Chapter-V

SOCIO-RELIGIOUS PRACTICES TODAY
V.1. Child Birth

Even in the present modern days the Lambadas do not give much importance to the Seemantam (Baby Showers) ritual. During the olden days, they had no tradition of bringing the daughter home for her first delivery. But, as part of modernisation or change in the culture, the parents are bringing home their daughter some months into her first pregnancy. Earlier, they depended upon the midwives for the deliveries, besides the pregnant women toiled until the day they delivered babies. However, as part of the transformation in life styles, the pregnant woman is given sufficient rest with in days of confirmation of pregnancy. Upon confirmation of the pregnancy, they are consulting the doctors every month, and also seeking the doctor’s services in hospitals for the delivery. The women of those days gave birth to a dozen or half-a-dozen children, but some of them have lost their lives either during delivery or shortly after because of lack of medical attention. However, the mortality rate has drastically come down. The traditions that they followed earlier immediately after the birth of a child are not followed today. Yet, to this day there are certain Tanda s that are quite away from urban centres, in which traditions like Vekalpero, Daleya Dhokayer, Dagdernokta (hot-branding), Jolironokta (cradle ceremony), and Phagalyapaderonokta are still being followed.

The families living away from towns and cities are still following the custom of Lattakaader (tonsuring) the infant’s head? These families in their attempts to appease their deity TuljaBhavani offer animals in sacrifice and remain awake through out the night singing songs. It is their custom to offer the infants’ hair to her after lighting lamps, incense sticks and oblations, the next morning.

During those olden days, the Lambadas depended solely on the midwife with in the clan to deliver babies, since they lived in forests away from all sorts of healthcare facilities. The deliveries, at times, were performed with great difficulty since it involved two lives. After the delivery, the midwife was offered certain amount. But, today the situation is quite different. The deliveries are done in hospitals where all facilities are provided, there by affording security, health-wise, to the infant. The infants of those days did not have any such securities due to lack of healthcare facilities. Though the expenditure towards deliveries is quite high today when compared to those olden days, the present trend affords full-scale health facilities to both mother and the child. Though this is beneficial to the Lambada community as a whole, the practices they followed hitherto during deliveries are given ago by in certain areas, which it is found to be the reason for the decline in their culture.

Today, the new mothers (puerperal) are not consuming Suvadi Kado, Suvadi Khuraki or the regulated food during their post-natal days. During those olden days, the neo-mothers (Puerpera) did not enter the kitchen to cook for almost a month and a half, but today, because of neutral families, they are left with no alternative than to start cooking after a week of delivery.
Earlier, when the Lambada couple could not conceive children, they usually adopted a boy through the ritual of Jhaangad. An adopted son among the Lambadas is known as Jhangad or outcast. To ensure that the adopted boy is recognised as member of the community, the families adopting him spent extravagantly to appease the community heads, thus relieving him of the ostracisation. That such custom is no more in practice among the Lambadas indicates a great transformation in their culture. Although this custom is out of practice, they are anyway looked down upon today. When a girl attains puberty, in the olden days, it was only the mother who knew about it and she does not inform the menfolk of the house hold about the girl’s menarche, but only the neighbouring women. They did not celebrate her menarche, since they hesitated publicizing it. But these days, the rich and employed Lambadas have abandoned their age-old custom keeping in view the people of other communities in view, and have started celebrating the girl’s pubescence. This could be partly due to modernization in their lifestyles.\footnote{Interview with Ajmera Ravi, aged 45 years, dated 08-06-2015, Dammannapeta Tanda Village, Gambhiraopet Mandal, Karimnagar District.}

V.2. Marriage Rituals Today

The Tanda culture of the Lambadas gives prominence to family life. The marriage rituals followed by them have certain uniqueness. These are not the usual one day affairs as we see them today. During the olden days, the rituals lasted for a period of 6 months to a year. While the choice of selecting a life partner for the son or daughter vested with the family heads earlier, it is now wholly the personal choice. Hitherto, the marriages were with in the community and the Nayaks, Dadees and Baats selected the bride or groom, provided the details to the parents and consulted with them. But today, the alliances are made by friends, relatives and acquaintances, and they proceed further only if the Gotras matched. Earlier, the Baats and Dadees not only verified the matching of Gotras to finalize the alliance, they played the role of interlocutors for both the parties, narrated and enacted the genealogies of both the parties to settle the alliance. Under the influence of modernisation, the Baats and Dadees have lost their relevance and had to resort to other means to earn their livelihood. Neither they narrate the genealogies these days nor does the community uphold this tradition. Consequently, their occupation is almost extinct today – the fallout of modernization.

Each Lambada clan has some sub-sects and people belonging to these sub-sects are deemed to belong to the larger clan, thus they have kinship (Bayipana). Those belonging to other clans are considered Segasan (the clans with which marital relationships can be established). The marriages had to be inter-clan and not intra-clan. However, during the researcher’s field study, intra-clan marriages have been observed. Twenty-five years ago, the marriage of bride and groom belonging to Kethawath and Banoth clans (both these clans are sub-sects of a
larger clan) was performed defying the established tradition. In another instance, an amatory affair resulted in an intra-clan marriage. Such marital relationships are leaving blemishes on their culture. The community of yore adhered strictly to the customs and traditions leading respectful lives.

The very first event in the marriage rituals of the Lambadas is Chwari Chwaraar Sagai (fixing the alliance). Earlier, the bride and the groom to-be did not see each other before agreeing upon the marriage alliance, but today it is only after both of them give their consent that the alliance is fixed. After the Sagai, earlier the groom would pay Bride-price (Karaar Daraar) and then marry her. This was not in terms of money but in the form of cows and jewellery which the groom offers to the bride’s father. However, they varied depending upon the groom’s economic status. As the community under went acculturation adopting the customs of the surrounding cultures, today the bride’s father is forced to offer lakhs of rupees along with gold, silver and other articles by way of dowry to the groom. The value of dowry has been increasing with each passing day, thus becoming a bane for the economically poor girls in the Lambada community. Similarly, the parents with more number of girls in the family and the poor families had to shell out dowries along with the expenses for the marriages are pushed further into penury. There are instances of families rendered further indigent forcing them to migrate to other places. From offering bride-price to demanding dowry, the community seems to have suffered degradation.  

After the Sagai, the families these days are consulting Brahmin priests to fix an auspicious day for the Engagement (Golkhayer), consuming jaggery. The event is usually held at the bride’s home. The groom, his relatives and friends reach the bride’s home early in the morning. The bride’s relatives, head of the Tanda and also those of others assemble there. Both the parties greet each other. They then discuss about the dowry being offered in the presence of all and agree to a final amount. Around 4 or 5 in the evening the Golkhayer event is organised. The bride’s parents invite the community elders and all others in the community for the event, which begins with the arrival of the community elders. The manner in which the event is organised has been discussed in an earlier chapter. The change in the event, as part of transformation in the culture, is that during the earlier days the Bhaats, Dadees, and Navis played a major role and sought remuneration from both the families, which is now dispensed with and cannot be seen in any of the Tanda s. The Bhaats, Dadees and Navis have thus lost their occupational livelihoods.

- **Wedding Rituals**

Following the present trend, after the Karar Daraar event, the Lambadas are performing the marriages at the bride’s place. This is not the practice according
to their tradition. The groom’s party arrives at the bride’s home and in the presence of priests accepts gold jewellery that the bride’s father wishes to offer to the groom. Similarly, the bride too accepts jewellery that the groom’s father gifts her. The couple then jointly seeks the blessings of the elders. On the occasion of the event an animal is sacrificed and the meat along with alcoholic liquor is offered to the groom’s party. In the evening the groom’s party leaves. The expenses incurred for the feast are shared equally by both the parties. These days, both the parties are offering clothes to bride and groom before the actual event.\footnote{Interview with Boda Mangya Nayak, aged 65 years, dated 03-04-2014, Gudi Tanda Beriwada Village, Kesamudram Mandal, Warangal District.}

Saditanaer is an event in which the groom is readied for the marriage; during the earlier days, it spread across two days but is often completed with in a day at present. Earlier, porridge was offered as an oblation to Gosaibaba, which is now given a go by. At present some of the Tanda s are following the practice of singeing (Daag) with a fine needle amid chants of Mantras. As part of Saditanaer all the other events organised traditionally are now discarded. Before leaving for the bride’s home, the groom wore Katari, Barchee, Vayaar, Kotlee, Khwaal, Vayaardotee, Paagadi and such others as per the traditions. But these days the groom does not wear any of these. During one of my field trips to Dammannapet Tanda, in Gambhiraopet Mandal of Karimnagar district, I have noticed the groom carrying the Katari to the marriage. These days, as part of the Saditanaer event, a ritual called Chwara Hubowaero (groom stands) is performed. During the day, five women cook using a large vessel. After this, four people from the groom’s party hold aloft the four corners of a blanket, under which the groom’s sisters carry lighted oil lamps (Mangalaratulu) to the accompaniment of music. They go in a procession to the local potter from whom they pick-up five various sized earthen pots and return. The priest ties an auspicious thread (Kankanam) around the pots. Depending upon the family’s affordability, they pay the potter. On reaching home, the sisters carrying the lighted oil lamps proceed to a near by well or borewell, and fill two of the pots with water and return home. Before returning, they tie the auspicious thread around the cross-bar of the well or around the hand pump of the borewell. The water so fetched is poured into the five earthen pots brought earlier. The pots are then covered with a white cloth and paddy is spread underneath them.

