are installed one between the poles on the west side and the other at the centre. Before installing these two poles, a thread soaked in water and to which turmeric is applied, is tied to the pole at the end that has a metal sheath. Before installing all the six poles into the ground, vermillion powder and turmeric are sprinkled and coins are also dropped. The barbers later collect these coins. Along the poles on the four corners seven *Vaayaar Handis* (painted pots) are arranged one above the other together with lids. Branches of *Jilledu* tree are brought in a huge heap, which are then arranged over the pots covering them. Three of the pot arrangements along with the respective *Jilledu* branches and the poles are tied together with jute rope. Festoons of mango leaves are then hung. To the poles installed at the centre, an iron ring, cowries, *Myandal*, and lemons are tied. According to their belief system, the entire arrangement thwarts evil eyes over the bride and groom.

On the other hand, the bride and her friends continuously create obstacles while the arrangements are being made. They neither allow the grinding of *Henna*, nor of turmeric and sandalwood pastes. They hide the important articles that have to be used during the wedding. They do not allow the erection of the pandal itself. They question the audacity in organizing the event singing:

*Ghota Kkade Kon Kadayo Kon Adochint Valando Kon*
*Myadi Peeti Piso Kon Pisayo Kon Adochint Valando Kon*
*Vaya Bhande Konbhandayokon Adochint Valando Kon*
*Vayari Lakadi Layo Kon Mangayo Kon Adochint Valando Kon*
*Vaayari Dora Layo Kon Mangayo Kon Adochint Valando Kon*

Who prepared the drink, and on whose instructions? Who did the grinding of henna leaves, turmeric and sandalwood, and on whose instructions? Who fetched the poles and on whose instructions? Who fetched the threads for the nuptial knots, and on whose instructions?40

- **Vaayaar Hangoli (application of cleansing powder and *Baath*):**

Just like the Telugu people perform the ceremonial *Baath* by applying green gram flour to the bride, the Lambadas apply a paste of henna to the bride. The *Kakoti* – a wooden tub in which rotis are prepared – is then placed upside down near the first pestle in the pandal. The groom and bride are made to sit on

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this tub and then given the ceremonial *Baat*. Curtains are hung around them and water filtered through a thin cloth is poured from above the bride. They apply turmeric, sandalwood, and henna to her and sing while doing so. The groom is then given a shower of cold water. As soon as he starts his *Baat*, the bride’s brothers and sisters obstruct him. All this is done in jest *Hamsi Maskari*. They use sticks of the *jilledu* plant to beat him. His relatives come to his aid. The reason for applying henna, turmeric, and sandalwood all over the bride’s body is purely medicinal. While the henna paste cures numbness, rheumatism, blisters on feet, and mouth ulcers, besides reducing the heat in the body, turmeric is a disinfectant, cleanses the impurities in the blood, and is an effective medicine for phlegm, whooping cough, small-pox, besides improving immunity. It also gives an extra shine to the skin.\(^{41}\)

The groom tries to create obstacles while the bride takes *Baat*. The bride’s sisters-in-law recollect her antics during her childhood:

\[
\text{Chal Chwari! Ae Godiya Daban Byati}
\text{Chwari Vettiti Jana Jabaraj Nachnachkarteethi}
\text{Chal Chwari! Ae Myadipeti Ghus Byate}
\text{Chwarii Vettite Jana Paneer Jaga Jabaraj Bandateethi Chal Chwari Ae Godiya Dab Byati}
\]

Hey girl! He has at present suppressed your knee, thus ensuring that you do not move around. Hey girl! Recollect your antics during your childhood. Now, having applied henna, you sit like an innocent one. Why are you so silent now, when our brother sits suppressing your knee? Have you forgotten, you were so abusive near the well during your childhood?

The *Lambadas’* description of youth, comparing it with a pot filled to the brim with water, is nonpareil.

\[
\text{Koro Gudiya Tanda Pani Putgaya Gudiya Radgopani}
\text{Aschwari Par Chadjeejanee Utargayi Bani}
\]

The girl’s attainment of youth and the subsequent loss is just like the cold water in a new pot. The *Lambadas* have used the water in a new pot as a simile to describe conjugal relationship. The youthful body of the woman is compared with that of a new pot, and her youth as the cold water. The woman’s loss of virginity after marriage is compared to that of the breaking up of the new pot.\(^{42}\)


\(^{42}\)Interview with Bhukya Naraniya., aged 80 years, dated 04-04-2016, Lingannapeta Tanda, Gambhiraopet Mandal, Karimnagar District.
- **Hakoldin Dhokdaer (Worshipping a heap of Cow dung):**

  
  Hakoldin worship is one of the many events during a Lambada marriage ceremony, which involves the worship of cow dung, for they consider the cow dung to be Goddess Lakshmi Devi herself. As soon as the bride completes her Baath, she proceeds to perform this worship attired in a Saree. The women tie (called Gaant Chhed) the loose ends of the bride’s Saree and the groom’s dress while singing. The couple is then escorted to the heap of cow dung and then they pay obeisance to the heap. As stated earlier, this is a custom among the Lambada, but there is a reason behind this event. The lives of Lambadas are tied to animal husbandry. The earthen pots fetched for the marriage ceremonies are placed near the heap much before the couple arrives. A small part of the heap is placed in an earthen plate that the potter-woman had brought especially for this purpose. Some bangles, nails, Sapari, kernels of dry coconut, turmeric and vermilion are also placed in the earthen pot, after which the couple worships the heap. On completion of their worship, seven parallel lines are drawn on the ground using a knife. The couple cross these lines while returning home and do not turn to look back. This is a part of the occult practices, some of which find relevance among the Lambada marriage rituals. The seven lines are akin to a Rubicon or Lakshmana Rekha, which the Lambadas believe protect the couple from the ill-effects of necromancy or from the acts of ghosts. Long ago one Raymal Kanji had ignored the advice of not looking back during his marriage rituals and as a result died instantaneously. Even during this event the women sing quite many songs addressing the bride.

- **Garatani Chhodear:**

  The singing of Dhawalo by the bride while removing beaded ornaments tied around her ankles. She sings the following Dhawalo mournfully:

  Majir Hater Mote Dokaneri Mungi Molayi Dandi Tolayi Garitani  
  Mate Chhodo Bhavajo Ahiya  
  Andhari Rathema Tute Jaavato Reshan Pater Dor Karen Paroyi Garitani  
  Mathe Todo Bhavajo Ahiya  
  Ma Hunsen Molayi Kacha Kacheneri Harilaleri Garitani  
  Matha Todo Bhavajo Ahiya  
  Gola Catalari Lakadine Gijina Phange Phangotari Velema Avene  
  Tutagi Bhavajo Labivato Deejo Dhitivato Keijo Bhavajo Ahiya  
  Gola Catalari Kaveche Ku Chonteju: Chontegi Bhavajo Ahiya  
  Mari Yadiri Petema Huyi Janaro Sobha Mane Chwave Bhavajo Ahiya

  I bought the beads during the Majir fair to make anklets (Garatani), and have been possessive of it since then. Hey sisters-in-law! Please do not untie them. This Garatani gave way on an Amavasya night. The same night I made the anklets using strings of gold. They are so dear to me. Please do not untie them. Whenever I chose to buy the beads, I chose only those of the best quality.
Recollect that you have handed-over these Garatani when I lost them while collecting firewood at Golagutta, and now you are bent upon depriving me of the Garatani. They have become a part of my body, and you are depriving me of these. These are the first ever ornaments after my birth, please do not strip me of these.43

- **Dhorabandear (Tying of the knots):**

While the Telugus consider the three nuptial knots and the seven steps (*Saptapadi*) sacred, the Lambadas consider the seven nuptial knots (*Dorabandhear*) as equally sacred. The event can be considered as tying the sacred nuptial knots. After the removal of the Garatani from the ankles of the bride, the bride and groom are made to sit on wooden planks (*Peetalu*) under the wedding pandal. On the four corners of the pandal, four earthen pots (*Polu Muntalu*) are placed over heaps of grain. The women circumambulate around these pots while singing and make the couple weave seven strands of thread around the pots. The seven strands are coiled together and the thread so formed is untied from the pots and turmeric is applied to it. 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. On this occasion, they sing the following song:

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Rayamale Kanjire Hater Bada Dorano
Ku Bhandelaldi Nu Bhandelaldi Tare Baper Hather Badha Dorano
Ku Bhandelaldi Nu Bhandelaldi Tari Yadiri Hather Badha Dorano
Ku Bhandelaldi Nu Bhandelaldi Tare Sasarer Hather Badha Dorano
Ku Bhandelaldi Nu Bhandelaldi Tari Sasuri Hather Badha Dorano
Kun Bhandelaldi Nu Bhandelaldi
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The song describes how the couple ties the sacred thread to each other and how the elders – the parents of both, relatives and others – have witnessed this ritual, naming each one by their relationship with the couple. Long ago, a man by name Rayamal Kanji died during the event much before the sacred knots are untied. The elders then perform the rituals related to his death and advise his younger brother Shakmal to finish the ritual of untying the sacred knots and marry his sister-in-law. The bride mourns that the knots that were to be undone by the husband had to be undone by her brother-in-law.

- **Kaasada Bhaandaer:**

After the *Dora Bhaandaer* ritual, the couple ties the *Kaasada* to each other’s ankles. This ritual involves piercing a new red coloured cloth with seven needles and then wrapping the cloth around *Myandal* (*Manga Kaaya*), which is then

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43Interview with Boda Sali, Aged 75 years, dated 01-04-2016, Beriwada Village, Kesamudram Mandal, Warangal District.
moistened with water. The bride then fastens this around the groom’s ankle and
the groom fastens around the bride’s ankle. The couple, glowing due of the
thoughts about marital life, appear all the more attractive because of the healthy
foods they consume before marriage. Therefore, the Kaasada when fastened
wards-off evil eyes over them. 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.

Saatphera (seven circumambulations): The loose ends of the couple’s
clothing are tied (Gaant Chheda); the groom followed by the bride
circumambulate seven times around the pestles installed with in the area
enclosed by the decorated pots. The sacred Healer Rapya (one rupee coin) until
then secured in the groom’s handkerchief, is unfastened and handed-over to him
along with the bride’s hand. With the seven circumambulations, the couple is
deemed to have been united.

After the Saath Phaera, the couples commence 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.

- Kwaalayaa Khooraaaeroo (feeding curd rice):

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. Usually, the bride’s sister-in-law conducts this ritual. After this, both
are made to sit on the Kakoti (a wooden tub in which rotis are prepared) and
given Baath with cold water. By the time this event ends, the cock crows. 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. This increases intimacy
between the couple. The groom gives two kernels of dry coconut to the bride.
And this culminates the present ritual.

