CHAPTER-III
LAMBANIS: ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

3.1. ORIGIN OF LAMBANIS:

India is a land of castes and tribes. According to an estimate there are about 427 tribal groups in the country (Roy Burman, 1971:2). The Anthropological Survey (1967) has estimated the number at 314 considering a number of tribes to be the constituents of a group of tribes designated by a common name such as the Gonds, the Bhils, etc. In 1950, the number of scheduled tribes was 212. This number increased in 1956 with the revised list. All this gave rise to fluctuating figures of tribal communities and the tribal population.

According to Majumdar “Tribe is ordinarily an endogeneous unit, the members of which confine their marriage within the tribe. Several clans constitute a tribe....” (1963) Thus the characteristic features of a tribal group are that the members of the group not only live together, speak the same dialect but also identify themselves with one common originator.

Some of the distinctive identity marks, which act as the community’s boundary - maintaining means and mechanisms are: 1) a common name; Lambani or Banjara, 2) endogamy; 3) distinctive dress and ornamentation of their women, 4) Lambani dialect, 5) their exclusive separate settlements, 6) a strong sense of clanishness, 7) specific religious and value clusters. (Halber, B.G. : 1986:217)
Among the numerous tribal groups in our country a tribe which is known for its colourful dress is that of Lambani tribal community. These people are also called as Banjara and Sukali. In different states they are known by different names as indicated in the following chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Names by which Lambanis identified.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gujarath</td>
<td>Banjara, Charana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrapradesh</td>
<td>Lambada, Sukali, Sugali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>Labadi, Sugali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>Banjar, Ladeneya, Gamaliya, Gavariya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>Banjara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>Banjari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>Lambani, Banjara, Lamani and Sukali</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even though this tribal community is known by different names in different parts of the country, the terms Lambani, Banjara and Sukali are most frequently used ones in the regions wherever they live.

With a view to help the different caste and tribal communities to overcome their backwardness in various spheres of lives, our governments have grouped them as scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, de-notified tribes, other backward classes etc. The Lambani community in the states of Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Gujurat is considered as a Scheduled tribe while in the state of Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka and Kerala they have been considered as Scheduled caste. In the States of Madras and Madhya Pradesh they are considered under the category of de-notified tribes and in other states as Other Backward Classes. (Khandoba, 1991, 20-21). From the sociological and anthropological points of view, the Lambanis are a tribe and hence they should be considered under scheduled tribe category.
3.1.1 LAMBANI: THE ETIMOLOGY:

The Lambanis are a Pan-Indian tribe who are found in almost every part of the country with a descent traced to both their Dravidian and Aryan origins. James Hustings writing about the Lambanis maintains: “The tribe of wandering grain-carriers in India, which at the Census of 1901 numbered 7,65,861, most numerous in Hyderabad, but found in all the Indian provinces. As a result of their wandering habits, which have now much decreased since the carrying trade has fallen into the hands of the railway authorities, they are a very mixed race. Their origin is probably Dravidian, but they now all trace their descent from the Brahman or Rajput tribes of Northern India. It is in the Deccan and in the State of Hyderabad that they still retain more of their primitive beliefs and customs than in the scattered colonies in the more northern parts of the country, where they have largely fallen under Hindu or Mohammedan influence” (1909: 347).

Lambani or Lamani is derived from the Sanskrit word ‘Lavanah’. As the ancestors of the Lambanis were said to be involved in selling livanah (salt), they came to be called as ‘Lavaniga’. With the passage of time they have come to be named as Lamani and later Lambani (Thurston, 1975: 207).

The ancestors of this tribal group in Karnataka who are said to have moved in from the North India are believed to have taken the trade of selling the Lavanah because of the great demand for the item in South India. As a large tribal community embracing this profession, they have come to be called as Lambani, Lamani (Khandoba, 1991:11)
Another school of thought has identified this tribal group of Lambanis with the place of their origin. The migrant communities originating from Rajputana are normally termed as Rajputs in South India. Those coming from Bagri have come to be known as Bagris or Vagris. In the same way people hailing from Lavani in Rajasthan have been called as “Lavanis” or “Lambanis”. In historical records, it is mentioned that the place of Lavani had existed close to Maandu in Rajasthan in western part of India. (Sannarama, 1995:21).

**BANJARA :**

As stated earlier, the Lambanis are also called as “Banjara”. The term “Banjara” is derived from the Sanskritic root word ‘Vanijya’. In the olden days, the community members are believed to have been merchants wandering from place to place and one country to another doing business. Hence they have been termed as “Banajara” meaning ‘Merchant’. In the course of time they have come to be known as Banjara.

The word Banjara, sometimes written as “Brinjara” has various meanings given to it. Some say that it is another form of the word “Vanjara”, hurners or inhabitants of woods: while others derive it from the Persian word “Biranjar” meaning a “rice-carrier”; while yet others say that the word ‘Banjara’ means an “arrow”. The academicians believe that the term Banjara is derived from the word ‘Bana’ meaning group. As the people used to live in groups they came to be called as Banjara (Rathod, 1971 and Khandoba, 1991).
Lambanis are believed to have lived in forests. Hence they have been termed as ‘Vanachara’. This nomadic group is believed to have travelled from place to place for selling the spices by using domestic animals as caravans. This is also considered as one of the reasons for the Lambanis being termed as “Vanachara”—“Vanajara”—“Banajara”—“Banjara” (Khandoba, 1991: 10).

**SUKALI (SUGALI):**

Lambanis are also known as Sukali or Sugali in the regions of Andhra Pradesh, Madras and Kerala. In Telugu dialect cows are known as Sugali. The term Sukali refers to the man taking care of herds of cows. The historical records reveal that the community people were largely involved in herding domestic animals like cows and buffaloes. As they were involved in this occupation traditionally they have been termed as Sukalis (Khandoba, 1991:12).

**3.1.2. THE PLACE OF ORIGIN OF LAMBANIS:**

The distinct type of occupation pursued by Lambanis in the past i.e. selling food articles carrying them from place to place, is said to have posed difficulty in identifying their place of origin. There is a general belief that Lambanis have originated from some parts of Rajasthan. According to Sher Singh “Originally the Lambanis are the Rajputs of Rajasthan and they are known to be very brave people being the descendents of martial race of Rajputs and have not lost their instinctive martial spirit” (quoted in Khandoba, 1991:25). It is also reported that a group of Lambani people
approached Guru Govindh Singh for work and is said to have told him that they belong to Marvada, Brinjoli and Salambur in Rajputana province. Thus, a review of the opinion of the different scholars reveals that the Lambanis belong to Rajasthan and they are also Kshatriya Rajputanas (Khandoba, 1991:25).

3.2. MIGRATION TO SOUTH:

Their movement to the other parts of the country is explained in a story of the Rana Pratap Singh. Rana Pratap Singh is said to have ruled the places in and around Rajasthan and Delhi. In 1576 A.D, when the Mughal ruler Akbar attacked Rajasthan, Rana Pratap Singh is believed to have escaped into the mountainous region called Haldighat. Finally Rana Pratap Singh was defeated by Akbar. Not inclined to surrender to the Mughal ruler, he decided to stay back in the forest with an intention to conquer his lost kingdom. At that time along with the King, it is said people belonging to Lambanis, Marvadi and Gurjara also stayed in the forest. With the passing of time the King Rana Pratap Singh passed away and Marvadi and Gurjara people came back to town for their living. But it is said that it was Lambanis who decided to stay back in the forest with due respect to their King. That is how the Lambanis might have become "People of Forest".

Later on, it is said, because of difficulties in living in the forest, the Lambanis must have moved out of the forest. As Lambanis were originally merchants involved in selling food articles from place to place they had innumerable number of livestock. With the passage of time they came out of the Rajasthan region. However, due to the force of circumstances, Lambanis
were involved in the supply of arms and ammunitions and food grains to the Mughal army. During 1630 when the Mughal army came to attack Adilshah of Bijapur, the Lambanis also came to south and settled in the same place.