Some of the people from the groom’s party go to the carpenter to fetch the wooden planks for the marriage (called Pelli Peatalu in Telugu; it is on these planks that the bride and groom sit during the wedding ceremonies). Four among them hold a blanket/bed sheet on its four corners, another holds a stick at the centre to raise it while going. They pay the carpenter either Rs. 316/- or 516/- for making these. Then the barber comes to ward off evil eyes from over the groom. He does this as follows: He draws a square on the ground with a potful
of paddy, at the centre of which he places a plough and seats the groom and the bride’s brother beside it. The barber then applies vermilion dot on the forehead of both the groom and his brother-in-law, and then sprinkles rice mixed with turmeric power (Akshintalu) on them. Some of the women who have gathered there apply vermilion dots, and sprinkle the Akshintalu. The groom’s sisters then apply vermilion dots, and offer Mangalarathii while singing songs. The groom offers them certain amount for doing this. The barber then mimics as if he is combing the hair of the groom and his brother-in-law; he then washes and trims their nails. This completes the barber’s activity of warding of evil eyes. The grooms then leaves to bathe. As soon as the groom leaves the place, the barber collects the paddy into a bag, collects his remuneration and leaves. Once the groom comes back after the bath, the priest seats him along with his parents and performs Gauri Pooja. The priest writes down the details relating to the marriage on an inner wall of the house. Upon completion of the worship of Goddess Gauri, the groom’s party leaves for the bride’s home for the marriage. Five of them leave earlier than the rest. After completing all the rituals at home the groom accompanied by his parents and relatives, leaves for the bride’s Tanda. They do not go directly to the bride’s home but stay for a while at the local temple or school. Earlier, they journeyed on bullock-carts or by walk, these days they are travelling by cars. Upon hearing their arrival, the bride’s relatives meet them and offer water. Before the activity of warding off evil eyes over the bride and the subsequent Gauri Pooja are started, she stays veiled in her paternal uncle’s home. To bring her back home, the relatives approach her accompanied by music, but she refuses to leave her uncle’s home holding tight onto a pillar post. Her brother removes the anklet chains amid great resistance from her. He then picks her up carries her on his shoulder. This was the practice in the olden days, but today the brother brings her back home on a two-wheeler.

The rituals performed at the groom’s home to ready him are all repeated at the bride’s home in preparing her for the wedding rituals. The only difference is that instead of the brother-in-law, the bride’s sister-in-law sits beside her throughout the ritual conducted by the barber, after which the bride bathes and sits along with her parents to perform Gauri Pooja. Simultaneously, the groom is prepared for the wedding. The marriage Pandal is then erected, around which the local barber draws a square with grains of rice, again to ward off evil eyes. The wooden planks are then placed in the Pandal. The bride’s relatives go to the temporary stay of the groom and fetch him to the Pandal. On arrival at the site, the sweet delicacy (Moyi – prepared by cooking rice flour, ghee and jaggery) that the groom had brought from his house is distributed to all. In the olden days, the bride’s brothers carried the groom over their shoulders up to the venue, but these days, he is brought along on a vehicle. Upon reaching the venue, the bride’s brother washes the groom’s feet, sprinkles some drops over himself and his brothers and throws away the rest of the water at a place where none steps
The groom along with his parents sits under the Pandal facing the bride and her parents. The bride’s parents apply vermilion over the foreheads of the groom and his parents and offer them clothes; the groom and his parents reciprocate the offer. During the olden days, the clothes offered by both the sides conformed to their traditions. But, because of the acculturation with other cultures, the Lambadas are offering clothes that are in vogue today. The groom’s parents then step out of the Pandal, after which the bride’s parents wash the groom’s feet placing them in a large plate. This water too is disposed off at a place where nobody treads. The groom then changes his clothes that his in-laws have recently offered. Throughout these rituals, the groom holds an earthen pot in his right hand, while the bride enters the Pandal holding a tender coconut. Both of them are seated facing each other. The groom places his palms under the bride’s palms holding the coconut. The bride’s parents pour water over the coconut into the palms of the couple amid chants by the officiating priest. The water is collected in a plate. The priest then hands over a mixture of cumin seeds and jaggery placed in betel leaves to both the groom and bride. A screen is held between them and then the groom places this mixture on the bride’s head and the bride reciprocates. The betel leaves are then removed leaving the mixture on their heads. The priest then places the wooden handle of a plough between the couple, over the centre of which the groom places his right leg. The bride touches the groom’s leg thrice with her right leg, and the groom reciprocates touching her left leg. They then Garland each other. The priest then places akshintalu (grains of rice mixed with turmeric). After this, the couple showers each other with palmfuls of Talambralu. The couple then is seated side-by-side, and the priest ties the sacred thread Kankanam around their wrists.

The groom’s sisters offer Mangalarathi. The groom then rises holding agricultural tools in one hand and the bride’s hand in another. The bride follows him holding a lunch box and a container with water. Her sister-in-law holds them in place as she circumambulates along with the groom around the Pandal. The priest then shows them the celestial star. The groom then draws a line on the ground indicating tilling an agricultural field, while the bride drops grains of millet or paddy on the line. The couple is then fed with the food carried in the lunch box. This ritual is called Khaaliyaa Khoraaero. To ensure that nobody sees them eating, they are covered with a bedsheet. After this, the couple is let into the house. Just like in the olden days, even today the tradition of the bride giving

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4 Interview with Ajmera Raju Nayak, aged 58 years, dated 08-06-2015, Dammannapeta Tanda, Gambhirapet Mandal, Karimnagar District.

5 Interview with Boda Redya Nayak, aged 60 years, dated 02-04-2014, Beriwada Tanda, Kesamudram Mandal, Warangal District.
away half of Dograr Bagra is still practiced. The expenses incurred towards serving liquor and food is borne by the groom’s father even today. Simultaneously, food is served for the invitees to the marriage. Around the same time, the couple bathes and steps in to the Pandal to receive the invitees and also the gifts they present. In the evening the marriage party along with the newly married couple begins its journey back home. Many residents of the Tanda dance to the accompaniment of music; they are already inebriated. On reaching home late in the night, an animal is sacrificed and the newly weds are welcomed into the house by dipping their right thumbs in the animal’s blood. The bride steps into the house with her right leg first. In the olden days, the bride was accompanied by a large number of people, who returned the next day, but these days just one or two women accompany her to the in-laws’ house. The next day representatives of the bride’s parents arrive with household articles, gifts, and clothing given to her and display them (Bhaardekero). They return home in the evening. Hitherto, the groom’s parents hosted a dinner before leaving for the marriage, but these days the Lambadas are hosting a reception dinner after the bride comes home. After the departure of the bride’s relatives, the nuptial night is organised. The newly weds consummate their marriage and unite into one. The groom’s sister-in-law oversees the arrangements. The groom offers kernels of dry coconut to his sister-in-law before entering the room. This is still in practice in some Tandas. As recent as ten year ago, the daughter-in-law was expected to serve her parents-in-law until they sleep in the night, but of late, such practices are discarded.

Hitherto, the Brahmin priest had no role in the marriages among the Lambadas. But, these days right from the day of match-making, to the marriage and consummation of the marriage, the Brahmin priests are officiating in all the rituals and events. The rituals themselves have undergone a tremendous transformation as a result of their acculturation of the rituals and practices of the surrounding culture. Yet, one can find certain variations with in the community, and certain rituals/events are performed prior or after based on the regions. The variations are apparent from district to district. Further, the marriage rituals were commenced one month to a year in advance of the actual event earlier, today they are completed with in three days because of the influence of other cultures. Hitherto, the bride expressed her sorrow through the Dhawalos for having to leave her parents’ house while going to her in-laws, which is not to be seen much these days. Likewise, the custom of massaging the legs of parents-in-law is not in vogue today. This transformation can be said to have been beneficial to the women of the community. During the earlier days, the groom stayed at the bride’s home for six long months, doing almost no work at all, thus building a robust body. But, then there appears to be an intention on the part of the elders to subject him to some sort of inconvenience while passing the Hookah. They made him stand holding the Hookah pipe for hours on end. Yet, it was a good experience as he was exposed to various ways of honouring and respecting elders. Further, during those days, the groom lived so disciplined a life that he
never entertained the thought of seeing his would-be-bride. The rituals like Ghotakadero, Vayabandero, Doranbandero, Gotadhero, Chudotipero, And Navalerin Olayero, performed at the bride’s home seem to have lost their prominence these days.⁶

### V.3. Divorce & Widow Remarriages

Divorce among the Lambadas, during those olden days, was an easy affair. If either the man or the woman is no longer interested to continue married life, they could easily opt for a divorce, without even offering to bear the expenses incurred towards the marriage. However, they had 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. Over and above this, they will have to bear the expenditure incurred by the community, besides the penalties imposed by the community head. Divorces were rampant during those days, but because of the increased percentage of literacy among them, and their transformation from pastoral life to urban and civilized life, there seems to be a decrease in the number of divorces. But, the divorces settled with in the Tanda’s witness the man being ordered to pay large sums to the woman by way of alimony. Of late, some of the educated Lambadas are approaching the courts of law seeking annulment of marriages. Hitherto, the woman was not paid large sums by way of maintenance costs since it was the man who paid the Bride-price at the time of marriage. But, today aping the surrounding cultures, it is the bride who is paying dowry in lakhs and crores depending upon the family’s affordability. In such marriages, if marital discord arises leading to divorces, the man is forced to pay double the amount of dowry that he had taken. However, in some of the Tanda’s, if the couple has marital discord, they live separately but do not seek divorces; such couples are small in number, though.

In the olden days polygamy was rampant among the Lambadas, but because of social awareness gained today, this social evil is largely reduced. They pray to various gods for a child, and if they already have a daughter, they seek a son, since he is deemed to continue the family’s lineage. No matter the number of daughters they have, they still continue to bear children until a boy is delivered. One such instance can be seen in our Tanda, wherein a man had five daughters followed by two abortions, yet they had no son. The first delivery resulted in triplets, of which the two girls survived but the boy died on the third day of birth. There are men who convince their wives who bore them daughters, and go on to marry another woman. They do not hesitate to divorce her if she refuses to allow him to marry again. This goes on to prove that the Lambadas give more importance to sons than daughters. The Lambada society accepts polygamy.

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⁶Interview with Gugulothu Sakriya, aged 75 years, dated 05-01-2013, Beriwada Tanda, Kesamudram Mandal, Warangal District
With in our *Tanda*, a couple could not beget any child for quite many years; the man ultimately convinced his wife and married her sister, who begot a child for him. Likewise, my father’s elder brother Sri Boda Golya *Nayak* married three women, the younger brother Sri Boda Malu married two women, and my cousin Sri Boda Mangya *Nayak* had married four women. While some of the *Lambada* men resorted to polygamy for reasons of necessities, some others married multiple times to suppress their sexual urges, yet some others marry their elder brother’s wife out of obligation to care for her and her children.