The next afternoon around 3.00 PM, the entire Tanda gathers at the venue
of the previous night’s events, usher-in the couple there, seat them and make
them unfasten the seven knots of the sacred thread they have tied to each other.
While the couple unfastens the knots, the gathering sings songs related to the
event. After this, the couple unties the Khasada tied to each other’s ankles, amid
relevant songs being sung by the gathering.
- **Maandaa Rammer** *(searching for items in gruel):*

  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 gathering takes sides, supporting the groom and the bride, cheering them. The couples sprinkle the gruel over one another jocularly. This is also one activity intended to bridge intimacy between the couple.\(^4^4\)

- **Chippa Podaer** *(breaking the earthen bowl):*

  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.

- **Chottir Paani Piyer**:

  After the above test, the couple is given cold water *Baath*. 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. The others attempt to thwart her from drinking.

  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. They drop pebbles in the ears and squeeze the earlobes to teach him what pain of physical harassment would be. Even if it pains, the groom cannot complain. Further, the mother-in-law beats him on the shoulders with pestles, warning him to control both his tongue and hand. Even the sisters-in-law thrash him. Not with standing the pain of this thrashing, the groom is expected to bear all this. It is only then that the groom is deemed to be a capable and courageous man. These were the customs of the days gone by. Although these acts are performed jocularly, there are serious and subtle warnings in them. They convey the warning that if he takes good care of their daughter, they would surrender themselves and be subservient, and if his actions are violent, the consequences would equally be violent.

  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

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\(^4^4\)Interview with Gugulothu Ramulu Nayak, aged 75 years, dated 30-03-2015, Lingannapeta Tanda, Gambhiraopet Mandal, Karimnagar District.
Dema Guru, and the activity is called Saakhyaapujero. Sandalwood paste is extracted using a whetstone and the shape is drawn on the blanket that covers the couple seated under the pandal. Even on the day that the couple leaves for the groom’s home after the culmination of the wedding, the swastika is drawn upside down. They believe that the symbol affords protection to the couple.

- **Goot Daer (hosting dinner):**

  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. Accompanied by his Lariya, and carrying betel leaves and nuts, and holding hookah, he goes around the Tanda, inviting every household for the dinner. He first salutes the family head saying ‘Ram Ram’, offers the betel leaves and nuts, and hookah to the men in the family and invites them for the dinner. He touches the feet of the elders and seeks their blessings. Meat of rams is offered to the departed elders of the bride.

  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 Chwakopujaer. 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 vermilion 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 expenses for the dinner – from serving the meat, food, and liquor – are entirely borne by the groom’s party. If it is a community dinner, Hachchaar Pachchaar (permission to consume) is read before proceeding ahead with feasting. The gathering then blesses the new couple. This culminates the Goot Daer activity.

- **Chudotipaer:**

  The Lambada women do not wear the Mangalasutras. The Chudotipaer is the event that follows Goot Daer. This event involves adorning the bride with jewellery. In the morning of the event, the groom accompanied by his Lariya and carrying betel leaves and nuts, and holding hookah, he goes around the Tanda, inviting every household to attend Chuudotipaer Nokta. This is usually organised around 3.00 or 4.00 PM by the Muttagiduvas. Dry coconut kernels and jaggery are distributed during the ritual. Based on the families in the Tanda, the groom’s party has to provide the required material. Muttagiduvas among relatives from both the sides and the families in the Tanda apply turmeric and sandalwood powder to the bride and a vermilion Bottu. Amid singing, they make her wear the
jewellery that the groom had brought. She opposes their attempts and mourns thus:

*Mare Yadi Bapero Sobha Manekhatepane Jate Jamarero Sobhamanekoni Chyeve Gajaran Shan Yadi Ahiya
Jate Jamarero Haldero Tikkomanekoni Chyeve Mari Hunsano Yadiyo Ahiya
Jate Jamarer Khundekhande Baliya Manekone Chyeve Bhavajo Ahiya*

The jewellery that my parents gave me is the ones that enhance my beauty, but not those given by others. The turmeric and vermillion given by my parents are what I love, and not the ones given by others. I do not like the bangles given by anybody else other than by my mother.

While she mourns thus, the Muttyiduvas console her, but at the same time decorate her with the jewellery. The goldsmith (Sanaar) carefully fixes the bracelets (Bodulu) on her upper arms. Unable to bear the pain due to the friction, she sings a Dhawalo addressing the Sanar:

*Mariteepe Gadhachare Sone Sanarero Ladaka Veerana
Mariteepe Gadhachare Huniyaka Teepare Ma Ekleej Bayi Konij Tipuye Tipe*

My dear younger brother, blacksmith! The silver string is causing friction, please be careful. I can’t bear these bracelets, O brother!

The ‘History of Banjara Lineage’ speaks about the emergence of jewellery among the Lambadas. The erstwhile Rajput women took flight to the forests unable to bear the atrocities of the Muslim raiders. To camouflage themselves, they used silk-cotton seeds, tore their own blouses, smeared their clothing with red soil and dipped them in the sap extracted from the bark of Flame of Forest trees (Moodugu Chetlu). Beautiful women turned out to look like ghosts. Based on such anecdotes, it can be concluded that the women resorted to various practices to protect their chastity, which over time became rituals.

There is a variety of attire and jewellery of Lambada Soubhagyavatis (a woman whose husband is alive). They reflect their culture. Their skirts are embroidered with Paetiyaa (mirrors), colourful beads, and currency coins. The Kaanchali, embroidered with pieces of cloth of various colours, covers the chest and the upper arms. The Kaanchalis worn by married women and maidens are again different. The former’s wear includes Khavya hanging down from the shoulders, Kaanti beautifully painted clothing in the upper part of the chest, and the Paeti – an ornament hanging from the bottom of the blouse up to the navel. The veils worn over their heads – Tukri – are also embroidered with mirrors, beads, and silver trinkets. The Toplis and Ghagaris are silver ornamentation worn on the head splitting the hair into two. The Bhuriyas are the golden ornaments fixed to the nostrils. The bracelets worn on the upper arms are known as Baaju Baandh. The ivory bracelets worn above the Baaju Baandh wear are called
Choodaer Baliya. Besides these, they wear rings on the fingers and anklets called Vaankadi or Kassedanda made of silver. Adorned with all these, the bride glows like the divine Goddess herself.\footnote{Interview with Ajmera, Dulli Bai, Aged. 56 years, dated 31-01-2016, Dammannapeta Tanda village, Gambhiraopet Mandal, Karimnagar District.}

The widows among the Lambadas are called Raands. They stand to lose some of the ornamentation that the Soubhagyavatis wear. The Khavya and Kaantli stitched to the Kaanchali, the ivory bracelets worn on the upper arms, the Ghugris worn in the hair, the silver trinkets embroidered to the veil, and the Vaankadis worn at the ankles are all denied to them.

The bride is adorned with the ornamentation and attired as described above during the Choodotipaer ritual. The announcement for all to commence eating is made:

\begin{verbatim}
Samlo Samlopanch! Sabha Raja Bhojeri
Keeni Pancheri, Orkevas, Aur Dhanyakevas
Our Dhaliya Char Chattanni Chwak Vattaree
Panch Mangala Range Change Sitasariki Nari
Lakad Kaha Ma Moto Angarkaha Ma Moto
Tokano Kaha Ma Byato Ganga Betiro Marchya
Samundar Betiro Noon Hachchar Pachchar Ma Marochh Dhon Ghee Padochh Telatel
Pani Padochh Relapel, Dhaneri Padirasi Gheepadikavas
Hattenmayi Chap Challajatan Pheraj Mateeratan Malavo Byatotat
Tokanopade Sath Lotaj Pade Atth Kodchej Bandho Ghant
Kodchej Padovat Ek Tangero Thithar Bagar Korer Tthali
Peraj Rakadoman Champa Valo Palchu Mothi Valoghee
Ee Marakhean Kodchikam Bakchinkaralo
\end{verbatim}

Hear me Lambada elders! Assume that this King Bhoj’s royal court. Salutations to the panegyrists, barbers, drummers, and Lambadas! The experienced are supervising the auspicious ritual, and have arranged a hearth of five stones. The firewood, the fire itself and the cauldron are vying with each other as the food is being cooked. The chillies grown on the banks of River Ganga and the salt extracted from the sea are also competing with each other to provide taste to the food. There is sufficient ghee spreading its aroma all around. There is abundant food for consumption. But, be cautious about the finger rings. The community is ready for dining. Those who are serving, please be attentive and skillful for our prestige is at stake. We have the brinjal curry, and soup made with curry leaves for consumption. There are sufficient enough leaf-plates.

This announcement permitting the gathering to start dining displays the moral, humble, adaptable and principled lifestyle of the Lambadas. Adroitness and sarcasm are also subtly imbedded in the announcement. The announcement
says that there are adequate numbers of dishes cooked richly in ghee, because of which, it warns those serving, to be cautious so that their finger rings would not slip out of their fingers. The description of the dishes and their recipes reveals not just the great taste they afford but also reveals the singers ability to describe.46

The *Chudotiper* rituals and associated events prolong until late in the night. The next day is the one on which the family bids adieu to the bride. The bride finds even the new ornaments heavy to wear. She laments that she is tied with new relationships and pleads for freedom from them. She sings a *Dhawalo* through which she pleads with the head of the *Tanda* – the protector, her parents and siblings, and also expresses her wishful thinking that the night does not pass, the cock does not crow, but the fox howls its howl:

\[
\begin{align*}
Sutoka & \text{ Jagore Chukama Odane Maro Nangareero Nayak Bapu} \\
Ajeeye & \text{ Rateri Sameeye Sanjeri Tari Betiri Bandani Padarchhare} \\
Sutoka & \text{ Jagore Dasala Odane Maro Tanderogyani Nayak Bapu} \\
Tari & \text{ Betiri Bandani Chhodalare Hiya A} \\
Sutoka & \text{ Jagore Sela Odan Maro Nayak Bapu} \\
Ghinrajal & \text{ Nakejana Nanimoti Maldi Phandaveju Tari Betiro Jeeveda Phandago Bavele Ahiya} \\
Suthoka & \text{ Jagore Khunti Tanan Maro Hundi Nayak Bheeya} \\
Ajeeye & \text{ Rateri Sameeye Sanjeri Tari Byanema Vacho} \\
Padarchhare & \text{ Ozachalen Chhodalare Bheeya Ahiya} \\
Tharapuli & \text{ Chanenirat Ajeeyeke Ghadiyeke Vadisetho} \\
Mare & \text{ Nayak Bapuri Madagima Mari Yadiri GoDema Ghadiyeke Soyum Chandeni Rat Ahiya} \\
Ajeeye & \text{ Eke Ghadiyeke Nabolisatho Mare Raje Bapuri GoDema Made Maden} \\
Soyumre & \text{ Mare Nayak Bapu Ro Palo Poso Bangalo Kukado Ahiya} \\
Tari & \text{ Danche Bangene Sonodharayum Tari Tangene Ruperi Pinjani Ghadayun Kukado Ahiya} \\
Mare & \text{ Bapuri Garena Gyarininda Leeyun Kukado Ahiya} \\
Popati & \text{ Patareri Ghumari Gheleri Sali Tu Aje Boliseto Ajero Ekedhado Mare} \\
Raje & \text{ Bapuri Garena Gyarininde Leeyum Yadi Ahiya}
\end{align*}
\]

Hey saviour of the *Tanda people*, *Nayak*! Are you awake or blissfully sleeping! Throughout the night your daughter’s limbs are shackled. Please come and get me unfettered. O Father, your dear daughter is entangled just like the fish in a fisherman’s net. Hey Brother! Wake up from your slumber, your beloved sister is fettered, please come and unshackle her. Hey Night! You have ornately decorated yourself with stars as ornaments. Do not hasten in allowing dawn to break. Please extend your stay a little longer, so that I can stay at my father’s home for a little while more and cuddle comfortably in my mother’s lap. Hey my father’s favourite Bengali rooster! Do not hasten to crow, delay it for a little while so that I can sleep in my father’s lap oblivious of the surroundings. If you do as I say, I shall get a golden crown and silver anklets for you. Let the fox

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46Interview with Banoth Mothiram., aged 60 years, dated 01-02-2016, Dhammannapeta *Tanda* village, Gambhiraopet *Mandal*, Karimnagar District.
howl today without fail. Its howl, my father considers a bad omen, and I can extend my stay for a day more.