The Lambani leaders Jhangi and Bhangi came with Asaf Khan to down south. Among whom Jhangi had 1,80,000 bullocks and Bhangi had 52,000 bullocks (Nanjundaiah & Iyer, 1928:139). It is revealed that these leaders were approached by Asaf Khan at times of difficulties. In recognition of their services to him, he is said to have issued an order engraved in copper and gold letters, which runs as follows:

"Ranjan ka pani
Chappar ka ghas
Dinka tin Khun Maaf
Aur Jahan Asaf Janka Ghode
Wahan Bhangi Jhangika bail"

(Nanjundaiah & Iyer, 1928:139)

The meaning of the inscription seems to be: "If you can find no water elsewhere, you may even take it from the ranjans (pots) of my followers; grass you may take from the roof of their huts and if you commit three murders a day I will even pardon this provided that where I station my cavalry there I can find always Bhangi Jangi’s bullocks" (Nanjundaiah & Iyer, 1928:139).

Thus, the Lambanis have moved to the South India along with the Mughal army and settled in Bijapur of the erstwhile Mumbai Karnataka. As the Lambanis have got settled in these different places in Karnataka, they have come to pursue different local occupations for their survival.
3.3 OCCUPATION:

The Lambanis as a nomadic tribe have no traditional occupation of their own. However, the foregoing discussions have revealed that this nomadic tribe by virtue of being transporters did the job of supplying arms and ammunitions, and food materials to the Mughal army. The community did not face much difficulty in continuing with these occupations for the simple reason that they were not attacked by the soldiers. Thus, they continued with this occupation for a long period of time. But with the advent of the Britishers and the improvements in transport and communication, the very survival of the community was at stake. With no other options left, the community had to resort to sell the firewood collected by themselves from the nearby forests. The women members of the community are also reported to have pursued this occupation along with their menfolk rigorously. This was also one of the reasons as to why they settled in Tandas close to the forests. With the passage of time, with a view to settle at one place they might have taken to agriculture by clearing of the woods for agricultural purposes. Thus, the Lambani community after having migrated to Karnataka state, is said to have taken to occupations appropriate to the local conditions. This is also because of the fact that the major occupation of the people in Karnataka was also agriculture. They are also reported to have taken up various other occupations like cattle grazing, selling firewood, stone cutting, doing agricultural cooli and also petty business. Perhaps, because of the nature of these occupations what the Lambanis have been pursuing, they have continued to remain economically poor.
3.4 FOOD HABITS:

The Lambani community is said to be non-vegetarian in its food habits. This may be because they were nomadic tribes and were also living in forests for quite sometime. This might have influenced their dietary practices and the same must have continued through the generations. But it is also interesting to note that their dietary habits are very much influenced by the food culture of the region in which they continued to stay.

The common food items among Lambanis are Rods made out of Jowar, Ragi (African Millet), Wheat, chilly chutney and dairy products, etc. As they were living in the forests they generally use Roti and green leaves. It is called as “Bhaji-Bati” and it is a popular dish among the Lambanis. In modern times, on festive occasions they are found to be preparing “Payasam”, “Holige and Kadubu” which are also the popular dishes among other communities.

The community is said to prefer non-vegetarian foods. These non-vegetarian foods are prepared on the next day of the festival and the vessels used for the preparation are also kept separate. The meat consumed by them are that of sheep, hen, fish, rabbit, goat etc. They don’t consume ham and beef. Interactions with those caste members consuming ham and beef items are completely forbidden.

3.5 LAMBANI FAMILY AND MARRIAGE PRACTICES:

The family is the most important unit of social organization. It constitutes our first experience of social life and is the most enduring and permanent social group. The family is linked to a whole network of institutions in society. Its closest associations are with the supporting of institution of marriage, which regularizes the relationships between the family members.
The family is a group defined by a sex relationship sufficiently precise and enduring to provide further procreation and upbringing of children. The family is a universal institution of the society. It is found all over the world and at all levels of culture. The members of a family accept the co-operative division of labour and share a common shelter, a common purse and common hearth.

The characteristic feature of the Lambani family is that it is patriarchal in structure. The complete responsibility of running the family lies on the male head of the family. The primogeniture is the rule where after the death of father, the elder son in the family has every right for the father’s property and also gets the credit due for the family.

The Lambanis are said to have practised monogamy. This is not to say that there were no polygamous marriages. Polyandrous and Polygynous families among the Lambanis came into existence more out of circumstances.

Joint families are more an exception than a rule. The male children in the family stay within the family till their marriage and thus, form a nuclear family of their own soon after their marriage. This is also because of their increased preference for living independently.

3.5.1 MARRIAGE CUSTOMS AND RITUALS:

The marriage among Lambanis while resembling the marriage among other castes and tribal groups in the local area also display certain unique customs and practices. Marriages in this community are generally monogamous. The sagotra marriages are prohibited. However, in certain cases one does find practices of polygamy, where it is necessitated due to the death
of the married brother and widow remarriages are also encouraged. The marriage rituals right from the selection of the mate upto the procession in which the young couple are taken out after the marriage ceremony, consist of certain customs, practices, fun and sorrow, typical to Lambanis. An attempt is made to explain the same in the following paragraphs:

3.5.1.1 SELECTION OF MATE:

The selection of a mate was a real problem in the Lambanis as the community was constantly moving from place to place in view of their business pursuits. With a view to facilitate this process of selection of mate, ‘Dhadi’, the professional singer used to come into picture. He used to help the community members in finding appropriate alliances among families.

The practice in the community like in the traditional Hindu non-brahmin family, is that the elderly members in the family visit the bride’s place to decide on the prospective daughter-in-law for the family. The decision of the elders was binding on the bridegroom and thus, he had no choice but to accept. This speaks of the norms prevalent in the community. Upon the selection of the bride, the bridegroom’s father would offer ‘Sankero Rapya’ [bride price] the pre-determined price [in the past it was said to be Rs.1.25 and currently it is generally Rs.61 or Rs.101] symbolically, to the Tanda headman. The idea behind this practice is to announce among the Tanda members about the settlement of the proposed marriage and under no circumstances the alliance could be changed.
3.5.1.2 Betrothal Ceremony

(Vath Bandhero or Sagay Karero):

On the mutually agreed date of convenience for the betrothal ceremony, the bridegroom's family members, may be 8-10 in number, would visit the bride's house. They are expected to carry with them four bags with craft work on them containing either Methi and Cobra or Jaggery and Rice or Jowar and a rupee coin. These four bags are to be distributed equally among both the marriage parties. The Tanda headman will hand over the bags containing methi and cobra to bride's family and the bags containing jaggery and rice or jowar to the bridegroom's family. The ceremony ends with oral resolutions from both the parties. This process is called as 'Sagayi or Vath Bandhero'. If after this ceremony, either party withdraws without any proper reason, he or she will be liable to pay a fine fixed by the Panchayat.

3.5.1.3 Eating of Jaggery (Gol Khayero):

After the ceremony of Sagayi, there will be another ceremony which is also an important stage in the process and this is called "Gol Khayero" (eating of jaggery). In this process the bridegroom's elder family members and head of the Tanda (Naik), go to the girl's house and meet a large group of the girl's Tanda members and others in the neighborhood. The place selected for meeting will be generally a temple or the girl's house.