During my field study at Lingannapet *Tanda* in Gambiraopet *Mandal* of Karimnagar district, I met a 60 year old individual named Gangaram, who had married a 30 year old woman, since his wife had expired. This 30 year old woman had deserted her first husband to marry Gangaram. Such marriages, although not common these days, can be seen even today in the *Lambada* society. Here is another instance. About fifteen years ago a resident of our *Tanda* (Beriwada) died quite young due to a fall in a well. His wife was at that time pregnant. The leaders of the *Tanda* decided that the deceased person’s younger brother shall marry the widow of his brother since she is too young and is about to become a mother and therefore performed their marriage in a temple.\(^7\)

**V.4. Marae (rituals related to death)**

The rituals related to death continue to be followed as described in an earlier chapter, albeit with a little change here and there. As earlier, when the news of the death of a person with in the *Tanda* spreads, the entire hamlet assembles at the deceased individual’s house and consoles the family members. The *Lambadas* follow the rituals followed by the Hindus. The body is carried on a bier, known as *Khat*. The tradition of placing ghee and a piece of jaggery in the mouth of the body and then bathing the body is still in vogue. The body is then placed on the bier and tied securely with a rope, just as in Hindu custom.

If the deceased person is a man, all the symbols representing the wife’s marital status are divested from her. 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. The women of the hamlet accompany the body only up to the outskirts; they do not go to the cremation ground. 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 way of changing shoulders is known as *Vatarer* (*Dimpudu Kallam* in Telugu). From there the procession starts again to the cremation ground, where the body is carried around and then rested prone on the pyre. The elder son lights the pyre. All those who have joined the funeral procession, bathe from over their head. Once

\(^7\)Interview with Boda Laxman Nayak, aged 45 years, dated 02-04-2014, Beriwada *Tanda*, Kesamudram *Mandal*, Warangal District.
pyre is lighted, everybody leaves the place to a near by rivulet or well for a whole body bath in the olden days; these days they are dependent on borewells run on motor for the bath. The Tincho ritual besides the tradition of circumambulating the jujube tree, biting, and spitting its leaves are not practiced these days. Increased literacy levels among the Lambadas seem to have weaned them away from some of those orthodox rituals. All those participating in the funeral procession return to the deceased’s home, console the family and finally go home. Earlier, during the funeral procession there was no practice of sacrificing animals, which is done today. By the time the people return home after the cremation, the meat is cooked to be served to all along with arrack and liquor.

To this day, the Dhado Karero ritual performed on the third day is practiced, but with a little variation – earlier animals were sacrificed, which is now discarded. The ashes are heaped using the jilledu branches. The ashes are then collected into a small earthen bowl, which is then securely tied to a tree. At a later date, they immerse these ashes in a river duly consulting a priest. The practice of immersion of ashes was hitherto not followed. This is an influence of the Hindu culture. The rest of the rituals on the third day are performed as described in the earlier chapter.

The ninth day ceremonies called Naudadero, wherein the deceased’s family invites relatives and offers a feast is still in vogue. Similarly, the Baradadero (Twelfth day ceremonies) are also seen to be practiced in some of the Tanda s.8

V.5. Festivals

The festivals celebrated by the Lambadas reflect their social customs; while some of these festivals are celebrated by the entire community, some others are celebrated with in the families. Like wise, they celebrate change in season, i.e., the end of one season and the onset of another; these are not just related to social customs but also involve aspects of economy. Further, celebrating these festivals is connected to their religious beliefs. It is their belief that good and evil are all pervasive and that evil always results in numerous perils. And to avert these perils, the Lambadas venerate the village gods and offer animal sacrifices. Though primarily of North Indian origin, they celebrate the north Indian festivals even after centuries of settlement in South India. Yet, these days the influence of the local culture on the celebration of festivals is apparent.

The Lambadas celebrate festivals for the following three reasons: (1) productivity (2) security and safety (3) seasons. Even during these modern days, with the exception of certain families settled in urban areas, all the families with in a Tanda celebrate the ancient festivals with fervor, albeit with a little change

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8Interview with Boda Golya Nayak, aged 80 years, dated 02-05-2014, Beriwada Tanda, Kesamudram Mandal, Warangal District.
due to the changing times. As stated already, the festivals celebrate productivity related to domestic animals and agriculture.⁹

V.5.1. Worship of Seetla Bhawani

During the earlier days the Lambadas owned large number of cattle and other domestic animals. They were predominantly nomadic traders during the 17th and 18th centuries. They carried their goods of trade on the back of these animals and moved around various places; thus their necessity to rear animals. With the introduction of the railways in 1853 by the British their nomadic trade seems to have faced an impediment forcing them to give up their nomadic life and settle down in forests depending on agriculture. Here again, they had the necessity for animals to till the fields. Thus, their life had been totally dependent on animals. They worshipped Goddess Seetala Bhawani to protect these animals from diseases and offered sacrifices to appease her.

The festivities in honour of the Goddess are celebrated these days during the months of June or July, after due consultations and discussions with in the Tanda. Even to this day, a majority of the Lambadas depend upon the animals instead of tractors for tilling their agricultural fields. It is for this reason that they worship the Goddess seeking prosperity of their animal wealth. Hitherto, they used to install the deity (in the form of a stone) under a neem or tamarind tree, but these days they are installing the deity under any shade giving tree. Underneath the tree, they erect a long tablet of stone, flanked by three other stones on either side. Another stone is placed facing these seven. The long tablet representing Goddess Seetala Bhawani, and the six others flanking her are all cleansed neatly and red-ochre is applied to them all. The previous evening the town-crier announces the festivities uttering 'Vashido Vashido'. By around 5.00 in the evening, the women reach the shrine amid singing, while the men make all the arrangements and sacrifice animals. The intestines in one of the sacrificed animals are pulled-out but not severed from the body by cutting the body from the hind legs and hung around Lunkadia. They prod their domestic animals to cross these intestines along the already laid path. Another man mixes the soaked lentils, sacrificial blood and cooked rice and the mixture is sprinkled on the animals. They ensure that the animals cross the intestines and go along the path, so that they do not get afflicted with any disease nor do they die untimely. The elders then offer the oblations to the deity, and then distribute it to all. Those suffering from ill-health seek better health; childless couple seeks children and pray to her saying that they are performing the worship for the year not with standing the hardships. The festival in honour of the deity is being organised in the same lines since the ancient past.¹⁰

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¹⁰Interview with Battu Samya, aged 75 years, dated 03-06-2013, Manchya Tanda, Kuravi Mandal, Warangal district.
V.5.2. **Teej Festival**

The Lambadas venerate seven female deities - Meraama, Hingala, Tulja, Dhwalangan, Kenkali, Masuri (Seetla) and Teej. The Teej festival is celebrated during July and August by the unmarried young women among the Lambadas with great piety seeking a virtuous man as husband.

At present, the festival is celebrated with a little variation from what it used to be in the olden days and described in an earlier chapter. The tradition of playing the kettle drums in front of the community head’s home announcing the commencement of the festival is no more in practice today, the day of festivities is decided by calling for a meeting of the people. The day before the festival, the maidens collect mud from formicaries in the forest, and the parents fetch wheat. The wheat is then soaked in pots of water that the maidens had fetched the previous night.

The elders fetch freshly woven wicker baskets. The maidens grind goat droppings into a smooth powder, half of which is mixed with the formicary and wheat grain in a basket. A platform built over four poles called Daklo (Manche in Telugu) is erected in front of the Nayak’s house or in a temple premises. All the baskets are either placed over the platform or hung to it. The girls water these baskets thrice a day for nine days. The elders in the Tanda go to the near by forest install two long poles which are then connected by a cross pole horizontally. To the horizontal pole they slip a rope made of coir the end of which is made into a loop to enable people swing sitting in the loop. The entire community merrily enjoys swinging. These sprouts are expected to grow like lustrous green crops. If the sprouts do not grow properly, they deem it to be an issue with the owner’s chastity.

During the nine days of the festivities, the girls consume a broth made of maize or corn flour mixed with cooked greens, lentils or juice of tamarind without adding any salt. They cook all these at the location, discard any food that is roasted, and cook again. During my field trip to Lingannapeta Tanda in Gambhiraopet Mandal, I learnt that the wheat sprouts were not so healthy, and the reason they have attributed to this by the Tanda elders was that one of the maidens performing the worship may be menstruating. When they have sprinkled the wheat, they started sprouting healthily with in a week. After the sprouts grow fully, they are immersed in a body of water on the ninth day. The leader performs the relevant rituals and ensures that the lighted lamps do not die-down. On the seventh day an event called Dhamoli is organised only in some of the Tandas. The eighth day is an important one during the festivities. The maidens break their fast on this day. They fetch mud either from a river or lake and perform Ganagor. They prepare figurines of a man and a woman with the mud they had fetched. The female figurine is named Gan – a representation of Meramma, while the male figurine is named Gor – Sevabhaya.
They then perform the marriage of Gan and Gaur figurines. The girls then prepare a dish called Lapsi, which is prepared by cooking rice and jaggery. The burning embers in the hearth are then placed close to the Teej platform. The maidens who have been initiated into this worship make a ball of the Lapsi and offer it as an oblation to the Teej deity and drop it into the embers. She adds ghee to the burning embers. This act culminates the successful completion of the initiates’ worship. The maidens then break their fasts and consume the Lapsi.11

On the ninth day a fully grown goat is sacrificed and Lapsi (porridge) is prepared to be offered as an oblation to Sevabhaya and Saloyi is prepared to be offered as an oblation to Meraama. The figurines of Gangaur are immersed in a near by lake, rivulet or a well, hours before immersing the Teej. In some of the Tandas it is learnt that the figurines are immersed along with the Teej. After the immersion, on the way back they address thus the soaked blackgram that are pierced into the thorns of berry shrubs: “Hey blackgram representing our hopes, do not drop down even when the youth strike their sticks at you”. It is the maidens who insert the soaked greengram seeds into the thorns, and the youth knock them down with their sticks. These acts of the young ladies and young men indicate their sexual urges. In some of the Tandas, the practice of inserting the greengram into thorns is discarded.