After the marriage the bride thinks about the loss of love and affection of her parental family besides the troubles she might have to face in her in-laws’ home. She, therefore, tries as much as possible to extend her stay and for this reason hopes that bad omen beset her departure. Her lamentation brings tears into the eyes of everyone around. She addresses the head of the Tanda to use his position to defer her departure. The groom is compared with the fisherman and herself as the fish. She beseeches her parents and siblings to save her, there by expressing her profound love for them. At the same time, she wishes that the night comes to a standstill, so that dawn does not break early. This wish of her reveals the Lambadas’ belief in the elements of Nature. Her references to the rooster, cattle, and the fox in her grief reveal the intimate relationship of their lifestyle with the surroundings.

Inhabiting in and near forests, the Lambadas believe that a vixen’s howl around the Tanda is a bad omen. They believe that the animal would not howl unless it perceives evil spirits. When an inhabitant of the Tanda hears a vixen howl, the matter is immediately brought to the notice of the Head. He then consults the elders of the hamlet, enquires the reasons, and as an antidote a ram is sacrificed to appease the evil spirit. In such an event, travel plans, if any, are postponed. It is for this reason that the bride prays for the vixen to howl, so that her departure to her in-laws’ home is delayed for one more day.

She moans at the very thought that she has to leave her parents, siblings, relatives, friends, the familiar people and environs around with in the Tanda. Besides, troubles she might face at her in-laws’ house flash in her mind’s eye. Her position there is that of a menial. She has to rise from bed early in the morning and has to work throughout the day serving her parents-in-law. She is barred from countering the elders, nor do her opinions matter. Even the food she is provided is that given to the labourers.

The Chudotiper rituals and associated events prolong until late in the night. At the end, the groom gives dry coconut kernels and jaggery to the elders, friends and relatives. The couple gives Tambulam to the elders and seek their blessings. This culminates the ritual.47

- **Nalwerin Valayer** (Bidding adieu to the bride):

  The day after Chudotiper, the couple is sent off to the groom’s home. Even for this event, the entire Tanda, friends and relatives are invited. This event, in a way, marks the handing-over the welfare of the daughter to her husband and his family, and is the culminating event of the marriage rituals. This is the event in

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47 Interview with Gugulothu Laxmi., aged 68 years, dated 02-02-2016, Lingannapeta Tanda, Gambhiraopet Mandal, Karimnagar District.
which the heart of a stoic melts to bring out streams of tears from the eyes, and is equally applicable to all urbanised, rural, or the forest dwellers. Bearing the child in her womb for nine months, and then fostering it to become a mature adult, the mother grieves. The father reminisces the sweet memories of the growing child. Their hearts weep inconsolably while bidding farewell to their loving daughter. This, of course, is applicable to all societies.

The bride expresses her grief while leaving for her in-laws’ home through Malero (a form of Dhawalo), wherein she hugs everyone in the family and friends and weeps inconsolably. Haveli is another form of Dhawalo, where in the bride stands on the back of a bull and sings for the welfare of her parental family. Expressed in any form, the Dhawalo are bound to melt the hearts of even stoics.48

On the day of bidding adieu to the daughter, the women in the family go around the Tanda and invite every household to bid farewell to their daughter and for lunch called Vayartelo. The entire Tanda gathers at the bride’s home by 10.00 O’clock in the morning. The Muttayiduva ready the bride, give her Navalerin Ves Peran (a special dress for the occasion) to wear, and bring her out of the house while singing. The bride remains inconsolable, does not budge out despite the effort of many; she hangs on to the threshold, and does not loosen her hold. With great effort the assembled women drag her out while singing songs related to wedding rituals. After fetching her out of the house, they help her stand on the back of a decorated bull -- Deju.

- **Haveli**

The five or six pairs of new clothes given by the parents, ornaments, meals plate and tumbler, and other articles are all sacked together into a Gun, which is then hoisted on the back of the bull. The Gun is a sack made of jute with pockets on either side when hung across the back of the bull. The jute sack is also called Tangadi. It is woven into various small pockets. The bride holding a stick called Dandiya is then made to stand on the back of the bull. Wielding the Dandiya with both the hands raised, she sings and performs Haveli. She refers to the Tanda, the Nayak, the people, their wealth, and pleads them to take care of her parents. She says that her association with the Tanda has come to an end from this day and that she does not have any more privileges to serve them. She requests the audience to not forget her but retain her in their hearts.

Addressing her brothers, she sings the following Dhawalo:

*Bhiyare Tari Byaneti Avadai Vyaremte Bandare*
*Chandagadero Chandulale Bhiyavo Ahiya*
*Bhiyare Tupanchema Chalasuto Pachhisema Paraklure*
*Manekotaro Marewadi Bhiyavo Ahiya*

48Interview with Late Boda Janki, aged 80 years, dated 01-04-2016, Beruwada Tanda, Kesamudram Mandal, Warangal District.
O my brother Chandulal, the ruler of Chandagadh! Do not show animosity towards me, your younger sister. O Mangilal Marwadi brother of Manukota I can recognise you even if you are walking in a group of 25 people. You may have enmity with your foes, but not with your younger sister. O brother Motilal, ruler of Mavugadh! I can recognise your voice amid 60 voices of the Panchayati heads. O brothers! Please do not behave the way you behave with your enemies; what you are doing is against my wishes.

Addressing the bull – Dholiya, she says:

Dholiyare Tati Aje Jhumri Jheler Saniya Khad
Dudiya Talayer Pani Chutago Doliya Ahiya
Sone, Ruperi Thadena Todalene Jhumari Jheler Khad Khalena
Dudiya Talayer Pani Pile Doliya Ahiya
Tari Singane Singadi Khaulene Taari Tapalene
Chandiya Khwale Doliya Ahiya
Aje Tati Jako Taro Malavo Chhutane
MaTeejako Mare Javanuro Jhurelo Chhuto Doliya Ahiya

O Dholiya! You are denied of lustrous green grass that grows in the forest, and also the milk like water of the lake. Unfetter yourself of the gold and silver ropes to satiate your appetite and thirst. The ornament hung to your horn, the Chandiya mirrors on your head, the embroidered cloth covering your back have all enhanced your natural beauty. Just the way you are forced to be away from your family, my time to depart from my friends has come. O Doliya! The time that keeps me away from my parental house has come.

Addressing her parents, she laments in the following Dhawalo:

Yadiyeje Tari Piliyene Tari Petema Ghatalena
Gokaliseto Ajero Papidado Talajaye Yadi Ahiya
Yadiyeje Tari Avediki Piliyeti Avedayi
Katemate Vejayese Chulepache Byatichwak Kshaneri Yadi Ahiya
Yadiyeje Tari Piliyene Sansadene Byasamate
Jayese Ghungate Ghugarari Yadi Ahiya!
Bavale Tari Pili Pakadir Pechema Kagaderi Puli Karelene
Gokalisito Gokajayu Bavale Ahiya
Sikade Sikadere Ba Tari Sikene Achwad Bandhu
O Mother! If you could have hidden me in your womb, this unfortunate day of seeing me off to my in-laws’ house would not have occurred. Sitting in front of the hearth, you would bestow it with beauty! Will you be able to sit in front of the hearth after taking the harsh decision of seeing me off? O Mother, you give extra glow to the Tukri (the veil that woman with surviving husbands wear), hope you would not forget me.

Dear Father, if you could hide me in your yellow coloured handkerchief, you would not have to face this day of sending me off to my in-laws’ house.

As she continues to weep inconsolably, the parents pacify her and at the same time instruct her the way she has to behave at her in-laws’ house.\(^{49}\)

They advise her to take good care of her parents-in-law, behave respectfully with her husband’s elder brothers, and treat her husband with utmost reverence. She responds amid bouts of weeping, saying that she would secure their advice in the corner of her Tukri, in other words follow their advice in letter and spirit. At the same time, she blesses them that they flourish with good health and wealth, and that the entire Tanda be prosperous. She sings the related Dhawalo:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Madageye Vadalajum Vades Guraler Ju Pyales Mari Bapuri Madagi} \\
\text{Javatum Kepe Bharayes Avaturele Chalayes} \\
\text{Haridubadi Puri Yali Rakaden Mari Bapuri Madage}
\end{align*}
\]

May my Father’s wealth prosper like the banyan tree, increase like the fruits of the fig tree! When he leaves home on business, if he carries a jute bag, while returning home, may he return with a train-like caravan of bullock-carts! May the home be filled with prosperity!

The banyan tree is not just a shade giving tree, but spreads across vast expanses of land with its prop-roots, and remains alive for hundreds of years. The bride blesses her father to prosper like the banyan tree. Similarly, the fig tree bears fruits bounteously without displaying even traces of flowering. Just as the green grass grows wildly even with a little rain, she wishes her father’s prosperity to spread as wildly.

Addressing the women who have joined her in the Haveli, she says:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Yadiyeje Gharbar Umarene Lage Pann Eak Pagela Me Kodili Lare Angesi Avo Yadiyo Ahiya} \\
\text{Yadiyeje Maro Bape Dinojako Hans Melena Amba Ameliri} \\
\text{Bagema Rastoyi Koradena Hato Meladiyu Yadiyo Ahiya}
\end{align*}
\]

\(^{49}\)Interview with Boda Malli, Aged 55 years, dated 02-04-2016, Gudi Tanda, Beriwada Village, Kesamudram Mandal Warangal District.
O Mothers! Your houses would not budge an inch from you; they will be there for you your lifetime. By for the final time you could join this unfortunate girl for a few steps, come! O Mothers, if you walk along with me for a few steps I shall pawn the Hans (a necklace) gifted by my Father, buy a ram and get Shorwa cooked with its meat in a mango groove on the way and serve them to you. You can then return to your homes.