Here the bridegroom's father, deposits a part of the brideprice (ranging from Rs.21 to 101 generally) in a small bag along with dry coconut. A woman of the Bhukya group and another of Jaat group carry this bag. Afterwards, the bag will be handed over to the man of Bhukya and another of Jaat descent. The
bags are generally placed on their right shoulders. Then both the parties distribute jaggery to all the members who have gathered around in the ceremony. The Naik who is the head of the Tanda is the first person to receive jaggery. It indicates the important role of Naik in the process of the ceremony. After the distribution of the jaggery, an experienced elderly man chants the Khasalat in the Lambani dialect explaining the importance of the family as follows.

“Panch panchat Raja Bhojer Sabha
Pachare laakh, unpachare Savvalaakh
Brahmeer Lakani, Baman Baniyar poti,
Laki Valivata Jhadi Char Naik
Dhakani paadi Upar Naik
Nayek, Ghade Ghader Beerur Naik
Daladaler Pamner Naik,
Sagenya parko to Hera Mayiro Lalar Naik
Moti Het To Chani, Toti Het Ma Chani,
Jaagadekan Paaga Bhande, Sath Sath Peedher Natakide,
Rakadato Nata, Na Rakadato Taaga Taar Naik”

( Khandoba, 1991 : 135)

**Meaning:** “O Chief! The betrothal is solemnized as ordained by God, with the feast over, the two families are now equal, nearer and deeper. Let this family bond get stronger for seven generations to come. Let them not do anything that breaks the bond. Rupture brings grief”.
3.5.1.4 RANG CEREMONY  *(Rang Dero)* :

After the completion of the jaggery ceremony, “rang ceremony” colour distribution will be arranged. If the bride is of the Bukya clan, then those of the Jaat clan must offer the colours. This ceremony ends with the fixing of the date of the marriage. In the ceremony of Rang distribution women are strictly prohibited. They remain inside watching the new bridegroom and amusing themselves by cracking jokes at the expense of the bride. The girl’s father arranges a dinner at night.

3.5.1.5 PUTTING UP OF PENDAL  *(Sadi Tanero)* :

“Sadi Tanero” is one of the most important events of the ceremony of a marriage. In this ceremony, the astrologer or priest fixes a day for the marriage. Bunches of mango leaves, a saadi enclaved of coconut leaves in front of the bridegroom’s house signifies the auspicious occasion. The pendal in front of the house is decorated with mango leaves and at the centre of the pendal a plough share is kept covered with a woollen blanket. Two holy vessels filled with sacred water (Kalasa) are placed on it. This is known as “Sadi Tanero”. On this occasion the people and Naik of the Tanda are invited.

3.5.1.6 STAMPING CEREMONY or DHARMA DEEKSHA  *(Vadahir Dag)* :

On the night of the Sadi Tanero the Vadahir Dag ceremony is performed. It is also an important ceremony of Lambani marriage. This is performed at the evening. It is a ceremony of initiating the groom into the life of a householder. This ritual involves ceremonial stamping at the left shoulder of the groom along with his younger or elder brother. This is called as ‘Vadahir Dag’ or ‘GoSayir Dag’.
To celebrate Vadahir Dag, the floor of the house is plastered with cow-dung. Seven sweet balls made of wheat flour and jaggery are kept on each side. At the centre, is placed sacred water vessel. Holy lamps are lit and kept by the side of the groom and his younger brother. A pin is heated at the edge of the fire and is pierced on the left shoulder of both the persons. This signifies that both of them are qualified for marrying. If this ceremony is not performed, the boys are not regarded as fit for marriage. At the time of this ceremony the following Kasalat is being chanted by the elderly person or Naik.

"Koli Ava, Koli Java
Koli Mayi, Joga Samala
Munge Avada, Mograa
Talli Avda Baana Cha
Dhoro Ghodo Hansalo
Pataliya Savara Cha
Guru Godayi Baaba Sada Sada"

(Khandoba 1991 : 138)

**Meaning:** “The Hen comes and goes. The Seven sweet balls symbolise hens. One set goes to the chief of the Tanda and another to the groom’s mother. On each sweet ball a hollow is made and in the hollow a cotton wick immersed in oil is burnt. Care is taken to see that the holy light does not put off when the left shoulder is pierced with the red hot pin. The scar is as small as a grain. One may ride a white horse. Guru Gosayi Baba will take care of you forever.”

After chanting the Kasalat the sweet balls are offered to the chief of the Tanda and others who would gather around.
3.5.1.7. DISTRIBUTION OF JAGGERY PAANAKA (Ghota Dero):

After completion of Vadahir Dag, Ghota is made out of jaggery, puppy, cloves, cardamom, pepper and nutmeg. It is prepared by the groom with the help of his friends. An earthen pot is filled with the sweet drink. A new piece of cloth is used to cover the pot. This ceremonial pot is called “Kalaser Bindiga”. This pot is placed in the auspicious pendal. One Rupee coin is put in this pot.

3.5.1.8. THE BRIDEGROOM IS TAKEN OUT FROM THE HOUSE (Vethadun Bhar Kadero):

After finishing the Ghota Dero, this ceremony is performed. Before coming out of the house, the bridegroom offers pooja to the family deity. When he comes nearer the door a pair of boy and a girl move to his right. At the bidding of the head there, they take handful of rice from the dish, throw it on the bridegroom’s head and retire. Then a second pair of a boy and girl repeats the same procedure. The bridegroom then steps out of his seat and bows before the assembled members, repeating the salutation called “Ram Ram”. It means that the bridegroom pays his respect to the assembled people. Then the “Ghota” will be served to the assembled elders. Here, the official leaders like Naik (head of the Tanda), Davo (Vice-President of Tanda), and Karbhari (Secretary) should be present. They all bless the bridegroom and have the Ghota. At this time, the elder member of Tanda or Naik chants the following Kasalat.
“Kas Mas Kase Kasturi  
Ghasan Kade Ghota  
Sanda Sanda Lota Mare  
Lo Sagan Bhai Ghota”  

(Doddamani, 1996 : 113)

**Meaning**: “The ghota drink is prepared from different kinds of the spices pounded together. So please drink it.

After this Kasalat, there will be another Kasalat as follows;

*Panch Pacheri Pancheri Jagat*  
*Varali Sapari*  
*Sarlo Pan*  
*Chunnu Charako*  
*Kato Parako*  
*Lo Rang Puto*

(Doddamani 1996 : 114)

**Meaning**: “Honourable elders of the Panchayat do receive the beetle nut leaves and lime and also the sweet. Please receive the same with our respect.”

3.5.1.9. **FAREWELL TO THE BRIDEGROOM TO BRIDE’S PLACE (Vatadun Valayero)**:

Before the bridegroom leaves for the marriage, (marriage ceremony is normally arranged at bride’s place) the members in the Tanda offer their presentations to the groom. The groom along with ‘Lariya’ and other relatives
leaves for the marriage. He leaves the house as a ‘hero’ and the elders advise him to return to Tanda with his wife confronting all the difficulties that he may encounter. As soon as the groom’s party arrives at the temple in Tanda (Math), Lariya takes the message to the headman and he receives them with following ‘Khasalath’.

“Dalamaleti Darshan Payek
Hiyatiti Malagat
Apan Got Gangasech
Kem Khasalat”

(Khandoba 1991: 142)

Meaning: “We have met with good wishes. Now we are in the same lineage. Let all our relatives and neighbors remain like the confluence of the river Ganga”.

After the exchange of good wishes, the chief calls upon the bride’s family and asks it to invite the bridegroom and his retinue. Usually, they get this permission at night. The elderly women of the Tanda gather at a place and proceed to invite the bridegroom and his retinue. After this, the ‘Moyi’ (Sweets) brought by the groom are distributed to the Tanda members of the bride. Jocular songs are sung at this time and in a way they are intended to tease one another. Finally the bridegroom and ‘Leria’ are given water to drink. The Leria receives it saying the following Khasalat:

“Panch Panchat Sagasgeri Rameri
Pachare laakh, Unpachare Savvalaakh
Sagan Bhai Javala Lo”

(Doddamani 1996: 116)
**Meaning:** "O esteemed kith and kin! who have assembled here in this hall which is like the darbar of Lord Rama. Will you please take water" Then the bride's folks sing and cut jokes and escort the bridegroom and his retinue to the bride's house. The bride is all along in a mood of melancholy. Before he enters the bride's house, the groom has to offer money ranging from Rs.2 to Rs.20 as gift to the bride's elder brother. After that, the dinner is served.