Before the immersion of the Teej, the elders in the Tanda squat in a circle. The girls pluck the leafy part of the saplings and inset it in the Naik’s turban, followed by the turbans of the other elders. The men in turn gift them with money depending on their own affordability. After this event, they all leave to immerse Teej in the lake. The girls carry their respective Teej baskets, while the men carry drums and cymbals. The girls then immerse their respective Teej into the water amid wailing. The brothers wash the feet of their sisters and present them with money. The entire group then consumes the Churmo and returns home. This culminates the Teej festival.12

V.5.3. Worship of Tulja Bhawani

The Lambadas venerate Goddess TuljaBhawani as their family deity. Some of the Tanda s organize festivals annually, triennially or quinquennially to appease her with animal sacrifices. Every Lambada family possesses a statuette of the goddess. As described in an earlier chapter, the worship of the deity is performed to this day as in the olden days; there is a slight deviation today. While the families in the olden days spent the night singing songs in her praise, these days the songs are heard through audio appliances. Hitherto, during the feasts only palm wine or arrack was served, these days a variety of liquors is

11Interview with Bukya Umla Nayak, aged 85 years, 30-03-2016, Lingannapet Tanda, Gambhiraopet Mandal, Karimnagar District.
12Interview with Bhukya Bala, aged 65 years, dated 03-05-2013, Marchya Tanda, Kuravi Mandal, Warangal district.
being served. Likewise, during those days marriages in the family are performed only after offering a sacrifice to the family deity, at present no such practices are followed. Further, those accustomed to urban life have totally forgotten about the worship of the deity.

V.5.4. Worship of Panni Bhawani

Of late, it is learnt that the Lambadas are worshipping even Panni Bhawani. The deity is renowned for creating a variety of troubles to the families that do not offer sacrifices. Left with no alternative, the families offered sacrifices after first praying to the deity to make the animals insensible (Dhad Dhadi). This worship can be performed only on a Tuesday of any month. The families worship the silver figurines of the goddess Panni Bhawani. It is found during the field study that the worship of the deity has gained prominence only during the past 15 years. After offering the animal in sacrifice, the family cooks Saloi to be offered as an oblation, and then offers prayers to her seeking her benevolence in protecting their health, and prosperity.13

V.5.5. Sevagadh (The Holy Land of Sevabhaya’s Birth Place)

Sant Shri Sevalal Maharaj was born on 15-02-1739 to Dharmini Yaadi (mother) and Shri Ramavath Bheema Naik in this holy land. At that time this location was popularly known as Ramagundem or Ramji Naik Tanda (Ramji Naik is the Grand father of Sevabhaya, who migrated to this area along with 360 families of his Tanda and about 4000 loaded cattle). Ramji Naik Tanda was deserted by the end of 18th century; the locals built a village Chennarayanipalle. This land now falls in the revenue village of Peddadoddi, taluq under Gooty Mandal in Anantapur district.

Sevabhaya lived with his parents at this place up to the age of 12. He bathed in Kalo Kundo (transparent clean water of natural spring water pond), worshipped in Chennakeshava temple atop Chandrayanagutta in the vicinity of Ramji Naik Tanda and grazed hits cattle in Zhoonri Jhol (forest of palms). All the relics and monuments exist even today. Lambadas and non-Lambadas of the area hold Bheema Naik Katta (platform) in high esteem and reverence since the “Ore” (residue) of Sant Shri Sevalal Maharaj is buried under this platform which is the tradition of the Lambadas to bury the residue after the delivery of a child. Bheema Naik delivered his judgements from this Katta to Lambadas of his Tanda and the neighbouring ones.

In Narration and in praise of Sevabhaya’s life and deeds, there are abundant folk songs and folklores and oral history is also narrated by Lambadas for the last 250 years. It is mentioned that Gooty-Bellary-Ma-Janam Lido Sevabhaya. Gooty Taluq was in the Bellary district of the then Madras Province of British

13Interview with Guguloth Samya, aged 65 years, dated 06-01-2013, Beriwada Tanda, Kesamudram Mandal, Warangal District.
rule. During that period there was no separate district called Ananthapur and town was part of Bellary district. In Peddoddi revenue village there is a piece of land of 18 aceres next to dilapidated Ramji Naik Tanda and the same is shown in revenue records as Nayakuni Bhoomi (land of Nayak). It is also mentioned in the book Sevadas Leelamrut authored by Sant Shri Ramrao Maharajaharaj Pouroagud (Sevabhaya’s Samadhi place) that Gooty, Bellary was birth place of Sevabhaya. Sant Shri Ramrao Maharaj is the living saint of the seventh generation of Shri Sevabhaya family. Even well known author poet and Lambada folk singer Shri Atmaram Rathod of Yevathmal (Maharashtra) has also established the same location in his popular book Shri Sant Sevadas Leela Charitra as Sevabhaya’s birth place. After lot of research work and exploration by many research scholars, linguists, historians particularly Lambada Dharmik Prarishad of Bangalore have identified and proved this location as Sevabhaya’s birth place.

- **Birth place of Sant Shree Sevalal Maharaj**

Birth place of Sant Shree Sevalal Maharaj was searched and located by tireless efforts of all India Banjara Seva Sangh, Banjara Dharmik Parishad-Bangalore, Maharashtra State Banjara Samaj, Karmachari Samstha and Ananthapur District branch of AIBSS in the year 2001.

- **Registration of Sant Sree Sevalal Maharaj Memorial Charitable Trust**

The trust was registered on 23.07.2001 by the name “Sant Sree Sevalal Maharaj Memorial Trust - Sevagad and its name was changed to Sant Shree Sevalal Maharaj Charitable Trust - Sevagad and the same was again registered on 17.04.2003 at the office of Dist - Registrar (Assurance) Ananthapur, Andhra Pradesh with the Registration No. 36/2003. The trust deed was signed by the 25 founder trustees from all over India who are reputed leaders, social workers and devotees of Sant Shree Sevabhaya.

A historical and monumental work has been done by the trust in procuring picture of Sant Shree Sevalal Maharaj from Nizam Nawab’s personal palace chronicles/ archives with the help of AIBSS and Banjaras Dharmika Parishad (Bangalore) throught the 25 years persistent efforts by Shree Rathod Chandrabhan Naik of Nizamabad (A.P.). Shree Namdeo Maharaj of Pohragad allowed Shree Raju Naik to Photograph the original Pagadi (turban) and the same is crowned in the photograph of Sant Shree Sevalal Maharaj.

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V.5.6. Birth Anniversary of Sant Shree Sevalal Maharaj

Every year the trust celebrates the birth anniversary of Sant Shree Sevalal Maharaj on 15th February. A huge gathering takes place on 14, 15 and 16th of February for darshan, prayer and Mahabhog ceremonies of Sant Shree Sevabhaya. Cooperation and help arrives from every sector of the community, government machinery etc. for the birth anniversary celebrations every year.

The trust has purchased 44.48 acres of land including the land 6.04 acres received as donation from Smt. Suvarnamohan Rathod. 7.85 acres of land is given to Andhra Pradesh Government for School purpose. Total 36.63 acres of land is in possession of the trust.\(^\text{15}\)

- **2016 Celebration of 277th Birthday of Sant Shri Sevalal Maharaj**

Sevagadh is the place where a shrine for Sevalal has been built during the year 2000. His birth date falls on 15\(^{th}\) February. A day before i.e., on 14\(^{th}\) February, the Lambadas across the country, primarily from the states of Karnataka, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana travel down to the abode to worship him and seek to attain righteousness. A venue in the vicinity of the shrine of Sevalal Maharaj is made ready on 14\(^{th}\) February itself. It reflects the status of the Lambadas and depicts their lifestyles. Some of the women entertain the audience with their folk songs and dances. The Trust takes care of all the arrangements. During my visit on 14\(^{th}\) February 2016 to Sevagadh, the popular Telangana news anchor Mangli had entertained the audience along with many other folk artists. It is learnt that she hails from a Tanda that is close to Sevagadh. The cultural programmes continue till late into the night and around midnight people cut a cake hailing the saint.

Since there is no accommodation for the pilgrims, they squat on the large expanse of ground near the shrine. Early in the morning on 15\(^{th}\), some of the Lambadas who are on a vow (Deeksha) wearing the specific attire and rosaries enter the shrine offer prayers to Sevalal and then proceed to the near by shrine of Meraama. Some of them carry a palanquin bearing an idol of Sevalal. Ahead of them, a large group of 101 maidens carries Bonams, visit the shrine and then go to the shrine of Meraama. Some of these girls swing as if in a trance. Their kin try to hold the earthen pots intact. None of the pilgrims would dare to walk wearing footwear in front of women who are possessed, lest she lashes onto them fiercely. Some ascetics are present there to control the women in trance. The men in vow then circumambulate the shrine of Meraama and then carry the palanquin of Sevalal back to his shrine. Then they untie the Irumudi containing rice that they have carried throughout their journey to the shrine. The women circumambulate the shrine of Meraama, empty the Bonams near the mast (Dhwajastambham)

\(^{\text{15}}\)Ibid, p.6.
erected in front the shrine, break coconuts there and then enter the shrine to seek the deity’s blessings. After this, they proceed to the shrine of Sevalal. Around 10 O’clock in the morning, the Mahabhog programme starts. The venue for this is in front of the shrine of Sevalal. Shri Ramarao Maharaj, a descendant of Sevalal Maharaj presides this programme every year, but he could not do so during the year 2015 owing to ill-health. Amid kettle-drums beats, a mixture of ghee and porridge is poured into the sacred fire, which blazes with a big flame. This is what is known as Bhog. Following the descendant, some of the prominent men too offer the mixture of ghee and porridge, after which the porridge is distributed among the assembled people. It is of utmost sweetness.

The pilgrims to Sevagadh have no facilities for accommodation. They have to make do with in the open area for their daily ablutions and baths. However, there is a hostel for students, in which some of the pilgrims could manage to sleep during the night. The state and central governments will have to provide at least minimum facilities there. The Trust could manage arranging food for the pilgrims on 14th, but people had to eat their food under the sun while standing. By 11.00 AM on 15th February, the Mahabhog programme ended and all the pilgrims have started their journey back home.