Suffering the pangs of parting ways with her parents, family, the familiar environs of the Tanda, overwhelmed by a grief-stricken heart and amid inconsolable sobs she invites the women.

The bride exposes a variety of emotions like kindness, warm-heartedness, grief, and many others while singing the various Dhawalo. While departing to her in-laws’ house, on one side she is grief-stricken, but at the same time on the other side she is happy too. She speculates as to what the people in the Tanda speak about her after her departure; she is equally sorrowful for having to leave her native Tanda. She promises the Tanda:

Rangonavaju Naviyu Rupo Tapaju Tapiyu Suire Nake Mayi Nikaliyu
Tobi Tamare Ankima Koni Ayodu Mare Nayak Bapu ‘Ahiya!

I will be soft in my behaviour at my in-laws’ place and obey the elders’ words. I shall be as malleable as silver in facing hardships. I shall not commit any wrongdoing that brings disrepute to my parents and my native Tanda. This I solemnly promise.

After the oath, she climbs down from the bull, goes to the head of the Tanda, embraces him and reminisces the sweet past amid sobs. She then goes to her parents, brothers, sisters-in-law, sisters, uncles, aunts and all other relatives, hugs them tightly and weeps and recites the Dhawalo. While she does all this, the groom hands-over the Tambulam and Hookah to all those present there, touches the feet of the elders and seeks their blessings.

The bride continues to weep and sings the mournful song of departure. As she repeats the song she waves her hands and folds them over her head. The departure song runs as follows:

Chutaagiye Mare Nanyeka Baapuri Haveli Ahiya
Chutaagiye Mare Dorajana Yadiri Haveli Ahiya
Chutaagiye Mare Ropa Khemao Virenari Haveli Ahiya
Khayesa, Piyesaye, Hari Hhari Reyes Ye
Mare Nayeka Bapori Nangari Ahiya
Chutaagiye Mare Naayeka Baapori Nangaree Haveli Ahiya

I am losing the protection of my
Father, mother and brothers,
Oh my fatherly Tanda, you are
getting rid of me, I pray God
That you get good food, good water and be prosperous.

The song makes everybody weep. She continues to sing and weep. After the end of Haveli, the sack Gun or trunk box in which clothing given to the bride are packed is placed at the centre of a mat. The groom is made to sit facing east, while the bride sits facing west. The entire gathering starts dining. The groom and the bride are joined by five people each, who eat from the same plates that the groom and bride eat. After the dinner, every household in the Tanda offer gifts to the couple. Based on the distance, the groom’s party begins its journey back home.

Before the marriage party is sent they all sit together and Kamarir Bhang is again distributed. Bhang is a mutually binding ceremony repeated seven times during a marriage. Then the marriage party leaves for the groom’s Tanda.50

The groom’s party leaves in a caravan of bullock carts. If the journey is quite long, they break it from time to time and enjoy feasting non-vegetarian food and alcoholic drinks. Experiencing the joyous occasion of the marriage thoroughly, they reach the groom’s home amid sounds of drums and trumpets. Upon seeing the new environs and all new faces, the bride is overwhelmed with sorrow and starts singing the following Dhawalo:

Yadiyeje Tama Sariki Marinani Yadise Chintapalliri Khati
Mitisindi Paraden Bholobhuladen Hato Pharegi Yadiyo Ahiya
Yadiyeje Chhidichhidi Kheralima Sangani Bammolima Antodene Hato PhregiYadiyo Ahiya
Yadiyeje Chilla Kantero Antodene Hato Pharegi Yadiyo Ahiya

O Mothers! A group of women like you have accompanied me up to Chintapalli, gave me a sour and sweet palm wine to drink and hoodwinked me with their sweet talk, before returning. Among the densely grown babool bushes, my family veiled me and returned. O Mothers! Coaxing and then leaving me among the thorny bushes, they returned.

The Lambadas believe that marriage is a lifelong bliss. It is with this belief that they sing the Dhawalos that reflect the happy and sorrowful moments in life. As stated earlier, these songs reflect human life replete with sweet and memorable moments as well as bitter and lugubrious ones. Some of the events depicted in these songs are heart wrenching.51

50Interview with Boda Sali, aged 75 years, dated 03-04-2016, Beriwada Village, Kesamudram Mandal, Warangal District.
51Interview with Guguloth Sali, aged 75 years, dated 03-04-2016, Beriwada Village, Kesamudram Mandal, Warangal District.
III. 3. Vyatdur Gara Vayar Kham (Events at the groom’s house)

On reaching their Tanda the marriage party halts at the outskirts of the hamlet or near a temple, spread mats, place the Guna at the centre and make the couple sit on either side.

- Gharema Leronokta (inviting the couple into the house):

As the groom’s relatives know in advance that Tangadi would arrive, they cook food and then go around the hamlet and invite all saying Tangadi Ayicha Gharen Balalam Avo (the marriage party has arrived; come let us usher them to the house). They carry a handy-vessel, vermilion and turmeric powders, Tambulam and a lighted lamp, all placed in a plate and go in a procession singing to the place where the party has camped.

After all have assembled there, the representatives of bride’s family distribute a sweet dish called Moyi (made with rice flour and ghee) that her parents have sent. Though the dish is tasty enough, the groom’s relatives mockingly say that it is tasteless, in a sense paying the bride’s party in the same coin. Hitherto when the groom visited the bride’s home before the marriage, he and his companions were subjected to the same ridicule. It is the turn of the bride’s mother now to be the butt of ridicule. The groom’s party sing songs poking fun at the culinary expertise of the bride’s mother, and at times they make fun of the bride saying that she came to her in-laws’ place leaving her parents’ home just to enjoy a much better life. The women in the Tanda question her for taking such a long time to come over after retaining the groom at her parents’ home for six months before the wedding.

Chho Chho Minare Chaveni Bhandaye Aje Ayi Kayiye Basiyari Dammedi
Chho Chho Minari Abe Ayi Kayiye Chinari Dammidi

O Basiya’s wife! Did you now find time to come here after he had moved around you for six months?

This is how the women closely related to the groom chide her mockingly.

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. They are made to stand in front of the threshold of the house and the couples in the gathering shower them with Akshintalu (grains of rice mixed with turmeric) seven times. They have to be given money for doing so. At the threshold, the groom’s sisters and sisters-in-law stop them from entering the house unless they are paid money. The couple then enters the house. The porridge and Tambulam are distributed among those who have gathered at the house. The groom offers Hukkah to elders and seeks their blessings. The bride covers her face with the Ghungato (veil), which she continues up to a fortnight or a month. During this period, she is known as Ghungatali Navaleri (a new bride).
• **Dantan Dero Nokta (giving twigs to brush teeth):**

The after the bride’s arrival, an event called *Teloo* (feast) is organised. The groom wakes-up early in the morning, goes to the near by grove to collect twigs of the pungam and neem trees. The neem twigs are cut into 6-inch long sticks (Dantan) for brushing teeth. The groom hands-over these sticks to the bride, who in turn puts them in a vessel and accompanied by her sisters-in-law goes around the hamlet, gives a stick to each household and seeks their blessings. She then invites them for the feast (*Teloo*) organised on the occasion of the marriage. After the feast the invitees are offered *Tambulam*.

• **Bhardeker / Tangadi Kholero Nokta (Display of the articles brought by the bride):**

After the feast, around 3.00 in the afternoon, the mother-in-law goes around the Tanda and invites the households to see the new clothes that the bride had brought. In the presence of *Muttayiduwass* the bride starts showing the new clothes and ornaments meant to be given away to the in-laws. The visiting women praise the workmanship and quality of the items brought. The bride then massages the legs of the elders, opens the loose end of her sari (*Kongu*) and touches their feet with it seeking their blessings. After this event, the representatives of the bride’s parents who had accompanied her are offered seen off on their return journey. They are provided with sufficient money to meet the incidental expenses throughout the journey. The bride starts weeping inconsolably at the time of their departure and starts reciting a *Dhawalo*. The elders console her.

Around 5.00 or 6.00 in the evening, the bride boils water and *Baathes* the elders including her parents-in-law, irrespective of their gender. They bless her.

• **Vyatadu Navalerin Bhelero Nokta (nuptial ceremony):**

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 couples consummate their marriage and unite into one. This is the first step in their marital life and leaves a trail of sweet memories. The *Lambadas* organise this event with as much fanfare and expenditure that they can afford. The groom’s sister-in-law oversees the arrangements; she invites the *Muttayiduwass* for the event. At an auspicious time, the couple is sent into a room. The groom offers kernels of dry coconut to his sister-in-law and other *Muttayiduwass* before entering the room.

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52 Interview with Boda Chiliki Aged 72 years, Beriwada Village, Kesamudram Mandal, Warangal District.
• **Services to the family:**

The daughter-in-law is expected to massage and *Baat*he her parents-in-law with hot water every evening. She is required to ensure that they are provided with food and drinks are the appropriate time. She has to serve them until they sleep in the night, and then start serving her husband. Until the arrival of the younger daughter-in-law, it was the responsibility of the elder one to perform all these activities. With the arrival of the younger daughter-in-law, the work is evenly distributed.\(^{53}\)

**III. 4. Tattooing:**

A distinguishing feature of *Lambada* women in Telangana is their tattoo marks on hands, face, forehead, temples and a dot tattooed on the left side of a girl’s nose. The tattoo is a distinguishing character of a tribe. Tattooing is very popular and common particularly with *Lambada* women. Men usually get their names tattooed and the figure of scorpion tattooed on their body; they believe that the scorpion will not bite them and if by chance it bites them it will not be fatal. It may be noted that different kinds of designs are drawn, some are very complicated and some very simple. They are drawn only for the purpose of decoration and no other motive is attributed to it. Some old people among the *Lambadas* are of the opinion that tattooing relieves the body joints from pain and exertion. It is believed that tattoo marks are also meant to ward off evil eyes. Some tattoo marks are signs of values and victory, Dots, various designs, names, leaves, flowers, animals designs etc., are tattooed by specialists in this art. The people belonging to a community called *Pachabottollu* who are experts in tattooing visit the *Tanda s* once or twice in a year. They are paid according to the design they tattoo. If the design is complicated they *Demand* more and vice versa. The charges are paid generally in kind.\(^{54}\)

**III. 5. The Groom covering his body with *Khval*:**

In the past the *Lambadas* were invaded by the solders of Sultan. In order to protect themselves from the attacks of the soldiers and to cover their sacks of ornaments they covered their bodies with a bedsheeth stretching to twenty yards. Even today the *Lambadas* follows the same custom. They cover the body of the groom with twenty yards bedsheeth. Before sending the groom to the bride’s *Tanda* the elders in his family fold the bedsheeth into four folds and place a coin in the *Khval*. The elders start folding the *Khval* on two sides. The coin in it keeps on rolling and finally the elders ensure that it rests either on the obverse or reverse side and decide the auspicious time called *Samman*. Then the parents and relatives of the groom sing a song weeping because they do not know when their