After the dinner the customs and practices of the marriage follow throughout the night. There are certain reasons as to why the programmes run throughout the night.

1. Since all the Tanda members are busy attending to their daily works during the day time, observing it during nights will facilitate the participation of the community members (Khandoba, 1991:136).

2. Mughal army during medieval times used to kidnap girls if they were seen during the day time. Hence, it was felt safe to observe the ritual practices during the night time. (Rampure, 1975:150).

Even though there are no specific musical instruments which are used during this occasion, from the beginning till the end of the programme in the night there will be singing of songs and performing dances among the members gathered. However, in these days the Lambanis are found to arrange for the music programmes by professional singers depending on the affordability as has been done in Hindu marriage ceremonies.
3.5.1.10. NIGHT PROGRAMMES:

1. Tilak Ceremony (*Teeko Dero*):

   Among the Lambanis the Tilak ceremony is known as *Teeko Dero*. The Tilak material is a paste made of sacred turmeric or yellow powder. The elder brother of the bride puts the Tilak on the forehead of the bride and draws a mark of ‘Swastik’ on the back of the coat or any other wedding dress worn by groom and also on the bride’s dress. This is called as ‘*Sankya Porero*’ At the time of applying turmeric paste on the bride’s forehead she is overcome with emotion. She weeps resting her head over her brother’s shoulders to express her feelings that she now belongs to the other family. Her sorrow is expressed as ‘*Davalo*’ in Lambani dialect which is a sort of ceremonial crying.

2. Smearing of Turmeric (*Mendipeti Lagadero*):

   This practice is similar to what is being observed among other Hindu communities. The senior lady members, who are not widows, smear the bride and the groom with oil and turmeric as a sort of preparation for the ‘Mangala Karya’. This is called as ‘*Mendipati Lagadero*’. This occasion is being eagerly looked forward by the ladies for they find it to be a time to sing songs which adds colour to the occasion.
3. **Marriage Bondage (Vaya Bandero):**

The most important part of the marriage ceremonies occurs by midnight. In front of the door, two pestles (Vanake) are kept at a distance of 5 inches between them. Beneath the pestles are placed areca nuts, beetle leaves and 25 paise coin. At the top of the pestles 'Geru Kai' (marking nut) is tied with a black thread attaching to it turmeric and cowries.

In the pendal, four pits each of two inches depth are made at the four corners of the pendal. Here in each pit, are placed seven earthen pots one upon the other. These pots are decorated with lime and various colours. These are the auspicious 'Cupolas' (Kalasa) with their necks decorated with mango leaves indicating the symbol of happiness and prosperity for the couple. These earthen pots are covered with plants (Aanker Jad). Here areca nuts, beetle leaves and 25 paise coin are placed at the bottom. All these are done with prayers to God to bless the couple with joy and prosperity.

The next ceremony is the bath ceremony. A reverse wooden plank is placed near the pestles. First the bride is made to sit on it and she takes bath with romantic songs being sung at that time. After her bath she is taken to a little distant place and made to sit there. Next comes the bridegroom. Oil is applied to his body by the bride's mother. She combs his hair, pulls tuft of his hair and pours water on his head. The water dripping from the tuft is collected in the joined palms of the bride's mother. She drinks it seven times. It is called as 'Chotir Panie Peyero'. Along with mother-in-law a few other women also participate in observing this ritual. After this, the other four to six women give bath to the bridegroom and try to lift up the plank so that the
bridegroom falls horizontally. At this time, Leria and other friends are present there to support the bridegroom. If the bridegroom falls horizontally the bride’s retinue sing a song teasing him. After this, the bride’s younger sister ties the feet of the bridegroom with a piece of red cloth. This is called as ‘Khasada Bandero’. After taking bath the pieces with which feet are tied are removed by the bride’s mother and are tied to the roof of the house.

4. **Kankan Tying (Dorno Bandero):**

After the ceremony of auspicious bath, the Kankana tying is performed. This is called as ‘Dorno Bandero’. Here, in this ritual both the bride and the bridegroom are made to sit on the wooden seat one after the other. Surrounding them seven small earthen pots are placed. Here the bride’s mother and the groom’s mother sit behind the bride and the groom respectively. Out of the seven pots, three are filled with water and four with flour. One of these is closed by the hands of the bride and the groom. A few married women as well as men sit round these pots and tie a thread over the pots seven times. Then the thread is put round the neck of the bride with seven knots. The remaining thread is left loose. Second time, the same thing is repeated and this time the thread is tied to the right hand of the bridegroom. One rupee coin, a beetle nut and cowries are placed in their hand and they are made to go around the pestles seven times. At this time, if these things slip and fall from their hands it signifies that their life partnership will not remain for long time.
5. **Tippe Shastra (Vokaldi Dhokayero):**

The bride and the bridegroom walk a small distance towards south where some cow-dung has been kept. The bridegroom holds an axe in his right hand and cuts the cowdung seven times. The bride also does the same. This is called as “Vakaldi Dhokayero.”

6. **Breaking of Mud Plate (Dhoskya Phodero):**

The groom stands on the wooden plank. The bride’s younger sister comes and removes the shoes from groom’s feet and she is offered two or five rupees. A few married women also perform this. Again the bride’s younger sister gives the groom shoes to wear and again gets two or five rupees. Afterwards she holds a mud plate and puts it near the bridegroom’s feet. The groom without touching his feet to the ground has to break it at the first attempt. This is called as ‘Dhoskya Phodero’. This is one of the funny items in the Lambani marriage ceremony.

7. **Offering Sweets to Both (Kolya Khorayero):**

Here the bride and the bridegroom have to take the common meal twice. Then the couple along with an elderly woman sit before a plate in which is placed a mixture of rice, flour, jaggery and ghee. They are completely hidden in the folds of a piece of cloth thrown over them.

Now the bride places her hand over the bridegroom’s hand and receives the sweet from him and eats it. The bridegroom does the same. This is done seven times.
8. **Removal of Kankana (Dorno Chodayero):**

The mother-in-law puts a towel round the neck of the son-in-law. She pretends to beat the couple with pounding rod and gets the promise from the groom. The promise is as follows: “I promise to take care of my wife under any circumstances”. The mother-in-law is offered two or five rupees by the groom. The ceremony of removing Kankana from the bride and bridegroom is called ‘Dorno Chodayero’. The kankna thread tied to the bride is removed by the groom and the same is repeated by the bride.

9. **Playing with Starch Water (Mand Ramadero):**

After the removal of Kankana, the attractive starch water game is arranged to the bride and the groom. At the time of play, the people gathered around look anxiously. Silver coin and cowries and areca nut are played in the starch water.

All the above rites are completed during the night. It is almost early hours of the next day by which it is completed and the couple who are going to be married are given some rest.

3.5.1.11 **Mangalya Dharana (Tali Baandero):**

The bride and the groom after a bath in the morning of the day of marriage wear the wedding costumes given to them by the bride’s family. The important bridal costumes are Skirt (Pettiah), Blouse (Kanchali) and Melmusku (Chatia). The bride is also bedecked with traditional
ornaments like Bangles made out of tusks etc. The groom would wear the costumes comprising of white shirt, red shawl and white dhothi. In recent times, there are changes in the costumes used by the bride and the groom, at the time of Taali tying ceremony.