It is already stated that the shrine devoted to Meraama abuts that of Sant Sevalal. The shrine was consecrated by the Holy Seer Shri Ramarao Maharaj on the 12th of February 2016. The programme was attended by prominent ministers, members of legislative assembly and parliament representing the state of Andhra Pradesh. From the Telangana state, the tribal welfare minister Ajmera Chandulal attended the function. The visitors to Sevagadh usually proceed to the near by Chandrayangutta after offering prayers at the shrines of Sevalal and Meraama. Atop the Chandrayangutta (hill) is a temple dedicated to Lord Chennakesava. Here, in a narrow crevice with in a boulder, the Lambadas offer prayers to Sevalal. During my field visit to the temple on 14th February 2016, I have noticed that there exists a small pond, in which, it seems the Saati Bhawaniis (Sapta Matrikas) and Sevalal Maharaj are said to have bathed. The pond is known as Kalokund. The forest area in which the Saptamatrikas are said to have walked and Sevalal is said to have grazed his animals is known as Jhumrijol. The devotees visit both the pond and the forest area with utmost devotion.

The birth day of Sant Shri Sevalal Maharaj, venerated by the Lambadas across the country as divine incarnation and a champion of social revolution, is being celebrated for the past 15-16 years. Hordes of devotees from across the country and various parts of the world visit the holy pilgrim site of Sevagadh.

When the Lambada society was plagued with dissonance and crises, it was the divine incarnation, saint and savior Bhagawan Sevalal Maharaj who guided them into the righteous path through his teachings and enlightened them to be united, thus instilling in them a new energy, peace, fervor and a sense of unity. At a very young age, he had attained enlightenment and indoctrinated the
Lambada society into a peaceful and united path, becoming the venerable icon for nearly 10 crores of Lambadas across the country. His birth day is celebrated with great devotion, and people from every Tanda visit the shrine to offer their vows at his feet.16

V.5.7. Pouragadh/Pouradevi

Pouragadh or Pouradevi is located in Akola district of Maharashtra. When Meraama pressurizes Sevalal to marry her, both approach Lord Brahma to resolve the problem. When Meraama reports the problem to the Lord, even he sides with Sevalal, thus infuriating her. With an intention to avenge, she asks him to wait for her in the heaven; she descends to earth and informs Sevalal’s mother that he had died three days ago. The distraught mother despite his brothers’ warning touches the body. The body rises up three times and lies down lifeless on the ground, signalling the end of Sevalal’s life. When the people of Pouragadh and Ruyi disputed about burying Sevalal in their own village, they came to an agreement that if the pall rises when a villager touches it, the body shall be interred in that person’s village. Based on this agreement, when the residents of Ruyi touched the bier it did not rise, but when the residents of Poura touched it, it rose and flew off to Pouragadh. Watching the miracle, the people said that Sevalal did not die, but he remained steadfast on the path of Dharma. They then fetched seven varieties of firewood, and seven coloured ghee to cremate him. When Sevalal’s nephew Jethalal lit the funeral pyre, Sevelal rose from the fire and gave the Lambadas a sermon on righteous living.

Henceforth, the people of Ruyi and Poura established Umri Tanda nangar and have been following his teachings. Every year a big fair is organised on the Sri Rama Navami day in honour of Sevalal. His descendants live in Pouragadh in Akola district, where they have built a Samadhi of Sevalal and a temple in honour of Pouradevi. The temple is served by Sevalal’s younger brothers’ descendants, of whom Sant Sri Rama Rao Maharaj is the most prominent. He is a celebrate and presides over the festivities organised in honour of Pouradevi and Sevabhaya every year. The Samadhi is in a shrine which is built with white marble stones brought from Rajasthan.

During my field trip, I was present at the fair organised at Pouragadh on 15th April 2016 (Sri Rama Navami day). The pilgrims were provided food and other facilities in the agricultural lands around the village. An old house abutting the shrine of Sevalal is the one in which Ramrao Maharaj stays and blesses the pilgrims. People from across the country converge to Pouragadh on the Sri Rama Navami day every year to worship Sevalal and Meraama. Those on Sevalal Deeksha complete their vows in the shrine on the day. Large numbers of the pilgrims are from Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Telangana districts of Nizamabad,

16Interview with Guguloth Ramulu Nayak, aged 65 years, 30-03-2016, Lingannapet Tanda, Gambhiraopet Mandal, Karimnagar District.
Karimnagar and Adilabad. They first seek the blessings of Ramarao Maharaj, and then visit the shrines of Sevalal and Meraama or Pouradevi. Sevalal’s bier after flying off landed underneath a tamarind tree, the remnants of which are still visible today. After visiting Sevalal’s shrine, the pilgrims offer animal sacrifices to Meraama and later cook the meat in the forests abutting the village. Thus, all around Pouragadh one can find vehicles and sacrificial meat on the Sri Rama Navami day.

V.5.8. Samaki Mata & Jethabhaya Shrines

Both these shrines are in Umrigadh, which is 7 Kms away from Pouragadh. Between these two villages on the way a Bhaktidham temple was inaugurated on 16th April 2016 under the supervision of Ramarao Maharaj. It was with in a few days after fixing the alliance of Sama and Jethabaya that Sevalal passed away and Meraama or Pouradevi ensured that the marriage is performed between Sama and Jethabhaya. Samaki Maatha vowed to offer an animal in sacrifice to Pouradevi if she begets a son. She did give birth to a son and informed her husband Jethabhaya about her vow. But he did not approve of the sacrifice. The son named Sawai grew to be three years old and the disputes about the vow grew between the couple. Not with standing Pouradevi’s reminders about the vow, Jethabhaya did not concede in offering animal sacrifice and had to face the wrath of Meraama to finally lose his life. Simultaneously, Sawai turned out to be a nonbeliever and obstinate fool; he too lost his life due to the wrath of the deity. Samaki Mata was an ardent devotee and served the people with great passion. Remembering her services, the people have built a shrine in her memory and even to this day they organize a fair in Umri on Sri Rama Navami day. Jethalal’s shrine abuts Samaki Mata’s shrine and people visiting Pouragadh visit even these shrines in Umri.

V.5.9. Bhayagadh

Bhayagadh is situated in Venkatapuram village of Gandhari Mandal in Nizamabad district. Just abutting the Tanda shrines dedicated to Meraama or Moulibhawani and Sevalal have been built in the year 2004 out of the Lambadas’ veneration to the deities. Every year, thousands of devotees take vows in the name of the deities, congregate at the shrines on 29th March the date on which Sevalal attained heavenly glory, and after seeking the deities’ and that of Shri Ramarrao Maharaj’s blessings and cease their vows. They offer tributes in the form of cash or articles to the deities before ceasing the vows. I was present at the event organised on 29th March 2016, as part of my field study, to witness the event. The state agriculture Minister Pocharam Srinivas was present on the occasion to seek Rama Rao Maharaj’s blessings. Shri Rama Rao Maharaj addressed the gathered devotees and sermonised them to follow the righteous path of life by not committing any sinful acts or by not causing any harm to others.

17Interview with Bhukya Ravugi Nayak, aged 45 years, 30-04-2016, Lingannapet Tanda, Gambhiraopet Mandal, Karimnagar District.
Lambada Bhajans in honour of the presiding deity. Women and men, attired in colourful clothes attended the event. The temple is a famous one across the district of Nizamabad. Many of the devotees from the districts of Karimnagar and Nizamabad attended the event.\textsuperscript{18}

**V.6. Influence of Christianity on Lambadas**

The Christian Missionaries entered India after 1813 and attempted to woo the Indians into their fold with various services like providing education and food to the downtrodden, thus enticing them into converting to Christianity. Their attempts to influence the Lambadas living away from the villages leading their own lives with in the Tandas fructified after efforts over a period of time. Usually, the Lambadas follow the Hindu traditions and those of their own customs, but, of late, there were cases where the Lambadas have converted to Christianity. This can be said to be the undesirable after effect of modernization on the Lambada culture. The converts have to forego the celebration of various festivities and feasts that are usually celebrated by the Lambadas. Besides, they abandon their relationships with those who continue to be Lambada practicing the existing religious customs, and they do not consume the sacrificial meat. They remain lonely, unable to mingle with the other Lambadas.

The Lambadas have the tradition of sacrificing animals to appease various deities like Seetala Bhawani, Teej, Panni Bhawani, Tulja Bhawani, Meraama, Maisamma, besides their own ancestors. During such events, they have to spend quite a good amount towards food and liquor too, which every family not with standing its economic status follows ritualistically, because they believe that the deities, if not appeased with such sacrifices, would create untold miseries. It is for this reason that the Lambadas, even if they have immigrated to a distant place for work, would return to their native hamlet to perform the rituals and host feasts. Those who have converted to Christianity do not follow all these rituals, and hence do not incur any such expenditure, which can be said to be the only advantage. However, even these converts offer sacrifices on Christmas and invite their kith and kin not with standing their religious following.

While the Lambadas offer sacrifices once a year, those who have converted offer prayers every evening, besides every Sunday between 09.00 AM to 01.00 PM. Of late, conversions to Christianity have been on the rise. The reasons are multiple – various diseases and health related matters, disillusionment towards occult practices for various cures, their habitation near forests away from civilized societies. The pastors influencing them to convert sweet talk saying that they would not be haunted by ghosts and such other super natural beings, and that Jesus Christ would heal them of all their afflictions. As a result, conversions have been on the rise and of late, every Tanda seems to have a Church with in its

\textsuperscript{18} Interview with Ajmera Ravi, aged 45 years, dated 08-06-2015, Dammannapeta Tanda, Gambhiraopet Mandal, Karimnagar District.
limits. Further, in certain Mandal headquarters the Christian organisations have formed Trusts and have been offering food during off-school times to students. These students are also offered training in sports and dinner in the evening. Thus, the Christian missionaries have been enticing the Lambada students with school uniforms, bags, books, and many such inducements, who in turn are encouraging many others to convert to Christianity.\textsuperscript{19}

Even after conversion to Christianity, there are, of course, a small number of people who have reverted to Hinduism after finding that Christianity offered no recourse to their problems. With this, it can be concluded that some of the Lambadas are attributing the unresolved problems in their lives to Hindu deities and are resorting to conversion to Christianity.