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\(^{53}\)Interview with Bhukya Rangi aged 60 years, dated 01-08-2014, Linganapeta *Tanda* Village, Gambhiraopet *Mandal*, Karimnagar District.

son finds the bride’s Tanda and returns safely along with his bride. The
bridegroom’s brother puts a swastika mark on the Khval and on Tukri (veil) of
the bride.35

III. 6. Traditional dress of Lambadas reflecting Culture:

The versatile and colorful Lambadas in these districts are found to be
interspersed amidst tribal and non-tribal populations and yet tenaciously
maintaining their cultural and ethnic identity. Their dress and decoration and
the social practices remained almost unchanged through the ages in spite of the
habitation shift from north-west India to Andhra Pradesh / Telangana. The
Lambadas are a strong and virile race and with tall stature and fair complexion.
Men are muscular and of medium height with Rajputan features. The pattern of
dress for the male is very simple and resembles that of others in the locality.
Their ordinary dress is Dhoti, a covering reaching the toes and a Pagdi or turban
of several folds, wound round the head.56

The men wear a shirt mill-made or of handloom cloth, a Dhoti, and a
Rumal or turban on their head. They wear their Dhoti above their knees. First
they tie half the Dhoti at the waist with one end and the other end is taken
between the two legs and tucked in at the back. There is no hard set rule that
turban should have a particular colour but it is observed that most of them use
red coloured turban or at least a turban with red stripes on it. It is believed that
the colour red brings them good luck.57 Some elderly persons while visiting
important people or while going to neighbouring villages put on their old
overcoat. During marriage celebrations, the groom wears a new Dhoti, a shirt
with a new overcoat and a red turban and a cloth called Pachehadan preferably
with a border, spread on his shoulders and a pair of foot-wears which are locally
made or purchased from a near by town. Most of the Lambada men wear foot-
wear made locally by a cobbler which is considered durable and cheap. In the
districts of Telangana, the Zumda of the Tanda s wear the following dress and
ornaments:

- Pakdi (Red coloured Rumal or turban; Red colour is chosen for it
  brings good luck)
- Jaglaa (mill made or handloom cloth shirt)
- Kandwa (a piece of cloth used as towel worn on the shoulders)
- Kandoro (a silver string tied to their waist)

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35T. Uppaiah., The Social Structure among the Banjara community of Telangana – A Case Study.
Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, submitted to the Department of History, Kakatiya University,
Warangal, 2011, p.79..
Delhi, 1989, pp.94-95.
37G. P. Reddy, Investigation and Draft, A.M. Kurup and B.K. Roy Burman, Ethnographic Study
No. 17, Lambadi (A Scheduled Tribe of Andhra Pradesh), Censes of India, 1961, Volume 1, Op.cit,
p.12.
✓ Dhoti (also called a Panche)
✓ Mirky, Viroli, Bali (ornaments made of gold or silver)
✓ Chowkadi (an ear ornament made of gold)
✓ Kolda (wrist ornament)
✓ Thoda (ring like ornaments which is worn as anklets)

The Lambadi women in these districts are conspicuous by their way of dressing and with their numerous heavy ornaments. The traditional dress of these women is replete with embroidery work and is quite colourful. By stature they are tall and are essentially homely. They wear a petticoat or skirt of coarse cotton prints, rich in embroidery work and hung from the waist in ample folds. A Phadki (Oni) or scarf of a similar texture is worn over the shoulders and on the head where it rests on a sort of horn or wooden comb. A bodice or Choli with long sleeves and tastefully embroidered in front and on the shoulders, covers the bosom and is tied at the back by bands, the ends of which are ornamented with cowries, beads and gaudy coloured tassels of cotton. A covering cloth made of Karwar cloth with embroidery is fastened at the waist and hangs at the sides with a number of tassels and strings of cowries. The traditional dress is designed to suit their nomadic ways and the occupational needs of passing through single tracts in order to collect wood for fuel from the forest.

The Lambadas get protection from their conventional or traditional dress. The Phadki protects the woman’s head. The women folk of the community are generally hard working and they move in forest to collect forest produce for their livelihood. The thickness of the cloth protects them from mosquito and snake bites. It affords protection to them from all types of venomous creatures.

III. 6. Ornaments of Lambada women and their utility:

The Lambada women wear different types of ornaments and decorate their bodies with tattoos. They wear colourful dress, anklets, bangles, neck ornaments and hair pins. The ornaments are prepared with silver, brass, aluminum and in some cases with gold. The ornaments not only decorate their bodies but also protect their bodies from severity of nature. These ornaments have their own utility. The women standout clearly among others because to their distinctive dressing and ornamentation. They are comely and strong in physique. The ornaments they wear are many and varied, besides they are never tired of wearing so many heavy ornaments. Men wear only finger and toe rings made of silver.

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• Ornaments of married Lambada women:

Married women are distinguished from the unmarried women in that they wear their bangles on the upper arm, while the unmarried girls wear them on the lower arm. Unmarried girls may wear black bead necklace which are taken off at the time of marriage. The Lambada women consider black colour as inauspicious and hence married women do not give importance to black colour. Married women also use hair ornaments called Ghugri to distinguish them from widows and unmarried girls. Their ornaments or jewels are very numerous and include strings of ten or twenty strands with a cowry as a pendant called the Chid (horse hair) and silver Hasali in the form of necklace and sign of marriage equivalent to the Tali or Mangalasutra, a sacred thread worn by married women. Their movements are easy, graceful and stately, rendered glow from the quantity of ornaments they wear. The Lambada women part their hair at the centre, comb it back, plait it and profusely deck it up with silk and cotton tassels. Heavy silver plated pendants hooked in the hair hang over their cheeks. The well to-do women wear silver ear rings and golden nose rings. The favourite ornaments appear to be rings of ivory from the wrist to the shoulder, regularly increasing in size, so that the ring near the shoulder will be immoderately large, sixteen or eighteen inches in circumference. These rings are sometimes dyed red. These women place a pad of cloth on their head called Gala when carrying water. They cover it with cowries and attach to it an embroidered cloth called Phieti ornamented with tassels and cowries.

➤ Analysis of ornaments worn by the Lambada women:

• Ghugri: It is a silver hair ornament and looks like a pendent made of a tube with small hanging silver beads. It is attached to the hair on both sides with a pin. The silver beads touch the cheeks. This ornament is indicative of the marital status of a woman. Unmarried girls and widows are prohibited from wearing this ornament.

• Bhuria: It is a gold ornament which decorates the nose. It is a ring like ornament and worn on the right nostril of the nose.

• Phule: It is a silver or gold pin inserted on the right nostril.

• Wanki: It is a silver or brass necklace with a big pendant in the shape of a horseshoe attached to silver or brass chains. On the upper surface of the pendant many designs are drawn for decorative purpose. Only married women wear this ornament.

• Har: It is a necklace made of coins of different denominations and made by a goldsmith.

• Cead: It is a necklace of strings of black beads. It is made by Lambadi women themselves.

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• **Haslo**: It is a silver necklace made of a rod bent according to the size of the neck of the women wearing it. Silver pendants, triangular in shape are attached on both sides of the rod. This ornament is made by a goldsmith. Both married and unmarried women wear this ornament.

• **Chodo**: These horn bangles cover the entire hand of a woman. Married women wear these bangles up to the shoulder, where as unmarried woman wear up to the elbow only.

• **Moterbalia**: These are horn and brass bracelets worn on the wrist.

• **Finger Rings**: There are two different kinds of finger rings

• **Winte**: A silver ring with old coins fixed on the upper side put on the first finger of the left hand

• **Plula**: This is made of old coins in floral shape and put on the middle finger of the left hand

• **Khas**: It is a bell metal anklet, round in shape with different designs drawn on the surface. Both married and unmarried women wear them.

• **Ghode**: This type of anklet is slightly thicker in shape and larger in diameter and is made of bell metal. It reflects the marital status of a *Lambada* woman and only married women wear these ornaments.

• **Toe-rings**: There are three types of toe-rings made of silver as well as brass. One is worn on the first toe of the left foot, second on the middle toe and the third on the little toe.

• **Wankdo**: These are anklets larger in diameter and made of bell metal. They are of a peculiar type with triangular projections pointing upwards. Only married women wear a pair of them.

Besides the above ornaments the *Lambada* women have some other decorative pieces made of cowries and red cotton cloth.

• **Kuncia**: It is a decorative piece made of red coarse cotton cloth put into a triangular shape. To the lower edge of the cloth are attached glass beads of different lines and cowries. It is worn by unmarried girls hanging it on the wrist.

• **Gazera**: It is a piece of embroidered silk cloth tied to the right wrist.

• **Kusotia**: It is a small cloth belt with glass beads on the upper side and cords of cowries and glass beads hanging from the side. This belt is tied on both shoulders of married women.

It may be noted that the women who have discarded their traditional dress have also discarded their traditional ornaments along with them. They are wearing the same ornaments used by the women of other castes.
It is clear that some ornaments indicate their marital status. There is no system of Mangalasutram among the Lambadas of Warangal and Karimnagar districts in Telangana. A married woman wears ornaments. Such as: Devi, Bhuria, Haar, Hansali, Phulli, Bhaajuband, Kasotia, Matlee, Baleyaa, Chooder Baleyaa, Kasse, Chatki, Pheliya, Kaanchli, Tukri, Wankidi, Sonkvalo Haar and Laalderoharr.\(^{63}\)

### III. 7. Divorces & Widow remarriages:

Securing a divorce is quite easy among the Lambadas. When differences of opinion crop up among the couple, the marriage does not last long. Just like any other tribe, divorces are rampant even among the Lambadas. Right from the day of marriage, the community plays a spoilsport. Disputes arise around consumption of toddy and arrack. In matters of reciprocation of gifts, the community is invariably involved. If either the man or the woman is divorcing his/her spouse, they are not forced to pay for the expenditure incurred during the marriage. But will have to pay a penalty of Sakyar Saat, Ghungater Pachchees – an amount at Rs. 60/- per each rupee of witness, besides Rs. 25/- towards the cost of the veil of a married woman. Over and above this, they will have to bear the expenditure incurred by the community, besides the penalties imposed by the community head. The Sakyar rupee has great value among the Lambadas. Hence, during community settlements, the Dadees take this rupee with great reverence.