On the auspicious time, with the singing of the songs by the girls in chorus, the groom ties the ‘mangala sutra’ around the neck of the bride. This is the most important occasion of the marriage which is being observed by the other Hindu communities too. This is followed by a sweet meal. Thus, it must be noted that while the Lambani community displays certain unique features in their marriage, they do follow certain important brahminical rites that are being observed among the caste Hindus. Lambanis, thus have ensured to remain within the Hindu fold.

3.5.1.12 SEND OFF TO NEWLY MARRIED COUPLES
(Tangadi Valayero):

With the completion of all the rites associated with the Lambani marriage, the stage is now set for sending the bride to the bridegroom's family. The occasion is generally charged with emotions and sorrow. This is very common among the Indian families.

As the time for departure approaches it is found that the girl cries aloud by embracing the father, the mother, the brothers, the sisters and other close relatives. The girl is consoled by the relatives present there. She receives the blessings of all the elders present there more importantly the parents. The
newly wed couple will be made to sit outside the house and will be presented with a box containing all the materials given to the girl and her in-laws from her father's house. This generally consists of clothes, utensils, jewellery, bronze plates, etc. Later, the girl will be made to sit on the cow symbolising her being taken away to boy's place. The girl again stretching her hands towards parent's place narrates all the good things about her mother's place and it is called 'Havelli'. The following is the summary of the havelli.

"Oh! Father, you brought me up so carefully
by spending much money
All this was to no purpose.
Oh! Mother, the time has come when I have to leave you.
Is it to send me away that younourished me?
Oh! How can I live away from you,
My brothers and sisters?"

(Thurston, 1975:224)

In spite of all this, the parents finally bless their daughter to do well in the new house and see her off. Other relatives accompany the boy and girl up to the groom's place. This is also a custom and practice among Lingayats and other communities, largely in the context of whom the Lambanis live in Karnataka. With this, the marriage rituals as arranged at the girl's place get over.
3.5.1.13. RECEIVING THE NEWLY MARRIED COUPLE AT THE GROOM’S PLACE (Thangadi Gharema Lero):

The newly wed couple accompanied by their relatives when arrive at the boy’s place are received warmly by the grooms’s family, most importantly by the elderly relatives. Both of them will make an entry into the house by keeping their right leg first. A few other customs are also observed on the occasion to herald the onset of prosperity to the new house and also for the couples to beget a male child within one year of their marriage. The ritual ends up with the girl offering the sticks used for brushing of teeth (dantal) and offering for a bath to the elderly relatives the next morning. Later on the girl prays for the blessings of elders. The same day a non-vegetarian lunch would be offered to all the relatives accompanying the couples (Tangadival) and to other people of the Tanda. This meal is called as ‘gote’. With this the entire marriage ceremony gets completed.

3.6. WIDOWS REMARRIAGE:

Traditionally widow remarriage was forbidden mainly among the Brahmanas and the Vaishyas. The social reform movement lead by Arya Samaj and Brahma Samaj encouraged widow remarriage. Widow marriage is traditionally permitted among many castes and there is no restriction as to the number of times she may remarry. Among some sections, like the Kodavas in south Karnataka and the Lamanis, a widow can marry her deceased husband’s brother.

Widow remarriage is common among Lamanis. The younger brother of the deceased husband is considered the most eligible to marry his brother’s
widow. An elder brother is not allowed to marry her. When a widow marries her husband's younger brother no "Tera" (bride price) is given. But the younger brother has to supply liquor and beetle nuts and leaves to the caste people. The remarried widow has no title to her previous husband's property and her children by him also do not go to his family and inherit his property. If the widow prefers another man and elopes with him, the first husband's relatives claim compensation and threaten to abduct a girl from this man's family in exchange for the widow. The ceremony of the 'Sire Udike' styled 'Ghugari Ghalero' in the lamani language takes place at night before the assembly of the caste men in the presence of Naik which is necessary. The woman is presented with a new cloth and a bride price ('Tera') of fifteen rupees and some bullocks. But now-a-days this type of marriage does not exist in the Lambani society.

3.7. DIVORCE AMONG THE LAMBANIS:

Divorce is very easy among the Lambanis, and may be obtained almost at will. The only condition necessary is the assent of the Naik (head of the Tanda), for which one rupee has to be paid as fees. If the woman is subsequently married in 'Sire Udike' form of marriage to the parmour, the latter has to pay her earlier husband the marriage expenses, and a fine of fifteen to twenty rupees to the caste panchayat in addition to the usual brideprice of fifteen rupees and three bullocks. However, she marries one who was not responsible for the divorce, he would pay only the bride price. It is said that if a woman is pregnant at the time of elopement the child is claimed by the husband and is delivered to him.
When an unmarried woman is seduced, the Naik of the Tanda has the power to subject the seducer to ignominious treatment as of shaving his head on the side and parading him in the street on the back of a donkey. This, however, is out of date, and in its place a heavy fine of one hundred rupees is imposed in addition to a compensation of hundred rupees to the parents and the girl is married to whom in a modified form of marriage, which consists of a couple walking round the two milk posts seven times and eating the common meal. When gone through, such a marriage renders the previous offspring legitimate or his within prohibited degrees of relationship, she is subjected to pay a small fine and is then taken into the caste with her child. She may afterwards be married to anyone else who takes along with the child, without incurring any caste disability.

Adultery on the part of the wife is not a serious fault, if the husband is willing to pardon it. It is said that if a man is convicted and is undergoing imprisonment his wife may live with another man of same caste bearing him children and after release of her husband, she may return to him along with the children of her parmour.

3.8. RELIGIOUS PRACTICES:

Lambani community influenced by the religious and cultural practices of the rest of the communities in the country is found to be embracing the local religious practices and also worshipping the local deities and observing the local festivals. The community is reported to strongly believe in the presence of an eternal power which guides and influences the good and the evil in ones life. Hence, they seem to be not going against the belief in the existence of supernatural power.
Lambanis generally worship the female deities. Mariyamma, Kariyamma, Durgamma, Kankali (Chamundi), Huliyamma (Vagjaie) are some of the female deities worshipped by them. They are also found to be worshipping the Gods like Seva Bhaya, Mithu Bhukia, Balaji (Lord Venkateswara), and other Hindu Gods like Shiva, Vishnu, Rama, Krishna etc.

Lambani Tandas generally have temples of Mariyamma and Seva Bhaya which is called as ‘math’ (place where socio-religious programmes are organised). In front of these temples there are red and white flags fixed. The red flag is for Mariyamma and the white for Seva Bhaya. It is believed that this would prevent the occurrence of diseases like cholera, plague etc.

The other Goddesses worshipped by them are ‘Saati Satti’ and ‘Saati Bhayani’. Saati Satti are 7 sisters and believed to be the wives of seven Rajas. The Lambanis depending on their place of living, worship one of the seven sisters. The following are the details of seven sisters and their Raja husbands:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satti Name</th>
<th>Raja Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hoona Satti</td>
<td>Ram ji Raja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kesi Rani</td>
<td>Kaanaa ji Raja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sita Satti</td>
<td>Dakhu Raja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bheema Satti</td>
<td>Teeta Raja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tola Satti</td>
<td>Madhu Raja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tulaja Satti</td>
<td>Sekha Raja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roopa Satti</td>
<td>Kaanaa Raja</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These female gods are never offered with any animal sacrifices. On the other hand the sweets prepared are offered to them. The vedic chantings called ‘valang’ are recited at the time of worshipping these Goddesses.

The Goddesses Saati Bhavani is also called as Adi-shakthi. These are seven sisters and are worshipped in the form of small pebbles on agricultural lands. These seven Goddesses bhavanis are as follows:

- Tulaja Bhavani
- Seetala Bhavani
- Bojari Matha
- Matarala Bhavani
- Masoora Bhavani
- Vagjai Bhavani
- Ingala Matha

These are called as Shakti deities and they are offered animal sacrifices on selected occasions. It must be noted here that among the Lambanis Saati Bhavani is worshipped as village deity, while Saati Satti is worshipped as a family deity. Saati Bhavani appears to be cruel and similar to the other village deities while it is not so for Saati Satti.