V.7. Influence of Islam on Lambadas

Many Lambadas offer prayers to the Islamic spiritual guide Hazrat Yakub Shaheed. It is a usual practice for the Lambadas to visit the Dargahs of Islamic spiritual guides seeking children, relief from hard times in life, and such other circumstances and then offer animal sacrifices. They usually do this during the off-season time in agriculture. The Lambadas living with in the reach of Warangal often visit the Dargah of Hazrat Yakub Shaheed located in Annaram village travelling either by an autorickshaw or a tractor carrying the animal to be sacrificed. During my field visit, I met a woman who had offered to sacrifice two animals in fulfilment of her vow since she is blessed with a child after seven years of marriage. Some others vow to offer sacrifices if they are cured of long suffering ailments. Such people offer the roasted lever of the sacrificed animal as an oblation and then consume the same as Naivedyam along with the meat and liquor. Such offers and feasting in Lambada parlance is known as Kandhori Karer. Some of the Lambadas, instead of offering the sacrifice at the Dargah, visit the site, offer prayers and pick-up flags from there. On the subsequent Friday they carry the sacrificial animals to their farms. Before leaving, they break coconuts in front of their homes, tie the green flags to bullock-carts in which they go along with their relatives, and invite a Muslim man to fix the flags underneath a neem tree and then sacrifice the animal. The liver is roasted and made into two parts, one of which is placed in front of the flag as an oblation and is taken by the Muslim man and the other half the family eats. Such offering is known as Pathiha.

During the Peerla Panduga festivities when the procession of the relic called Alam is taken out as part of Moharrum passes the homes of the Lambadas, they pour water in front of the Alam in veneration; make offerings along with rice grains. While the procession moves with in the Tanda, if the carriers of the Alam feel that anyone is possessed, they treat the victim by lashing them with

\textsuperscript{19}Interview with Bhukya Naraniya Nayak, aged 80 years, 30-04-2016, Lingannapet Tanda, Gambhiraopet Mandal, Karimnagar District.
neem leaves or whips until the victims writhe in pain, which indicates that the evil spirit has left the body. They then apply a mark on the forehead with ash.

The Lambadas are thus being influenced by Islamic practices and many of them visit Dargahs to seek divine blessings. These practices seem to be in place for quite many centuries, yet they have not abandoned their own religious customs. When compared with those who have converted to Christianity, the Lambadas following the Islamic rituals have not abdicated their religion, which the former have.20

V.8. Influence of Sikhism on Lambadas

The relationship of Lambadas with Sikhism was dealt hitherto in an earlier chapter, wherein it dealt with the way the Lambadas have cooperated with the Sikhs in their battles against the foreign rulers like the Mughals. As a mark of thanksgiving and respect, the Sikhs have built a Gurudwara in Nanded in memory of the martyred Lambadas. The Lambadas throng this Gurudwara every year. In the earlier days, during marriages a coin is set aside as an offering to Guru Nanak, which is offered at the Gurudwara when they visit Nanded. During their pilgrimage to Pouragadh on the eve of Sriramanavami, the Lambadas visit the Gurudwara at Nanded and pay their homage to the martyrs. During my field trip, I have visited the Gurudwars on 14th April, 2016. Some of the Lambadas are practicing the rituals of Sikhism and their attire is also like that of the Sikhs. Those that believe that Sikhism has benefitted them have totally converted to Sikhism and their children are no more Lambadas. However, such converts are rarely seen in the Tanda s.21

V.9. History of Economic life of Lambadas

It is believed that the traditional occupation of Lambadas was trade and commerce. Even the name Lambada or Banjara or Sugali is derived from their traditional occupation.22 In the past the Lambadas were nomadic transporters and traded along with Baluchis, Jats, Armenians, Banis and Marwaris and other nomadic traders like Bhils etc., in large caravans. Prior to the mechanical transport, land transport was carried on pack animals and bullock carts, drawn especially by oxen, horses and camels. The mercantile trading and transporting of food grains from place to place and corner to corner in the sub-continent was the primary occupation of the Lambadas.23 The Lambadas came to Southern India as transporters of food supplies for the armies of Delhi Sultanates, Mughals,

20Interview with Boda Siri Nayak, aged 50 years, dated 05-01-2013, Beriwada Tanda, Kesamudram Mandal, Warangal District
21Interview with Bhukya Darsing Nayak, aged 48 years, 30-04-2016, Lingannapet Tanda, Gambhiraoaet Mandal, Karimnagar District.
Marathas, Nizam and British in their raids in the South early in the 17th century. *Lambadas* used to attach themselves to the armies of Mughals and the British and supply grains to them during wars. They purchased grains from rural areas and transported them on their bullocks. In a way they were pastoral people who raised big herds of bullocks and maintained them. When the army had to face several difficulties due to bad communications and lack of proper transport, the mercantile *Lambadas* helped the army by quickly supplying rations and other necessities with the help of their hundred and thousands of pack animals. In 1630, the roads became unsafe and messengers stood in danger of being murdered. Even the local chiefs with local bands at their beck and call attacked traders and extracted levies. The imperial army of Mughal at Barahampur interfered with the transport of grain by the nomadic *Lambadas* to Gujarat from Malwa and beyond because they equipped with their security men. When their duties as suppliers of grains and provisions to the Mughal army ended, the *Lambadas* with their pack-oxen started trading and became useful medium of transaction between the north and south India. They carried salt from the coast and grains from the inland. Some of the *Lambadas* returned to the North while some of them stayed behind and carried on petty trade during the period of peace until 1870. In the nineteenth century they had taken up transporting service under the Maratha rulers of Satara, the Peshwas of Poona, the Nizam of Hyderabad and the British in Mysore and Maratha wars.

It may be noted that the *Lambadas* came to the Deccan with Asafjah who was also called Asaf Khan. Bhangi and Jhangi *Naiks* had with them one hundred and eighty thousand bullocks and Bhagavandas, the *Naik* of Burthiya clan, only had fifty two thousand. They followed Asafjah carrying his provisions during his raid into the Deccan. It was the objective of Asafjah to keep these bullocks well up with his forces and so much were they prized by that Vazir that he was induced to give an order to Bhangi and Jhangi *Naiks* as they put forward excuses regarding the difficulty of obtaining grass and water for their cattle and bullocks. The order engraved on copper plate and in gold letters stating that if they can find no water elsewhere, they may take it even from the *Ranjans* (pots) of his followers and grass they may take from the roof of their followers’ huts and if they commit three murders a day would be pardoned provided that where the Vazir’s cavalry was found, there he must find Bhangi and Jhangis’ bullocks. It is obvious from the order that for the sake of the amounting the commissariat service. In fact a lot of gratitude was shown by the rulers to the *Lambadas* in the middle ages and even the Britishers shown by the rulers to the *Lambadas* in times

of emergency. It is found that *Lambadas* supplied grain to the British army when they were at war with Tippu Sultan.\(^{28}\)

*Lambadas* used to purchase grains from rural areas and transported them on their bullocks. In a way they were pastoral people who raised big herds of bullocks and maintained them. Even today after shedding their old way of life, some *Lambadas* in two districts of Erstwhile Andhra Pradesh are interested in cattle breeding and cattle raising. It is alleged that they had acquired criminal habits when they used to move from place to place in search of their livelihood. They attached themselves to the army where discipline was least strict. They came swarming in from all parts hoping in the general disorder and confusion to be able to thrive with impurity.\(^{29}\) In regard to their occupation it is observed that they are very useful by keeping the market well supplied with the provisions that they have often stolen on the march. They hire themselves and their large herds of cattle to which even contending party will pay those best acting as carriers of the supplies and baggage of the army.\(^{30}\) When internal communications improved by the introduction of railways and mechanized transits and improvement in road transport they lost their position as armies preferred fast moving transport system and as a result they were forced to abandon old and well established occupation and seek other avenues for their employment. Their flourishing trading operations mainly thrived on their pack-bullocks which provided them a dependable means of transport at a time when roads were not developed and other modern means of transport were quite unknown. But, as normalcy was restored with the firm establishment of British Empire in India, the *Lambadas* who were moving from place to place had to slowly give up their nomadic habits. Further, the introduction of quick moving modern means of transport facilities hastened the decline of their business operations, as their slow moving pack-bullocks could not compete with fast moving transports and trains etc. hence they were forced to give up their unprofitable traditional occupation of itinerant trading under the changed conditions and took to agriculture and sedentary life. But still some of them retained their traditional skill in cattle rearing and breeding and this age old pastoral training which largely helped them in carrying out their once flourishing trade also contributed in no less measure to their recent shift to agriculture.\(^{31}\)

It is interesting to note that the replacement of their occupation by the railways and roadways may be said to have come as a blessing in disguise for them in certain spheres of life. Though they have suffered economically they

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have abandoned their hazardous, nomadic, and migratory life, and settled down in groups permanently to eke out their livelihood. Besides this, some changes have taken place in the sphere of marriages and other social customs due to this development. Now family life is more compact and stabilized. Despite the depressing economic position, the Lambadas did not like to adopt wage labour as it was against their pride and tradition. Out of sheer economic necessity, the Lambadas took up collection of forest products and later as agricultural laborers on the fields of neighboring caste peasants. After 1880 forest labour and sale of forest produce and pastoralism became their main occupation. However by 1930, the forest work had ceased to provide them enough earnings because of deforestation, strict implementation of forest protection measures and declaration of some forests as reserved forests. The situation compelled the Lambadas to turn their attention towards agriculture and other types of labour in order to supplement their earnings. And after 1930 they ultimately settled down first as pastoralists and then as agriculturalists, although agriculture had never been their occupation in history. Most of them have taken to pastoralism, agriculture and various types of labour for their means of livelihood. They are finding it difficult to carry on their occupation because of a declining Demand for their goods and also because of shortage of grazing land for their cattle. The habit of living in isolated groups away from other communities, which was a characteristic of their nomadic feature, still persists among the Lambadas. Even today, most of the Lambadas continue to live in exclusive habitats away from the multi-caste villages, though a few Lambada families also live in multi caste villages and towns. The cattle, which they used for good breed of bullocks for their economic avocation in the past, have helped them to rear good calves for sale and supplement their income. By maintaining many cattle, the Lambadas started working as agricultural as well as casual laborers in the fields of non-Lambadas to earn their livelihood.