The Sakyar rupee is given at the time when the gathering eats jaggery – Golkavajanna – in the presence of all. The Navi moves in an anti-clockwise direction and gives it over. The same is done in a clockwise direction at the time of engagement. The Sakyar rupee is given in the presence of the heads of various near by Tanda s. If it is the woman who is seeking divorce, her parents try to counsel her; yet if she insists on going ahead, they leave her to her own fate. In such cases of extreme obstinacy on the part of the woman or man, she/he will have to bear all the penalties that are imposed. There are cases where the woman elopes with another man since she dislikes her husband. In such cases, it is customary on the part of the second husband to pay a certain amount to the first. An essay titled Lambada Tegalo Vivaham, Vidakulu (Marriages and Separations among the Lambada tribes) refers to a Lambada woman Gangi, who it seems, sought nearly six divorces.\(^{64}\)

Widow re-marriages, called Bang Karer or Suko Atochataero, have been in practice right from the days of yore. The Lambadas had the tradition of getting their widowed daughters married again. During those olden days, if the husbands are martyred in Baattles, their widows ended their lives by burning themselves on the husband’s funeral pyre. Such women are known as Satis.

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\(^{63}\)Mohan Shantha., The Status of Banjara Women in India, Uppal Publishing House, New Delhi, 1988, p.47.

\(^{64}\)Interview with Boda Siri Nayak, Aged 45 years, dated 01-04-2014, Beriwada Village, Kesamudram Mandal, Warangal District.
There are many such women in every family of the Lambadas. They are revered with great respect. A young woman leads a horrible life after the demise of her husband. To ensure that his nephews and nieces are not orphaned, and to afford parental protection, the deceased husband’s younger brothers must have married the widowed sisters-in-law. For instance, in our Beriwada Tanda, a young man died after accidentally falling into a well. His wife was pregnant at that time. The community elders deliberated upon the future of the young widow and the yet to be born child, and married her off in a temple with the deceased man’s younger brother. This incidence happened some fifteen years ago.65

An investigation of the when and why of the origin of widow remarriages in the Lambada society reveals a strong narrative. During the ancient times, Rana Kanji was martyred in a Baattle. His wife was too young when he died. Moreover, she was the daughter-in-law of a reputed clan, and unfortunately she had lost her husband. The Lambada elders deliberated on this matter and decided that she is too young to suffer widowhood. To ensure that the woman of the clan remains with in, they have permitted Shekmal, the brother of Rana Kanji, to marry her.

An analysis of the above historic event reveals that the Lambada elders did not let the young girl’s life wither, and that their hearts melted at the very thought of widowhood at such tender age. Thus they have initiated widow remarriages with in the clan. Instead of letting the daughter-in-law of the family become the wife of another man, the elders seemed to have requested her brother-in-law to accept her as his wife. Henceforth, the younger brother marrying the wife of his deceased brother has become a custom.

According to anthropologists, some societies have made it a social right for the brother to marry his deceased brother’s wife. Such marriages are known as Devara Nyayam. This tradition is prevalent among the Khasa tribe living in Himalayan regions. Devara Nyayam is of two types – if the elder brother marries his younger brother’s widow it is Jyeshtha Devara Nyayam and if the younger brother marries his elder brother’s widow, it is Kanishta Devara Nyayam. At present, the latter tradition is prevalent among the Lambadas. If the deceased man does not have any younger brothers, and the widow marries another man outside the family, he has to pay a certain amount to the deceased man’s family as decided by the elders, besides bearing the expenditure towards hosting a feast for the leadership of the Tanda.66

It is permissible among the Lambadas for a man to marry his elder brother’s widow. But according to Hindu tradition, the sister-in-law is deemed to be next to mother. However, among the Lambadas, the wife of a younger brother

is considered like a daughter for the elder brother, hence such marriages are not acceptable.

We have instances in *Ramayana* to justify the tradition. During Lord Rama’s exile into forests, when Sita asks Rama to fetch the golden deer, he goes forth in its pursuit. When he releases his arrow to kill the deer, demon Mareecha, who had assumed the form of golden deer, screams “Ha Sita, Ha Lakshmana” imitating Rama’s voice and dies. Hearing the screams Sita fears that her husband is in danger and persuades Lakshmana to go forth searching for him. Lakshmana tries to counsel her that his brother is in no danger. Sita then accuses him of lusting for her, and for this reason he is not moving. Further, she tells him that Lakshmana’s attempts to possess her are vain. Although what happened next is out of the present context, we can conclude that even during those days, the tradition of younger brother marrying his elder brother’s wife is very much in vogue.

In the same epic, we have another instance of younger brother marrying his elder brother’s wife. In his search for Sita, Lord Rama reaches Kishkinda, kills Vali who had forcefully held Sugreeva’s wife Tara as captive. When Vali accuses Rama of killing him unethically, Rama replies “You have wrongfully held captive your younger brother’s wife and have been satiating your lust. Being your younger brother’s wife, she is deemed to be your daughter, and satiating your lust with a daughter is more unethical.”

The tradition of younger brother marrying his elder brother’s wife is, therefore, in vogue since ages. The Lambadas, therefore, follow the tradition and the younger brother takes care of his brother’s wife and children. As barred by the custom, the elder brother does not marry his younger brother’s widow, but treats her as his daughter. If he happens to be lascivious and satiates his lust in such a relationship, he is ridiculed as *Bodinchoddu*, i.e., one who sleeps with his younger brother’s wife.

The rituals associated with widow remarriages are a little different from the usual marriage rituals. The widow is first transformed into a *Muttayiduva*, i.e., she is given a *Ghagari* and *Chudo* to wear, and is then decorated as a bride. The couple is seated together; they are given a sweetmeat made of rice flour, ghee and jaggery to feed each other. This culminates the marriage ritual. The left over sweet meat is distributed among the attendees. This event is known as *Bangkaren Ghalero*.67

### III. 8. Rituals in the event of a death:

As stated by Lord Krishna in *Srimad Bhagavadgita*, – *Jatasya Hi Dhruvo Mrtyur Dhruvam Janma Mrtasya Ca*, that which is born shall die. The body that

67Interview with Boda Golya Nayak, Aged 80 years, dated 02-04-2014, Beriwada Village, Kesamudram Mandal, Warangal District.
took birth because of the five elements is bound to immingle among the same five elements. Birth and death are natural processes. If a soul takes birth, the family’s joys knows no bounds, but when another soul dies, equal or much more is the family’s grief. A person moving among us, would invariably push the family in throes of sorrow with his departure. Between birth and death, there are quite many rituals to be performed. The rituals concerning death followed by the various tribes differ based on their customs. However, the rituals associated with the ceremonies and cremations are quite unique. Every society has its own unique rituals related to cremation. It is natural for the body to decompose once the body loses life; hence every society has its own ritual of either cremating or burying the body. The Lambadas follow the rituals followed by the Hindus.

As soon as the information about the death of a resident of the Tanda is received, the people abruptly stop eating. The food prepared for consumption, and even the water they fetch are discarded. They consume only the water fetched and food cooked after receiving the news. Immediately on receipt of the news of the death of a person with in the Tanda, the entire community gathers at the deceased person’s residence to console the family.

The Lambadas cremate only those persons who are married. Unmarried persons (male or female), those dying because of deseases are, by custom, buried. The body is carried on a bier, known as Khat. The bier is prepared by two of the elders in the Tanda using two long bamboo sticks across which four to five slats are tied; along the bier grass is laid over which the deceased person’s blankets are spread. As per the tradition, the Lambadas place ghee and a piece of jaggery in the mouth of the body and then the body is Baathed. All the relatives apply ghee to the hair and then participate in the Baathing ceremony. The body is then placed on the bier and tied securely with a rope (Guntogantiobadana), just as in Hindu custom. If the deceased person is young enough, the eyes are pierced with needles; this is done with the belief that the spirit will not be able to see the path to reach home.

If the deceased person is a man, his wife is given new clothes to wear. She is then accoutred like a Muttayiduva, and then all the symbols representing her marital status are divested from her. Henceforth, she cannot wear colourful clothes nor can she use flowers to deck her hair. Her brother-in-law (the deceased husband’s younger brother) has to break the Topali, Ghugari, Baliya and Vankadis she used to wear till then. These ornaments after being removed from her are then tied to the bier. If the deceased is a married one, the bier has to be carried by four men; if it is an unmarried person, the bier is prepared such a way that it has only one bamboo pole to which the body is tied and will be carried by two men. The Lambadas do not have the tradition to Baathe the person who lights the pyre. But, he has to carry a new earthen pot on his shoulder. The Madigas lead the funeral procession with their drums. Throughout the procession, items
that the deceased person likes are sprinkled; these items are either buried or cremated along with the body.

Before the funeral procession reaches the cremation ground, the elders in the Tanda gather at least one or two pieces of wood from each household, and carry them in their own bullock cart up to the cremation ground. If the body is being buried, the site is inspected and grave is dug-out before the procession reaches the ground. Being Kshatriyas, the Lambadas usually prefer cremating the body; however, if the family prefers, the body is buried in some cases. The women of the hamlet accompany the body only up to the outskirts; they do not go to the cremation ground. It is only the men that go to the cremation ground. The women return home and mourn the loss of their dear one. The songs they sing during mourning are heartwrenching.

The wife mourns the death of her husband leaving the responsibilities of bringing up their children. She wails in despair:

Manaj Kayi Sayeba, Ahiya Tarebal Bachyar Rakkakun Kammare
TarBala Bachya Kenadeka Tar Ladkiyo Kermunde Sam Dekha
Tu Hamena Jal Byatotto ami Chodan Chalogokayi
Tar Chhchchyapar Rowato Kunhansu Luvacha
Bhuke Tharase Chhakenakun Khabarlacha
Tar Chhchchyapar Tar Vatjovarechha
Tu Hamena Sansan Chalogo Kayi
Aan Unden Rovomatkejo
Bhulikhan Tar Chhachchyaparpadre
Hamatibolan Gokoni Karan
Tar Saru Panchibai Anki Kadan Bete
Unde Par Hhth Peran Chalojo
Kalthu Hamarmayi
Ajkayi Janvego Saayeba
Ham Tar Saru Bhukecha Ekvana An Mundo Dikalajo"

O Dear! When did you leave us? Now, who will care for your children, they are rendered orphans! Whom do they address as ‘father’ now! Your children are languishing in hunger and thirst. They still feel that you are still some where around. Why did you not speak to us before leaving us? Like the hungry hatchlings we are awaiting your return. You were amidst us just yesterday, where are you now! Please come at least once to meet us.

In this wailing of the recently widowed woman, one can understand the pathetic situation in which the children are losing their father, the pitiful and difficult future of the wife in the absence of her husband, and the misery of the family after it has lost the family head.