Mithu Bhukia:

Another deity worshipped among the Lambanis is Mithu Bhukia, an old free-booter, who lived in the Central Provinces of India; He is venerated by the dacoits as the most clever dacoit known in the annals of the caste, and a hut was usually set apart for him in each hamlet, a staff carrying a white flag
being planted before it. Before setting out for a dacoity, the men engaged would assemble at the hut of Mithu Bhukia, and burning a lamp before him, ask for an omen; if the wick of the lamp drooped the omen was propitious, and the men present then set out at once on the raid without returning home. They might not speak to each other nor answer if challenged; for if any one spoke, the charm would be broken and the protection of Seva Bhaya, Mithu Bhukia removed; and they should either return to take the omens again or give up that particular dacoity altogether. After a successful dacoity a portion of the spoil would be set apart for Mithu Bhukia, and of the balance the Naik or headman of the village received two shares if he participated in the crime; the man who struck the first blow or did most towards the common object also received two shares, and all the rest one share. (Russel & Hiralal, 1975:177).

**Seva Bhaya:**

*Seva Bhaya* is valued very highly and is worshipped by all the Lambanis. Every *Tanda* will have a math of *Seva Bhaya*. He is said to have taken many “avataras” and is considered to be a “siddi purusha”. The temple at Pouraghad in Maharashtra is considered a place of pilgrimage. This is also believed to be a place where he has attained salvation. Very recently a temple has also been constructed in Sooranakoppa in Honnali Taluk in Shimoga district in Karnataka because this is considered to be a birth place of *Seva Bhaya*. However, there is no unanimity among the scholars on his birth place. The two other places said to be his birth place are as marked out by scholars are Guttivallari near Mangalore and Gutti near Guntakal in Andhra Pradesh.
3.9. ‘LAMBANI’ - DIALECT:

Lambani language belongs to the Indo-Aryan family of languages. The Inner Indo-Aryan languages are derived from Saurseni Prakrit. Rajasthani is one of the languages belonging to this group. Lamabani is supposed to have been derived from old western Rajasthani. It possesses the same syntactic structure throughout India. In the matter of vocabulary, it has borrowed from the local languages many lexical items. There was a mistaken notion that this language is a mixture of Marathi, Gujarathi and Hindi. This view is now set aside and the Lambani is recognised as an independent language. (Barikeri, 1982:7)

Lambani language is called as ‘Ghor Boli’. Lambani, like many other languages in this region, is also the dead language without its own script. The attempts at understanding the evolution of this language have not clearly revealed the influence of any other language on this. However, as they have migrated from the north the Lambani language might have been influenced by the ‘hindi’ language. The dialect is said to be intimately connected with other languages like Marvadi, Malvi etc. More importantly, the use of words from other languages like marathi, gujarathi, kannada, telugu, arabbi and english has made the language rich. Thus, one finds the usage of English equivalent terms relating to Hospital, Rail, College, Radio, Bag etc., in the Lambani language. This is an evidence of the influence of the local language on the Lambani dialect. Such usages could also be seen in respect of terms relating to agriculture. Lambani people across the regions in the country are found to be talking the same dialect. It must be noted that usage of certain words is very much unique to this
language and is not in use in any other Indian official language. For example, *Kanchali* (Blouse), *Tandro* (Men), *Vetadu* (Bridegroom), *Navaleri* (Bride) etc., are the terms which are typical Lambani words.

Thus, while the community continues to retain its dialect, the influence of the local languages on their dialect speaks of the cultural integration of this community into the other cultures and thus, the processes of adaptations followed by the community members.

3.10. DRESS AND ORNAMENTS:

One of the most distinctive and highly visible features of the Lambani community is their dress. This is more so in respect of the dress used by their womenfolk. Till very recently they were continuing to wear their traditional dresses without any exception. No other ethnic community in India follows such a typical dress code like what the Lambanis do.

**WOMEN’S DRESS:**

The dress and ornaments of the females are found to be more attractive than those of the males. The dress worn by the Lambani women is generally red in colour and sometimes it is mixed with yellow, green and other colours. It is mostly a patchwork of different cloth pieces. These dresses are also bedecked with small mirrors and shells and they will be nicely crafted through their craftwork. It is expensive too. Preparing such dresses needs considerable patience. Artistic sense and tradition go in the slow work of preparing the apparels. It is estimated that it takes a minimum of 4-5 months to prepare
a pair of dress. It is interesting to learn about the reasons as to why such a type of dress has been in use among them. It is said that the cloth with mirror work was used to protect them from being attacked by wild animal, when they used to go into jungles or forests for collection of firewood (Khandobha, 1991:62); and to minimize the impact of excess heat on the body. (Sanrama, 1996: 71) The important dress items are Blouse (*Kanchali*), Skirt (*Phetiah*) and Veil or Covering cloth (*Chantia*).

**Blouse (*Kanchali*):**

Breast size piece, belly piece, pieces for arms, three inch wide tape for both sides of the back, ‘*Kanchalis*’ both sides of the breast, *Khavya* in the left arm, tiny pieces of mirrors all over the jacket, bunches of coloured thread, tiny tinkles in chain stitched to the border— that is how the parts of a Lambani jacket can be described. The mirrors, the hanging coloured threads, bunches, coloured motley all these make the jacket look attractive.

**Skirt (*Phetiya*):**

Black cloth half a foot wide and twelve half arm lengths (*Kalochantyar Phero*), a red cloth half foot wide and twelve half arms length (*Rathado Chantyar Phero*) any coloured cloth of one half arm wide and twelve half arms length, lavan of two inches width and twelve half arms length a ‘lepo’ tape, tiny mirrors fixed sparsely embroidered, these constitute the skirt (*phetiya*) as worn by Lambani women.
Veil or Covering Cloth (Chantiya):

It is a red cloth veil of five half arm length on which five square pieces of the same size each with figures of lovers embroidered, two types of two inches width each patta, a heavy outer cover musfer (Ghungatoo) all put together in an artistic design well embroidered - this is how the preparation of veil can be described. The border of the veil and the outer cover are punched with old coins. This is to see that the heavy veil does not fall off the head. The falling of veil before elders puts women to tight comer. When a stranger or a visitor enters the house, no woman speaks to him without her veil. The veil is the symbol of prestige to the Lambani women.

3.10.1. WOMENS ORNAMENTS:

The way how a Lambani woman adorns herself with ornaments, creates a feeling of wonder on the lookers. On either side of cheeks hangs twisted hair of lock, the falling twisted hair gold or silver ‘Ghugari’, Topli, Chotla, Kaddi, Adisankli, chudo - these are the ornaments of Lambani women. Ghugri - Topli, Chotla and Chudo seem to take the place of ‘Mangala-Sutra’. Of late the tradition of tying Mangalasutra has come in vogue among the Lambanis also. An interesting point to be noticed here is only widows are eligible to wear ‘Topli’. The costliest ornament which is worn by a woman is that of the nose ring ‘Bhuriya’. Only recently, ‘Besari’ is being used. ‘Bhuriya’ beautifies the face of Lambani women. ‘Kaniya’ is the ear ring made of metal. It hangs from the ear. A chain of old coins (Rapiyarhara) adorns the neck. The other ornaments adorning the neck are silver loop (Hansli),
a garland of small beads of yellow design skirt and others. The weight of all these some times touches one kilogram. The bangles, adorning the wrists are known as Chudo or Bhuriya. Generally, they wear ivory bangles. Those who can not wear ivory bangles, wear plastic bangles ‘Khosatya’ ties. The ornaments adorning the arm are worn tightly so that they do not fall off the arm. Copper or silver rings adorn the fingers. Widows do not wear chudos. A belt of cowries is worn round the waist. ‘Sadak’ hangs from the waist to the knee. There are other ornaments like round shaped thodas, vankadi, the brass covered ornaments, square shaped ‘kasse’ silver or other metal chains, silver ‘vanchva’ adorning toes, copper ‘chataki’ and brass ‘Angutla’. Apart from these ornaments and dress the Lambani women get their foreheads, arms, cheeks tattooed with figures in beautiful artistic design. Modern Lambani women put on vermilion mark on their forehead like the Hindu women. Thurston points out “... their ornaments are singularly chosen that we have, we are confident seen women who had 8 or 10 pounds weight in metal or ivory round their arms and legs” (1975:218).