In the tribal economy, the family is a unit of domestic production. The members together form a unit in production. The allocation of labour, production and decision making for domestic stipulations is geared up to familial (domestic) requirements. Yet it never means that the familial group is self-sufficient. They get the cooperation of individuals of their households too. The family is constituted for production by age groups and is equipped to govern production by possession of the necessary tools that are easily made and skills that are common and uncomplicated. The Lambadas have learnt agrarian techniques by retaining their pastoral tradition. At present the Lambadas have taken up many kinds of economic pursuits and among them pastoralism and agriculture have become the two primary occupations in Warangal and

Nalgonda districts. In economic terms, pastoralism may be the primary activity of a group and the principal source of its food, clothing and shelter, or the care and exploitation of domesticated animals play a secondary role in a way of life which is primarily agricultural. Besides pastoralism and agriculture, the Lambadas in the two districts have settled down in different occupations to eke out their livelihood. There is a considerable diversification of occupation among the Lambada population. Majority of the Lambadas have chosen cultivation as their occupation as tenants and as well as land owners.

In the Tanda s where investigation has been carried out by the researcher most of the Lambada cultivators were tenants and some were engaged in agricultural labour on daily wages after completing their own agricultural operations. Some of the Lambadas are engaged in building construction activities, trade and commerce and also in transport and storage activities in addition to selling firewood and seasonal fruits. However, some of the Lambada households in different Tanda s in these two districts are found to be engaged in petty businesses like selling salt, maintaining Tea shops and small provision shops. The urban areas of the two districts are also attracting many Lambadas in connection with road laying and other civil works. Though Lambadas suffered economically, they abandoned their hazardous, nomadic and migratory life and settled down in groups permanently to eke out their livelihood. Making the field ready for sowing is the male’s job whereas sowing, weeding, transplanting and harvesting are mostly done by women labourers. Men usually attend to harder works like ploughing, leveling the land etc. It they find more remunerative work they even go to other villages. Construction of Nagarjuna Sagar Dam over Krishna River in Nalgonda district has attracted many Lambadas to cultivate around the dam. The Lambadas living in this Tanda s are engaged in quarrying and other construction works.

V.10. Agriculture and Cultivation Techniques of Lambadas

The Lambadas of Warangal and Karimnagar districts engaged in agriculture follow the local pattern of cultivation and raise the same crops as is done by other people of the region. In many Tanda s of Warangal and Karimnagar districts Lambadas are dependent on dry cultivation having no irrigation facilities for wet cultivation. If rains come at suitable time, their expectations go high regarding the harvest while it fails then look forward to hard days to come. The Lambadas do not engage any hired labourers for agricultural activities. The monsoon conditions permit only one paddy crop a year. Majority of the respondent Lambadas in Warangal and Karimnagar districts are proficient in all agricultural operations. They use chemical fertilizers and are also aware of the fact that too much use of chemical fertilizers affects the health of people. Hence they evince keen interest in storing natural manures. This is an important aspect of change that has come in the agricultural activities of the Lambadas and the motivation for the same has come from the caste peasants.
They produce crops such as Ragi, Jowar, Gingelli, Chillies, Pulses, Sugarcane. When the crop ripens, the elder members of the family keep watch on the crops throughout the day. During the weeding seasons, besides attending to their fields, they participate in the weeding operations in the field of others in lieu of daily wages. Harvesting is the main job of women. Usually for harvesting the farmers engage as many labourers as possible as it is to be completed with in a short period. During the ploughing season some Lambada households, in Warangal and Nalgonda districts, with bullocks of their own plough the fields of other on rental basis.

The government has enacted and implemented many laws for the benefit of the agricultural tenants and agriculture wage earners. The latest agrarian reforms implemented by the government hold up the prospects of revolutionary changes in agrarian relationships, but the implementation of these measures is not commensurate with this statutory provision. The purpose of these measures is to impose ceiling on individual holdings so as to wipe out the concentration of lands from the few landlords and to convert the tillers into owners of land. It was also proposed to redistribute at least half of the surplus of land resulting from the enforcement of ceiling limits among the scheduled tribes of Erstwhile Andhra Pradesh. As such under 20 Point Programme and under the Indira Kranthi Padhakam surplus land was distributed to scheduled tribes in Warangal and Karimnagar districts of Erstwhile Andhra Pradesh. This way of land distribution to Lambada people in Warangal and Karimnagar districts helped them to shift to agricultural activities to improve their economic conditions in the given society. In the process of settling down to permanent residence and adoption of agriculture and agricultural labour as is the major source of their livelihood, the Lambadas in Warangal and Karimnagar districts of Telangana region in Erstwhile Andhra Pradesh came under the direct economic and fiscal influences of locally dominant agricultural communities. During the past few decades the Lambadas in Warangal and Karimnagar districts have purchased agricultural lands. Some of the farmers in Lambada community started irrigating their lands with the help of electric motors and the methods of cultivation are in no way different from those of other neighbouring agricultural communities.

The elevation of Lambadas to the rank of agriculturalists can also be discerned from the study of their dialect. They have been using many Telugu words for agricultural implements and operations, as they do not have Lambada words; because agriculture was not their occupation or livelihood in the past and so their dialect did not contain words relating to agricultural pursuits. It is possible that the early Lambadas from North India brought a language without agricultural terminology and had to borrow local vernacular words and then they choose agriculture as one of their occupations. Majority of the sample respondents have revealed a fact that it was while working in the fields of agricultural castes of adjoining villages that they had learnt the agricultural techniques. A better imbibing of agricultural practices and agrarian values were
achieved by working as annual servants in the houses of non-Lambada agriculturalists, which enabled some of the enterprising Lambadas to accumulate savings to start as tenant cultivators in due course of time. The contact with the advanced peasant families generated by Jeeta (agrarian labour) work, resulted in an acculturative adoption of the Lambadas towards an agricultural way of life. These annual servants not only learnt agricultural operations but also imbibed the safe ways of the dominant communities in the form of changes in the mode of food preparation, speech, thought patterns values and beliefs. In a boarder way, the whole Lambada community came under the influence of the local peasant way of life, because even those Lambadas, who did not work as annual servants, had to work with other peasants as casual labourers. Some of the Lambadas who managed to save money purchased land whenever it was offered for sale. Moreover, the price of the land was relatively cheaper till the first quarter of 20th century. Those who could not afford to buy land could adopt agriculture as tenant cultivations provided they had saved some money to purchase bullocks, agricultural implements etc. They felt that even tenant cultivation was more remunerative than wage labour. It is very interesting to note that there is a rise in the standard of living of the Lambadas as a result of the pursuit of agricultural operations. This raised their incomes and consequently standard of living of the well-to-do caste peasants is being imitated. The non-cultivating Lambadas are also motivated to attain the status of cultivation. This is a remarkable change in the economic history of the Lambadas of Warangal and Nalgonda districts from the mercantile nomadic transporters and petty traders, pastorals to peasantry.

It was observed that the needs and aspirations of the Lambadas have increased. Their need for fertile land, good cattle, better irrigational facilities and assured crops is a phenomenon that can be called a peasantising process among the Lambadas and now they are getting thoroughly sedentarised. In this respect the peasant Lambadas of Warangal and Karimnagar districts in Telangana are far more advanced as compared to the nomadic Lambadas of the Western Rajasthan who require a fresh orientation and persuasion to take up agriculture.

Agricultural labour is another important occupation in which Lambadas are engaged in. Labour is required for weeding, harvesting, sowing and transplanting. The economic movements among the Lambadas have necessitated the employment of labourers on contract basis for a relatively longer period of time. The contract between the agricultural land owner and the labourer is generally made orally and is considered to be of mutual advantage for both the parties. This arrangement provides security to the labourers under economic pursuit. It is the utter poverty or unbearable family expenditure or both that force a person to go in for the work of an attached agricultural labourer. The contract is more a class phenomenon than a tribe or caste one as only affluent families belonging to either tribe or any Hindu caste can engage attached
agricultural labourers. The contract is generally for one year and may be renewed. Sometimes these labourers borrow huge sums of money from their employers, and in such cases they have to remain in service till their debt is cleared. Majority of the people among Lambadas of Warangal and Karimnagar districts taking part in the agricultural labour are women though now and then men also participate, if they have no other work. Normally remuneration is paid in kind and sometimes in terms of money against the labour. Making the field ready for sowing is the males’ job whereas sowing; seeding, transplanting and harvesting are mostly done by women labourers. Men usually attend to hard work like ploughing, leveling the land etc. If they find more remunerative work they even go to other villages. For weeding, harvesting and transplanting one needs delicacy and skill which the women are expected to possess and they are most sought after by the Ryots for these operations.

At present agriculture has become one of the highly valued economic pursuits of the Lambadas in Warangal and Karimnagar districts. The monsoon conditions permit them to grow paddy crops. Other cereals such as Jowar, Bajras are grown in dry lands. In the low lands after paddy has been harvested, Bengal gram, Green gram and Red gram are grown as secondary crops. They also adjust the cropping cycle to the changing seasonal conditions. Depending upon the market they also shift their cropping to the current needs and try to raise their agricultural earnings.

V.11. Trade and Commerce

Even though trade is their traditional occupation very few are at present engaged in trade and commerce. Some of them are engaged in selling custard apple and ghee. The Lambadas of Warangal, Ranga Reddy, Mahabubnagar, Nalgonda districts are highly engaged in custard apple and ghee selling business. Some of the Lambadas are found to open shops such as Kirana, petty shops, pan, Beedi, vegetable etc., the educated youth are found running public telephone booths with photocopying machines. It is also observed that some of the Lambada families depend on forests for their business. They collect firewood and sell them in the neighbouring villages. It is also observed that some Lambada families are indulged in the collection of Beedi leaves in the forest for sale in the market at heavy discounts.