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68Interview with Guguloth Sali, aged 75 years, dated 03-04-2014, Beriwada Village, Kesamudram Mandal, Warangal District.
Midway through the funeral procession, the bier is placed on the ground and the bearers change their shoulders those walking in the front go back and vice versa. This is done even with the vain hope that the deceased person may possibly be breathing and come alive. This way of changing shoulders is known as Vatarer (Dimpudu Kallam in Telugu). After placing the bier on the ground, all the ornaments on the body are removed. If the deceased is a married man, his wife’s ornaments like Mangalasutra chain, toe rings etc. that represent her status are placed beside the body. If it is a woman, the coins and grains of rice knotted earlier in the lose end of her sari are opened and left here. From there the procession starts again to the cremation ground, where the body is carried around and then rested prone on the pyre.

After resting the body, the person lighting the pyre circumambulates around it for seven times, turns away and drops the earthen pot on the shoulder, and then finally lights the pyre looking away from it. The earthen pot is shattered into pieces. In some areas, instead of an earthen pot, a small earthen vessel is carried along. The son who had lighted the pyre carries a Tuniki (a kind of tree called CoroMandal ebony, whose leaves are used to make beedies) stick – Tindoordwali – touches it to the head of the deceased person seven times. This ritual is known as Tincho. The ceremonies and rituals differ from caste to caste and tribe to tribe. Man is so afraid of death that every ceremony related to deaths is performed with a sense of fear. All those who have joined the funeral procession, those who have carried the bier, and even those who have heard about the death, invariably Baat the from over their head. Once pyre is lighted, everybody leaves the place without looking back at it, go to a near by rivulet or well for a whole body Baath. On the way, they circumambulate around a jujubetree, pluck its leaves, bite into them and spit. By doing this, they believe, if the deceased person has become a ghost due to unfulfilled wishes, the ghost would move around the tree, and by then dawn would set in, when the ghosts vanish. All those participating in the funeral procession return to the deceased’s home and sit there in a circle. The Navi (the barber of the Tanda) then brings a potful of water and pours a little from it into the left palms of those sitting there. This, they believe, removes impurities, if any, of going to the cremation ground.69

The elders then console the family. If it is the father in the family who had died, then the eldest son is advised to care for his mother, and siblings. If deceased is the woman, the husband is consoled and advised to care for the children. After the sermons, liquour is fetched and offered to all. They drink and leave for their houses.

During the funeral procession, or while returning from the cremation ground, if a snake, scorpion, blue jay (Palapitta), rabbit, or a fox are sighted, or if anyone is injured in the foot because of stones and the foot starts bleeding, the Lambadas believe these to be bad omen. For instance, a man had to join a funeral

69H. Kishan., Warangal Jilla Banjara Sahityam, Sanskrutika Adhyayanam, Opicit, pp.66-68.
procession due to the death of a relative in Allampalli Tanda in Warangal district. On the way to the cremation ground he saw a snake, but ignored informing this. He returned home, and the next morning he went to his cotton field. There he was bitten by a snake and died instantaneously. Had he informed the people around, the entire community would have assembled after returning from the cremation ground and would have decided to sacrifice a goat or a sheep (Cheli Nikan Gorli) in the name of the deceased person, which would have ensured that the bad omen is neutralised.

- **Dado Karero (Funeral rites):**

  On the third day a ritual called Saro Baro is organised. For the rites, a goat or a ram is butchered. Rice flour, jaggery, ghee, spices, the utensils and other requirements to cook are all carried to a place away from the Tanda but closer to the cremation ground and a water source like a well or a lake. The women among these prepare rotis. Young boys cut the rotis into pieces, to which jaggery and ghee are added and made into balls called Churmo. The elders chop the meat and cook a dish called Saloyi. After the food is prepared, and meat is cooked, the elders carry arrack, Tambulam, coconuts, incense sticks, and milk to the cremation ground. On the way they pick up branches of Jilledu plant. The children of the deceased followed by others sprinkle milk on the ashes. Five of the assembled people gather the ashes into a heap using the Jilledu branches. They then light the incense sticks, break the coconuts, pour the arrack, and then pay their obeisance. The gathering then proceeds to a well or lake, Baathe there and go to the place where they have first stopped to cook. Upon nearing the place, Saloyi, Churmo, and arrack are given to them. One of the elders carries them to a distance, offers them to the departed soul as oblation, pays obeisance, and returns. The departed person’s brothers and cousins sit on one side. They are offered the balls of Churmo. Those who have come to express their condolences offer a glass of liquor and pieces of meat to the men in the family of the deceased person. The rest of the men then consume the meat. If anything is leftover, it is not carried home but is tied in a piece of cloth and knotted to a tree. The women do not eat this food, because of the belief that they would be rendered deaf. On reaching home, the shoulders of those who had carried the bier are ceremonially cleansed. The cleansing activity is known as Kandhya. This completes the third day rituals. Shraddha Karmas are performed for the departed soul to achieve peace, else, it is their belief that dissatisfied souls haunt not just others, but even the members of their own family. If any Lambada passes away on a Tuesday or a Sunday, as soon as the cremation ceremonies are performed on the same day, an animal is sacrificed. Such sacrifices are known as Haad. If the death happens on any other day of the week, Saro Baro ceremony is performed on the third day.

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70[Interview with Guguloth Samya, aged 65 years, dated 03-04-2014, Beriwada Village, Kesamudram Mandal Warangal District.](#)
If it is a husband who is dead, the wife is divested of all the objects that hitherto gave her the status of a Muttayiduva on the third day. On the day, all the Muttayiduvas in the hamlet give her a shower, braid her hair, apply vermillion mark (Bottu) on her forehead, and decorate her with flowers. After she is so bedecked, the widows take charge and first remove the Ghugari (veil) from over her head, followed by the breaking of the bangles (Chuder Baliya), thus signifying the start of her widowhood. She is thenceforth, barred from wearing any ornaments or clothes that are usually worn by the Muttayiduvas. Instead of a Ghugari, she starts covering her head with a Chotla, a simple jacket (Kali), and a petticoat (Petiya), and a simple half-Saree like cloth to cover her chest (Chantiya). These clothes are first bought by the daughters for their widowed mother. All the gold and silver ornaments that the deceased father was wearing at the time of his death are distributed among the sons; if it is the mother who has died, the daughters receive the ornaments belonging to the mother. If an unmarried man or woman dies, the Lambadas do not cremate them nor do they perform any final rites, they are just buried.71

- **Naudadero (Ninth day ceremonies):**

  On the ninth day, the deceased’s family invites relatives and offers a feast. The day culminates the funeral rites, and the family emerges from the house to start their routine works and speaking to others. Their mourning ends on the ninth day. From the next day, starts the vow to ghosts (Deyyala Mokku). This ritual is dealt with in the section titled Prayer Methods. The Lambadas do not perform any monthly or annual ceremonies. During the Naudadero rituals, the Baats sing an elegiac song in the name of the departed soul:

  Dharmeri Nidari Soma Nayakeri Dharmetivath  
  Dharthima Dadee Baatena Talo Koni Pero  
  Gor Garibhena Anatunigalo  
  Heman, Uma, Chandu, Samma Panchi Bahiro  
  Gor Garibhena Anatuni Galo  
  Barapano Tat Soma Nayakeri Dharmeri Vath  
  Sati Gotrema Rathoderi Jath Padmavateku

  The words of Soma Nayak have always ensured that the Dadees and Baats never returned empty handed. He had always given the poor as much as they wanted. The five brothers Hema, Uma, Chandu, Soma, and Samma always remained steadfast on the right path. Soma Nayak belongs to the reknowned Sath Gotra Rathod clan, and his words are righteous ones.72

72Interview with Bhukya Bala aged 65 years, dated 02-02-2013, Manchya Tanda, Kuravi Mandal, Warangal District.
• **Baradadero (Twelfth day ceremonies):**

The *Lambadas* believe in rebirths. They seek to know what the next birth of the recently deceased person is. On the twelfth day of the person’s death, the family cleans the house, smear the ground in the frontyard with cowdung and draw *Muggu* over the ground. They cook rice in an earthen pot until it softens like paste, transfer it into a new earthen bowl and flatten the top layer like a polished stone. They draw *Muggu* on the right-side of the frontyard, make a ring with cowdung to support the earthen bowl, sprinkle turmeric and vermilion over the ring, and then place the bowl over it. The bowl is then covered with a wicker basket and left untouched overnight and is removed the next morning. Upon uncovering, the flattened layer of rice has marks on it. If the departed person is reborn as a human being, the footprints appear, if reborn as an animal or insect, the respective footprints appear. The *Lambadas* believe that the departed soul is now reborn as that creature. Thus, the rituals and ceremonies performed throughout the lifecycle right from birth to death reveal the culture and traditions of the *Lambadas*.²³

### III. 9. Polity and Village Administration

It may be interesting to note that India had a well-developed village administration from times immemorial. Villages and hamlets came into being in the process of people settling permanently on lands. The earliest settlers cleared the jungles and settled down in the vicinity of their agricultural lands. Some tribal people who were engaged in rearing cattle and goats and collecting forest produce settled down in hamlets nearer to the forests. In the early years of settlements, the more powerful and numerically dominant tribes drove away the local aboriginal tribes to forests and hilly areas and occupied all fertile lands cleared and cultivated by the aboriginals. With all this initial fighting for permanent settlement, people established their own villages and their administrative system to discuss and decide all matters concerning. Their system of administration decided all matters concerning internal disputes, marriages, feasts and festivals etc. In course of time different occupational castes and tribes started living together in the same village performing certain necessary functions in each settlement area. Thus, the compulsions of social service in the settlement areas necessitated cohabitation of different castes with in the same village. In order to lead peaceful and restrained life they selected representatives of each caste and tribe to be the members of the village administration so that people of all castes and tribes had a voice in the common affairs of the whole settlement. They used to meet at a common place and the representatives of each caste or tribe owed their loyalty to the headman of the administration. The administrative system was called *Panchayat*.

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Through this Panchayat they carried on their internal administration of the village with harmony and unanimity because what concerned all was discussed and decided by all. It was considered as a self-governing republic of the people of the village which carried on with latent vitality even when rulers have come and gone. It may be noted that in the village Panchayats of olden times representatives were mostly nominated. There were hardly any elections; the chairmen of village Panchayats mostly inherited the position hereditarily and many of them were despotic and it was difficult to remove them as there were no laws to govern their conduct and prescribing their duties and responsibilities. The members of the majority castes had the dominant voice in the village Panchayats. In the caste-ridden Hindu society, with the hierarchical gradation of some castes being high and enjoying equal and similar rights, vast majority of illiterates and ignorant castes and tribes that are considered low in status, were subjected to un-mitigable exploitation and atrocities. Hence, it may be considered that the there was no real democracy at the grass root level village administration.74

The Tanda generally consists of twenty to three hundred huts and 100 to 500 people inhabiting it. If the Tanda consists of more than a hundred huts, it is invariably found to be divided into a number of smaller settlements, each consisting of fifty to sixty huts with a headman of its own known as Naik.