3.10.2. MEN’S DRESS AND ORNAMENTS:

There is no uniqueness as regards the dress of the menfolk. It is the same as that of the other caste or community members. Generally the Lambani men wear a red or white cloth turbans, white shirt, white dhoti, silver or gold earlet, silver bangle (Kadaga) for the wrist, silver rings and silver thread surrounding the waist. These mark the dress and apparel of men. A tiny tassel bunch of the ‘banni’ is tied to the black thread surrounding their waist. Lambanis call it Tathodjundi. This distinguishes the Lambani from others.
In south Karnataka, some of the Lambani elder men wear red turbans, white shirt and white dhoti. The educated Lambani young men wear trousers and shirts or slacks. In North Karnataka the traditional dress seems to continue even today. As days passed the modern civilization may render their artistic designed, coloured dresses obsolete.

Perhaps in due course, the Lambanis might have changed their style of ornamental decoration. This is evident from the decoration of the Lambanis of the Karnataka. The peculiar style of Lambanis underwent changes in the southern parts of Karnataka and these can be seen in the Lambanis of Davangere. However, the elderly Lambani women of North Karnataka still follow the original style of decoration.

If the Lambanis follow the modern styles and prefer changes in their decoration, the Lambani decorations and ornaments will in course of time be seen only in the museum.

3.11. FESTIVALS:

The important festivals celebrated by the Lambani community are Deepavali, Holi, Gowri festival (Theej) and Dasara.

CELEBRATION OF DEEPAVALI (Davali):

This is the occasion when all the community members gather together at Tanda to celebrate the festival once a year during November. This is largely celebrated by the female members in the community and more importantly the adolescent girls who are about to get married take active part in the celebration of festival. The important aspects of the festival are performing
Lakshmi Pooja, Making Arathi (Mera), Worshipping the ancestors (Dabukar Dero), Worshipping of Cows and Kalimas (Pooja offered on the black new moon day preceding Deepavali).

On the evening of the Deepavali, as per the Hindu norms, the Lambanis also offer their prayers to Goddess Lakshmi. During the night, the adolescent girls in the Tanda offer arati with the lighted lamp to the family deity, to the elder members in the family and subsequently they visit all the households in the Tanda wishing all members on the occasion. This is called as “Mera”. In their Mera chants they not only recall the ancestors, but also appreciate the elder members of their families for whatever good they have done to the youngsters and perform “Arati”. The members offer a token money as per their capacities as a gesture to these girls. The elders would feel sad if the girls do not get married before the next Deepavali. The elders always wish the young girls of marriageable age get married within one year from the time they participate in the performance of “Mera” during Deepavali.

On the next day, they offer their prayers to the ancestors and thus celebrate Deepavali. They decorate the stoves and prepare “Ghoti-Ghati” [sweet jowar balls] and offer it to the ancestors. They also invoke the blessings of the ancestors to give them good health and prosperity. They also offer fruits, liquor, ‘hoka’ and such other things to the ancestors which they liked when alive. This is called as “Dabukar Dero” (Ancestor Pooja) which is observed with the utmost care and devotion.

As the Lambanis were also keeping cows and buffaloes in the past, as a source for dairy products they continue to worship them on the occasion of the Deepavali like what the agricultural communities do.
The “Kalimas” is another feature of the Deepavali. ‘Kalimas’ means ‘amavasya’ devoted to Kali. On this day the Lambanis offer a common sacrifice and drink and dine together.

HOLI FESTIVAL (Holi Balero):

Holi festival, which is an important festival for the community members, is being observed now only by a few people. This is more a festival of merry making than with any prayers and offerings to any of the God or Goddess. The festival is being celebrated by the youths with the permission of the Tanda headman. An important aspect of the programme is that it is celebrated at the Tanda level with the participation of all. On the day a fire is lit to burn ‘Kamanna’. All the youths gather around and dance to the music chorus. They also sprinkle colours and offer animal sacrifice and the same is distributed to all the households. The special feature is that the birthdays of the boys born on that day are also specially observed on the occasion.

GOWRI FESTIVAL (Theej):

The Theej festival is one of unique festivals observed by the Lambani community. Unlike other festivals the Gowri festival is not being observed every year. It may be celebrated in a frequency of 3 or 5 years only if there is economic prosperity. This is said to be a special festival in Rajasthan. The Lambanis as the people hailing from this place continue to observe the “Theej”. This only helps in the continuation of the
observation of this tradition. The adolescent girls who are about to get married participate and enjoy by singing songs and dancing to the chorus when it is celebrated. These celebrations are expected to last for 10 days.

As a part of the “Theej” festival, the Wheat is soaked in water and put to sprout and grow as plants in bamboo plates specially made for this purpose. On the 10th day it is brought to the temple and offered to the God and distributed among the community members. Finally it is taken in procession for immersion in water either in a river or pond or well. The girls and boys are said to have lot of fun during the whole observations.

DASARA FESTIVAL:

This is one of the important festivals observed by the community during which time special poojas are done for the deities like Seva Bhaya, Mariamma, Meetu Bukhia and Durgamma.

3.12. LAMBANI CULTURE:

Lambani dance and culture have a special place in the culture and the folklore of Karnataka. It must be specially emphasised that singing and dancing is very well blended with the life of the Lambanis. The songs sung by the women members revolves around beauty and experience, and their dances totally absorb the spectators which is perhaps due to style, dress and the ornaments.
The Lambani dances could be broadly classified as those performed by the women and the men. Of the two, the dance performances of the women are more popular. The performances followed by a group of 15 to 20 members who form themselves into a circle which very well resembles a fort. This is said to be symbolic of their unity and strength. The dances are performed during Dipavali, Holi and on such other occasions.

**TATTOO:**

One of the ancient arts still prevalent among the tribals in general and the Lambanis in particular is the ‘tattoo’. Tattoo is the art of decoration on skin made by pricking it with a needle and putting colour into wound. The women are found to have these tattoos generally either on hands or on the chin. That is symbolic of the Lambani women. There is a belief that tattoo will protect them from the dangers (Khandoba, 1991) and it also adds to their beauty and symbol of purity. Thurston who has attempted at studying Lambanis has said that tattoo was more a way of decorating women and no common symbol or sign has been used by the community. (Thurston :1975:192) The pictures are a combination of scorpion, fish, flowers, tiger’s nail and in certain cases the names of people whom they love. Some of the men are also found to have these tattoos on their body.

According to Tavar Niyar, a tourist, the juice of the selected plant’s roots was used in preparing the necessary colours used for tattoo. (Quoted in Khandoba, 1991 : 176)
There are four popular beliefs associated with the usage of tattoo among the Lambanis. They are:

* The food prepared by such females would not get spoiled.
* The picture of insects was used to avoid getting bitten by them.
* As protection from the disease, and
* To protect themselves from the evil eyes.

Tattoo is still in vogue among the Lambanis living in Tandas and villages.