It may be observed that majority of the Lambadas are agricultural labourers. Since there is only one yield of crop, even those that owned land often times had to work similarly since their lands sell out of reason. Even here the labourers are at loss. It may be noted that some of the sample Lambada families

35Malhotra and Bose., Problems of Rehabilitation of Nomadic Lambadas of Western Rajasthan, Annals of the Arid Zone, Op cit, pp.74-76.
working as agricultural labourers are not aware of the minimum daily wages fixed by the Government and hence they accept whatever is paid by the land owners. For the sake of subsistence they take advances on which they pay heavy interest at the time of distribution of wages. The researcher, during his survey, also found some of the Lambada families taking loan from the non-tribal, outsider professional money lenders whom they have to pay higher rates of interest.36

V.12. Impact of Modernity on Lambada Life

With the advent of the modern means of road and rail traffic in India, the Lambadas carrying trade on pack-bullocks declined, their economic conditions deteriorated and their daily life became difficult. It may be observed that in a fast changing modern world, no tribal community can remain isolated and be static. With the expansion of communications and swift means of transport, with the televisions invading the nook and corners, a new horizon is unfolding itself to the Lambadas in the Tanda s. It may be noted that in a fast developing economy, no steel curtain can be put between the tribals and the advanced people of society. Thus the Lambada families in the Tanda s are exposed to the socio-cultural, economic and political influences of the advanced people of other communities in Erstwhile Andhra Pradesh society in general Telangana particular.

It may be observed that the Lambadas identify themselves as belonging to a single homogeneous group and speak of themselves as belonging to one single community. Although they are individualistic by temperament, they do recognize their unity into a tribe different and distinct from the neighbouring castes and other tribes. The original dialect of Lambada tribe known as Gwar-Boli is mixed with several North Indian languages such as Gujarathi, Punjabi, Rajasthani and Hindusthani. In spite of borrowings from various languages as they moved to South from their original Marwar region of Rajasthan, the retention of Lambada dialect is the most significant way of preserving their identity. This dialect is used mostly at homes and settlements.

The Lambadas can be easily identified by their conversation and the Lambada women are easily identified by their gorgeous and well decorated dress. But it is somewhat difficult to identify the Lambada men, because they look like any other peasant. It may be noted that the Lambada who followed different occupations such as transportation of food grains, trading, cattle rearing, firewood selling and practicing agrarian methods of production, has been existing for the last many generations. Their contacts with neighbouring castes naturally brought about many changes in their life styles. With the result the language of neighbouring castes and certain regional words crept into their original dialect.

It is very interesting to note that the kind of social structure possessed by the Lambada tribe in Telangana has swiftly changed based on the Demands of the altered economic circumstances. However, the Lambadas are very much conscious of their separate ethnic identity and they also give importance to the need to preserve and protect it from being assimilated though they have borrowed a few words from the neighbouring castes. The continuance of the customs of their nomadic days also helped them to identify themselves as a distinct group. The social, economic and political changes in their life did not shatter their unity. It may also be noted that the Lambadas stress on settling down in an exclusive and separate settlements which are called as Tanda s. It may be interesting to note that the Lambadas still speak of themselves as a body of people bearing original generic name ‘Lambada’ and forming a single homogeneous community which spread all over the Indian sub-continent. The Lambadas address each other throughout India as “Gwar” and call the non-Lambada as “Kwar” indicating their sense of separate entity. The cultural and social segregation of the Lambada from the non-Lambada is also evident from their frequent use of the term “Gwaria” for themselves and as “Kwaria” for the permanently settled agricultural neighbouring caste communities of the villages.37

- The Custom of Dress Change Feast

It may be observed that a kind of change seems to be taking place in their pattern of dress because of various influences. However some young women have adopted the local saris but the pattern of wearing the Saree is that of the Marwari women and there by retaining their distinct style of wearing the Saree. The research scholar had a general discussion with Lambada women folk with regard to discarding of their traditional dress and acquiring a new tradition. Majority of the women have expressed their willingness to discard their traditional dress not because of their interest in modern dress but because the husbands of the married women Lambada want it. In certain Tanda s in these districts some Lambada women have completely discarded their traditional dress and adopted local pattern consisting of Saree and blouse. Some educated and enlightened people among Lambadas are making continuous efforts to change the pattern of dress of women fold of their community. They even visit different Tanda s and persuade the people to change their dressing pattern. Almost all the Lambada men feel that their women must change their dressing pattern. The Andhra Pradesh Lambadas Seva Sangh is staunchly supporting the changeover to modern dress.

Those who support the discarding of traditional dress have said that there are many advantages. They feel that unless they change the dressing of their women they cannot move up in the society. Their conventional and traditional

dress is conspicuous and reductive of their community. Their dress makes other people to look at them with an unsavoury feeling. In their traditional dress they cannot mix freely with the other women of other castes and their social movement is very must restricted to their community only. The girls cannot attend the schools and participate in the social gatherings of the village along with other women. Further, they have to put much labour and money for stitching their traditional dress and they have to spend much time towards the stitching. They felt that this amount of time may be diverted in other economic pursuits. The women of Lambada have expressed feelings that instead of spending huge amount and time on one conventional dress, they can as well purchase more number of Sarees at a time. Some of the Lambada men folk have said that their women are good looking with very fair complexioned; their beauty is spoiled by their way of wearing conventional dress. If they put on Saree and blouse they look much more beautiful.

A separate custom is followed by the Lambada women folk of Warangal and Karimnagar districts for discarding and changing of their traditional dress. A separate function will be held for this. For this they consult a Brahmin priest and decide an auspicious day for changing their dress. On the day of changing their dress, they invite their relatives and celebrate it as a festival. The change of dress will take place at the auspicious time fixed by the Brahmin priest. At the precise time the husband offers Mettelu (a silver toe ring) and ties the Mangalasutra (a sacred thread worn by the women around their neck as a symbol of marriage) in the presence of the priest. The Lambada couple offer a feast to their relatives attending the dress changing function.

Some Lambada women opine that they cannot discard wearing of traditional dress for the whims and fancies of others. They cannot go in for Saree and blouse in which they look funny and may be ridiculed by other women and they themselves feel uneasy and shy to go about if they put on Saree and blouse. Some of the old Lambadas said that their women should not discard their traditional dress. They opine that the women of their community wear the traditional dress to appeal to their gods. Particularly while dancing during the festivals, the supernatural can be pleased and appeased only in that way. Otherwise they may have to become victims of the wrath of the Gods who may punish them with drought, sickness and other calamities. Some of the Lambadas are particular that they should not change their dress because they feel that on the day they take the path of detribalization, they may lose all the privileges they are at present they are from the Government as they were declared as Scheduled Tribes in Telangana.  

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V.13. Influence of Modernization on Lambada Community

Among the other tribes of Telangana the Lambadas occupy a significant place. As the unlisted tribals of the adjoining states, many of the Lambadas migrated into the bordering districts such as Adilabad, Warangal, Nalgonda, Karimnagar and Nizamabad of Telangana. Lambadas are highly mobile, entered the urban life and benefited by modernization through education and employment opportunities. Many of them got government jobs, and some of the hardworking ones got selected for the administrative services of All India Services and Group I services.

Being nomadic and constantly mobile, the Lambadas have come into contact with different sources of development such as urbanization, industrialization, expansion of Government agencies etc. Their frequent interaction with the aforementioned forces has made them imbibe the different aspects of modernization. Therefore, many Lambadas of the present generation have given up not only their traditional occupation but also their dress pattern and life styles. However, most of them are no longer nomadic in the sense that they have taken to agriculture and such other settled professions. These people have taken advantage of several rural development programmes. Because of this reason, in many aspects of their lives, we may find the influence of modernization.39

V.14. Liquor Manufacturing and Consumption

It may be noted that the life of Lambada is not free from certain urban vices like consuming liquor and it is observed that the Lambada youth in many Tanda s are addicted to this vice, more specifically of drinking illicit liquor. The researcher found many young widows who are the victims of this illicit liquor consumption by their husbands. Liquor manufacturing is considered to be a lucrative trade for the Lambadas even though it is prohibited by law. It is learnt that in some Tanda s young men of the Lambada families are indulgin in the preparation of illicit liquor and the children and women are indulging in the selling the liquor and there by they earn their livelihood. The manufacture of liquor has become one of their subsidiary occupations to supplement their income. It may be noted that liquor plays an important role in Lambada community even from the days of nomadism to settled life on occasions like betrothal ceremonies, death ceremonies.

The illicit liquor prepared by the Lambadas is called “Daru”. For the preparation of this “Daru” they use ingredients like rotten fruits and chemicals which are considered as harmful to health. In some of the Tandas they have their own “Bhattis”, for preparing illicit liquor. The Bhattis are some kind of liquor making distilleries. It is observed that even in this business they are not

39B. Lal., Contribution of Banjaras to Telangana a Historical Study (1860-1951),, Opcit, pp. 107-108.
prospering. Because of the addiction, they themselves consume bulk quantum of liquor. Some of the sample Lambada family members had revealed to the researcher that in the beginning their business was very prosperous and they could earn more money. However, the restrictions of the government, sudden raids by the excise officials and the rise in the price of jaggery etc., all have caused the downfall of this business. Now-a-days, they have switched over to the consumption of toddy.

V.15. **Daakki and Daakkan**

If a Lambada woman practices witchcraft for causing sickness to a person or brings a calamity to a family she is called ‘Daakkan’ and if the same is practices by a man, he is called ‘Daakki’. Lambadas believe that Daakki and Daakkan are capable of causing sickness to persons and also to their cows, oxen and buffaloes. In this connection, they consult their Tanda priest called Bhagat. The Bhagat may belong to any clan but he performs worship to any god or goddess in a Tanda. He is considered by Tanda people as witch doctor. If he expresses his doubts about a person that he or she is practicing witchcraft, they remove the teeth of that person. Bhagat will make the Daakki or Daakkan to drink the water used by a cobbler for making foot wear, with the faith that the person would never practice witchcraft.\(^{40}\)

\(^{40}\)Ibid, pp.100-101.