- The Naik:

The Naikship is an important institution among the Lambadas. He is responsible for the maintenance of law and order in the Tanda and also the general welfare. He knows all the people in his Tanda; and he possesses substantial information about all persons in the Tanda. Everyone in the Tanda is expected to consult him before starting any significant undertaking. He represents his Tanda to the Government. He is expected to be truthful, honest, and intelligent and to have a just and understanding temperament. Generally, he is a man who is well acquainted with calamities, disasters and famines. In general, succession to Naikship is hereditary but the rule is flexible. On the death of Naik, his eldest son, if he is intelligent and known for his understanding and believed to be capable of managing the affairs of the Tanda succeeds him or the people decide who among the sons of Naik should succeed him. Usually one who has the above mentioned qualities is selected as the Naik.

If a Naik dies without any male heir, then the people elect some other intelligent man, preferably a member of the deceased Naik’s clan (Gotra). If they cannot find a suitable man with in that clan some one with requisite qualities who hails from another clan is selected for the Naikship. A special ceremony is held for succession to the office of and the Naik of other neighbouring

Tanda s are invited on this occasion. A long turban (Pagdi) is brought by the settlements on this occasion and is presented to Naik who is going to succeed to the office in the presence of the Naik s of neighbouring Tanda s and all the people belonging to his own Tanda. There he ceremoniously wears the turban of office of Naik; with this he is formally installed in the office. The new Naik then gives a feast to all the participants.75

After his succession to the headship of the settlement, the Naik tries his best to carry out the duties and responsibilities of his office. He edeavours to act very cautiously and tries to ensure that the people of his Tanda remain satisfied. He is expected to maintain his dignity at different levels in discharging the duties of his office. He often has a decisive voice in determining the expenditure to be borne by the two parties. During the marriage ceremony two rupees (from each side known as Sakiya) are paid to the Naik.

- The Karbhari:

The Naik is assisted in discharging his duties by a Karbhari. He is appointed by the Naik from his own Tanda. The Karbhari must be able to help and give his opinion regarding complicated matters. In the absence of the Naik, he acts to decide ordinary cases. But important decisions over the complicated cases have to be settled only by the Naik. On the death of a Naik and until the selection of another, the Karbhari manages all the affairs of the Tanda. After the death of Karbhari, if one of his sons is intelligent enough to carry the duties of the Karbhari, he is appointed in place of his father, otherwise some one else is appointed.

The Panchayat consists of the Naik, who is the Head-Panch and some other elders from the settlement. The body of Panchayat deals with the important affairs of the settlement and settles the disputes arising with in the Tanda. If the dispute arises between a Lambada and a non-Lambada, the other party’s headman is also invited to sit in the Panchayat. The elders argue on behalf of their people, although the final verdict is given by the Head-Panch. It is not necessary that all the members of the Panchayat should be present whenever they have to settle a dispute. If the Naik, who is the head-panch and three or four other members are present, the Panchayat proceeds with its business. But the presence of the Head-Panch is essential.

Members of the Panchayat express their opinions pertaining to the merits and demerits of the case and thus assist the head-Panch in arriving at a decision. The decision itself is final; it is the responsibility on the of the head-Panch to arrive at final analysis. The Naik or the head-Panch depending authority structure of the settlement decides cases regarding inheritance and division of property.

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marriage disputes a, and cases of divorce, clashes and conflicts. In deciding every case, he should convince the parties involved in the dispute as well as the members of the Panchayat. Whenever there is a complicated problem before him, he uses his intelligence, foresight and acting with fact he tries to convince the members. It is his duty to ensure that the traditional norms of approved behaviour in the society are observed.76

- **Structure of Traditional Panchayat of Lambadas in Telangana**77:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Naik</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karbhori (Secretary)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhavo (Vice President)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panch (Jury)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sipai Bhai (Constable)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jodiwalo (Surety Agents)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meghponi (mediator between Panchayat and victim)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhadi, Bhat (Bards)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nayi (Barber)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singodia (Horn blower)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus it is clear from the above that the nature of family, social organisation and cultural customs of the Lambadas were unique. Although there appears to be some influence of Hindu culture over them, by and large the Lambada community in terms of its customs and its village administration has maintained its originality.

The Lambadas mostly settled as agriculturists or agricultural labourers. The Lambadas of the Marathwada and Karnataka regions proved to be successful to some extent in agriculture as well as in education and politics. This is in part because the Lambadas of these regions had settled largely in plains areas in which the land was fertile. Helped by the flourishing of a strong dalit (depressed castes) politics in these states, the Lambadas emerged as a politically influential community. Particularly in Maharashtra, their community leaders have served as Chief Ministers twice in the last fifty years. Taking advantage of this, many Lambadas established themselves as industrialists and businessmen after obtaining government loans. Also, the Lambada leaders established a large number of educational institutions across the region for the benefit of their community. This has hastened their pace of change. Despite this, considerable economic disparity is still found within the community in these regions.78

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78BhukyaBhangya., *Subjugated Nomads the Lambadas under the Rule of the Nizams*, Orient Black Swan, Hyderabad, 2010, pp.244-246.
The situation of the *Lambadas* in Telangana is quite different. They have succeeded neither in agriculture nor in politics, except to some extent in getting a little education and some government employment. Their *Tandas* has not been provided even with the most basic facilities such as schools, electricity, health care, roads or transport. Generally, their *Tandas* are away from the main village sites, often at a distance of two to five kilometers, and sometimes even about ten kilometers way, in forest areas. All the government schemes that are sanctioned for the village *Panchayats* have been confined to the main village and never reach these *Tandas*. The voting power of the *Lambadas* is often obstructed by the dominant pea*Sant* castes of the villages. The village president is elected for five years and under the rules a *Lambada* has from time to time to occupy the post on rotating basis. But when the *Lambadas*’ turn comes, the influential figures of the dominant pea*Sant* castes of the village put up a *Lambada Jeetagadu* (bonded labourer) as the candidate. It this *Jeetagadu* wins the fight, his master enjoys all the power. Being still a bonded labourer, he has no option but to put his thumb impression on any document that his master puts before him. Such manipulations of power are common in the region. If not the *Jeetagadu*, the dominant pea*Sant* castes pick up some inactive *Lambada*, who they can use as their puppet, when it is the turn for a *Lambada* president. The same is the case in the *Taluk* and district boards and legislative elections. One important reason is that the electorate is general, that is, all people vote for, not just the *Lambadas*. Hence general exigencies always predominate over the specific *Demands* of the *Lambadas*.79

- **Dwelling System of *Lambada* Families in Telangana Districts:**

It is a common phenomenon among *Banjaras* or *Lambadas* in Warangal and Karimnagar districts to have their settlements outside the main village which are exclusively inhabited by them. Sometimes *Lambada* settlements may be as far away as one or two kilometers from the main village. They call their settlement a *Tanda*. In the past they were nomads moving from one place to another and naturally used to settle outside the main village where they could find plenty of places to keep their cattle and exclusiveness to carry on their nomadism. They still continued to raise their settlements outside the main villages. The consideration of health, convenience of grazing, housing their cattle and immunity from epidemics are other factors in their choice of residence.80

In most of the *Lambada* settlements the houses are arranged in rows facing each other with a street in between the two rows. Majority of the dwellings of *Lambadas* in these districts belong to the local type. It can be said to be in square and sometimes oblong shape. Though each house is a separate structure by itself the houses are rebuilt side by side in two tiny parallel lines. In some of the *Tanda* s, 

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the houses are built by the social welfare Department of the Government where a linear pattern has been adopted.

The most common and traditional types of house is called Zumda in Lambada language. The Midda type called Male is also found among them. The difference between Zumda and Midda is that Zumda is built of mud walls with a few stones with a thatched roof whereas Male is built of stone walls and a Puckah roof. The Zumda is oblong in shape and Male is square in shape. The doors are made of wood for Male and bamboos for Zumda. Generally Zumda or hut is divided into tiny portions. One portion is used as kitchen; the middle portion is used for sleeping, sitting, and to accommodate guests. Third portion is used as store-room where they store their food-grain, metal boxes and other personal valuable materials. Entrance to the hut will be very low and one has to bow one’s head, while entering into the hut. The interior of the Zumda is very dark without ventilation and the soot emitted from the hearth is deposited on the sloping roof made of date-palm leaves as well as on the walls. When the members are inside, they keep the entrance-door always open so that some light enters into the hut. The floor of the hut is kept clean by smearing it with cow-dung once in a fortnight or in a month and on festive occasions. The walls are generally white washed once a year and also on occasions of social ceremonies and festivals. The front yard of the hut is swept clean and sprinkled with water mixed with cow dung once in two days and they also draw Muggu in the front yard to give a better look to the house.

The grand plan of Male type of house is very simple and is divided into tiny portions viz., the kitchen, store room and verandah. Verandah is called living room where the members sleep, take restin the afternoon and entertain guests. The floor is cleanly swept and plastered with cow dung. The walls are white washed and red earth is applied to the threshold. The doors are made of wood and also have ventilation facilities. Every house invariably will have a front yard which is kept clean and occasionally sprinkled with water mixed with cow dung. They either have cattle shed by the side of their house or they will have at some distance outside the habitation area where they store fodder also. It may be observed that at present some of the economically better off Lambadas of these districts have built improved houses at a considerably greater cost with proper ventilation and more accommodation. All the rooms and kitchen have windows which allow sufficient air and sunlight inside the house. The doors and windows are made of wood, and walls are built of stone and the roof is supported by wooden pillars.

In Tandas the pattern of settlement is always according to the kinship relations. Though a Tanda consists of many houses belonging to many Lambada families, it is with an idea that all the relatives inhabit together at one place. In the past years, the Lambadas’ emphasis on settling down in an exclusive and separate settlement, in order to keep themselves at a safe distance from others,
gave them an opportunity to minimise contacts with others, which they consider detrimental to their identity.81

An interesting feature of the Lambadas of these districts in Telangana are that they still speak of themselves as a body of people bearing original generic name Banjara and forming a single homogeneous community which spread all over Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. The Banjaras of these districts address each other as Gwar and call the non-Banjara as Kwar indicating their sense of separate entity. The cultural and social segregation of the Banjara from the non-Banjara is also evident from their frequent use of the term Gwaria for them selves and as Kwaria for the permanent settlers of agricultural caste communities of the villages.

In the past the Banjaras or Lambadas in these districts used to construct or raise their Tanda s on hilly areas in order to avoid the accumulation of mud on their settlement which would be inconvenient to their cowherds. They were afraid of robbers, burial grounds and forest animals and hence they used to raise their Tanda s in safe places after careful examination of these above said facts. As they raise their Tanda s on elevated areas, they used to cultivate dry crops suitable to the soil they obtain there.

Before raising their Tanda s they first consult their Naik. Even in Tanda they first construct a house for the Naik followed the construction of huts for the others. Generally the houses in a Tanda are constructed facing east. In the modern days the Lambadas are constructing their houses according to Vastu and also ensure that the houses are constructed near agricultural fields and borewells. They name the Tanda s after the names of their gods.82