**Embroidery Work:**

The embroidery work with different colour threads and different sizes of needles is a distinct feature of the Lambani embroidery work. In the embroidered clothes the pictures of plants, flowers, animals, birds etc., are drawn. This artwork is generally appreciated by one and all as it looks most designful and as a piece of an art.

The womenfolk among Lambanis generally wear clothes/garments with embroidery work. The preparation for embroidery itself used to last for three to four months. This is one of the reasons why this traditional dress is slowly disappearing among the community members. The mirror and metal pieces were also commonly used in the embroidery work.
Bhajan:

Lambani culture is found to be different from other cultures even in terms of the bhajans and prayers offered to their Gods and Godesses. The important instruments used by them are “Nagari” [a big drum like instrument], the “Thali” (bronze plates) and the “Taala” (Zanj -A concaved bronze plate used against another one to produce a rhythmic sound). Nagari resembles the shape of a cut coconut and skin of the buffalo or the ox is used for getting appropriate sounds. For every temple in the Tanda these musical instruments have been acquired and stored in the temple itself and these are extensively used during singing and story telling sessions which are arranged during festivals and other occasions and also during leisure times. The way the bhajans are arranged, in Lambani dialect, they are called “Vaja Ghaleru”.

The bronze plates used in the musical sessions are given to the bride at the time of the marriage where they consider it having a religious sanctity in the community. Only vegetarian food when served for the guests at home is found to be offered in these plates. The bronze plates are replaced at the temple by buying the new ones by the bridal family.

3.13. BIRTH AND DEATH RITUALS :

BIRTH :

The practices at the time of the birth is nothing unique to the community under study. As in the case of other communities, the community is said to observe the birth of a male child with joy and fervour
and the message is spread to the community through beating the nagari. The occasion is also observed through offering drinks to Naik, Davo, Karbari, and Daosan. Thereafter the naming ceremony and chaula ceremony take place.

DEATH:

The death of any of the community member is believed to be a matter of great distress for the family and as a result all the families in the Tanda offer their help. The Lambanis are believed to have the practice of burning and burying the dead bodies. The pregnant, the unwed and those with skin problems are said to be only buried, not burnt.

The rites carried on the third day is known as “Dado Karero” [Kandya Karero]. In the event of the death occurring on Saturday and Sunday, it is considered inauspicious and hence the rituals are performed on the same day. On the evening of the third day, the leaders of the Tanda and the relatives buy a sheep, butcher it and prepare the food out of this meat for all and consume it together with drinks. This occasion is also called “Had Bhandero”.

The rites observed on the 12th or the 13th day is called “Baro-Tero”. The rites include offering food prepared in the ghee to the dead. They are said to be preparing sweets, but not the non-vegetarian food on the occasion.

The nature of the settlement pattern is said to have influenced their attitudes and practices. As the families were constantly on the move and their meetings with other community members was uncertain, many of the occasions are found to end with deep sorrow. This could be observed on three occasions
viz., bride crying at the time of the marriage [Davalo]; send off to the bride [Haveli] and meeting after a long duration [Malero]. Perhaps what is peculiar as compared to the other communities is that the feelings of distress or sorrow are also expressed through crying. The menfolk join the womenfolks who cry aloud at these times.

3.14. POLITICAL ORGANISATION:

The core political organization of the Tanda consists of the Naik, Davo, Karbhari and Davsan where the “Naik” is “president”, “Davo” is “vice-president”, “Karbhari” is secretary and “Davsan” is the “senior member” of the Tanda.

**Naik (President):** The Naik is chosen by heredity. The Bukya group members are believed to have enjoyed this status. However, this depends on the membership of each of the groups of Bhukya and Jaath in the Tanda. Naik is said to be most experienced, honest, intelligent and with integrity of character. The reason for the choice of such a person is that he will be able to give effective administration to the Tanda and as a result will bring name and fame to the Tanda. Naik is the head of the Tanda and all the affairs have to take place through him. He is said to enjoy a very high status in Tanda. He is largely independently responsible for all the activities of the Tanda.

**Davo (Vice-President):** Davo is the assistant to the Naik and is the second man in command. In the absence of Naik, Davo would discharge all the responsibilities of the Naik. Davo who is also chosen by heredity, is similar to Naik in terms of various characteristic features. In the absence of the legal heirs, the successor would be selected by the community.
Karbhari (Secretary): Karbhari as the secretary of the political organization is the real executive in the Tanda and executes all the instructions of the Naik and Davo. He takes initiative in the over all administration of the Tanda and is also believed to guide and assist the Naik and Davo. The post is generally hereditary.

Davsan (Senior Members): Davsan are the elderly individuals and assist the three key functionaries in the discharge of their functions. They also express their opinions in the judicial matters coming up within the Tanda. The President decides only after hearing the opinions of these senior members. The prevalence of these posts is symbolic of the collective responsibility in the functioning of the Tanda instead of a monarch.

The political organization of the Tanda also has other positions. Dalia gets Karbhari, Davsan and other senior members for the meetings as per the orders of the President. He is also responsible for bringing the culprits. He is said to function more as a servant. The Dhadi is a singer who sings songs with the help of Tamburi [Cello] and is believed to work as a bureau in arranging for the marriage. Navi is mainly the barber and is said to be doing all the odd jobs. Thus, all these three people are said to enjoy a very low status in the community.

3.13.1 Caste Panchayat:

The Caste Panchayat is called the "Gorh Panchayat". From the ancient days, this is said to be responsible for resolving conflicts, violence and any other deviant acts. These issues are said to be strictly maintained within the Tanda. These practices very much reflect on the highly complex systems evolved by this community.
The member or members of the *Tanda* in case of any dispute or difficulties approach the President in the *Tanda*. The complainants pay for the panchayat expenses and get their problems redressed. The panchayats are held either in the ‘math’ (temple) or any other important public place. The women members do not attend these panchayats, thus indicating the patriarchal system that prevailed in the community. The decisions are arrived at after carefully listening to both the parties and the decisions taken by the panchayat are binding on both the parties. The matters dealt with the panchayat are divided into three categories viz., *Nasabha* [method of penalising], *Hasabha* [matters relating to land, property etc.] and *Malavha* [matters relating to internal conflict]. The details of the punishments what caste panchayat can impose for different crimes are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Murderer</th>
<th>Rs.350/- penalty and the expenses of the panchayat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Offences</td>
<td>Rs.60/- penalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thief</td>
<td>Cost of the robbed item and Rs.25/- penalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thief who has robbed sheep</td>
<td>Rs.61/- penalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thief who has robbed hen</td>
<td>The thief has to give back sheep</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexual Offences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- If the victim is a bride a penalty of Rs. 75/- and the panchayat expenses are levied on the offender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- If the victim is married a penalty of Rs.125/- and panchayat expenses are levied on the offender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- If the victim is a widow Rs.150/- penalty and panchayat expenses are levied on the offender</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The penalty amount stipulated above are those that existed in the past. On those occasions wherein the panchayat within the Tanda is not able to decide on the issue, the leaders of the other Tanda are invited specifically for this purpose.

Thus, the Lambani community which is said to have moved from the Northern India is found to have certain distinct features in terms of marriage, culture, beliefs and practices. However, the community has displayed certain common features exhibited by the other native community members like the food prepared on certain religious occasions etc. The community because of migration and other reasons is found to have undergone a process of transition and thus giving rise to lot of changes in their social, political and religious life. The community which in the past had only panchayats at the Tanda is found to have been organising at regional, state and national levels. Thus, there is the "All India Banjara Seva Sangha" which will perhaps go a long way in protecting the interest of the community. In the process of consolidation the Sangha is organizing a number of meetings and conferences to display their strength and unity. The objective of the present study is also to understand these changes in the urban area where they have migrated. These changes have been dealt elaborately in the next chapter.