

Chapter - IV

Modernity Vs. Tradition of the Lambadas.

4.0. Introduction:

This chapter will discuss the issue of modernity vs. tradition in the Lambada community, with particular focus of the influence of modernity on the traditional Folk culture, customs, belief system, dress, food habits, occupation, culture and language of this ethnic community.

Any analysis of the transformations taking place would be incomplete without speaking about westernisation, which has left a deep impact on the social milieu in several countries, including India. It may be recalled that the colonial powers sought to justify their occupation of countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America that they were civilizing the savages. Westernisation entailed issues like imposing the norms, values, cultures, religion (mostly Christianity), attire, etc., of the west on the people of the lands occupied by the colonial powers. For a long time, the impact of westernisation was felt only in urban areas.

It is not that westernisation has been totally dysfunctional. After all, it has also brought about phenomenal improvements in the means of communication and transportation, literacy rates, healthcare and introduced institutions like a free press and a democratic system of governance. Westernisation had also given a major boost to the various social reform movements in the country. Who can forget the role of the British in almost totally abolishing the obnoxious practice of widows being forced to immolate themselves on the

funeral pyres of their husbands? Westernisation has also helped in the development of progressive values like humanism, egalitarianism and secularism.

Today, it is more fashionable to talk about modernisation. It may not be totally wrong to posit that westernisation owed its power and influence to foreign powers. However, the modernisation that we are noticing today, even in the remotest corners of our country, is largely due to our indigenous political, social and economic forces. Two, as already mentioned, westernisation had generally left its imprint only in urban centers. On the other hand, symbols of modernisation, like cell phones, two wheelers, fast food, TVs, western modes of dresses and the IT revolution, can be found even in areas considered to be inaccessible. It may be pertinent to recall what Mr. George Fernandez, a former union minister had said, way back in 1977, “Even in places where no drinking water is available, one could be sure to find Coca Cola.” It may not be totally incorrect to state that modernisation has helped in triggering a social revolution of sorts and increased the access of people belonging to the backward classes to education and the political process.

- **“Social Mobilisation** – the process by which the old public, economic and emotional elements have changed and new social values of human behaviour are set up.”
- **“Social Differentiation.** Here, there is an increase in the complexity in social, political and economic activities and a development in the activities of human in various fields. Industrialisation and the administrative complexity in the centre and local bodies in the political sphere are due to modernization. To

modernization, new trends in philosophy, religion, science and literature become visible”.

4.1. Change in the Organisational and Status System.

“A feature of the modern society is the emergence of a number of specialised organisations, division of labour. At the same time, organisations based on close kinship lose their importance”.

- “Social and Political Movements. New social and political movements which aim at transforming society in order to make man adjust to the fast changing conditions. These movements also aim at casting off orthodoxy and paving the ground for the change to modernity even in areas inhabited by the tribes.”

As regards India, S.S. Chandra and R.K. Sharma have made a very valid point, “It is important to mention that India is following the West in matters like dress, life style, town planning, etc. There is more of westernisation in the technical and systematic spheres than in the social spheres. “It is important to mention that India is subsequent the people are still sticking to the scholarly values of casteism, communalism and parochialism” (Sharma R.K., p. 211-225).

Modernisation can lead to greater awareness about the legitimate rights and become more responsible players in the democratic process. Increased literacy rates can help one from being exploited by persons like contractors and money lenders. It can also help one to know about issues like good sanitary practices (including the importance of domestic toilets) and inoculation of children from diseases like Polio. Greater literacy can help

people access facilities like education, healthcare, PDS. Today, schemes like the MGNREGA are not fully meeting their intended objectives, since many genuine potential beneficiaries are not aware about these. Also, many of them appear to be over-awed by the procedures involved in these. The concerned agencies should, besides providing facilities, also disseminate information about these to the intended beneficiaries in a manner that is understandable and convincing.

Any discussion on modernisation would be incomplete without discussing the role of social institutions. According to M Weber (Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology (1978), University of California Press, Berkeley, p 58), such institutions “regulate the performance of persons in core areas of society: (a) family and relationship networks carry out socialisation; (b) institutions in the territory of education and training ensure the transmission and cultivation of knowledge, abilities and specialised skills; (c) institutions in the labour market and the economy provide for the production and distributions of goods and services; (d) institutions in the dominion of law, governance and politics provide for the maintenance of the social order, (e) while cultural, media and religious institutions further the development of contexts of meaning, value orientations and symbolic codes.”

Despite its positive contributions (like providing better healthcare, and creating greater awareness), modernisation has triggered the ‘felt need’ for items which are not actually required. These include: drugs, alcohol and tobacco. Modernisation has also led to greater materialism and the craze to earn money by all possible means. To paraphrase some lines from Oliver Goldsmith’s “*The Deserted Village*”, earlier it was possible to describe a rural youth as:

*“His best companions, innocence and health,
His best riches, ignorance of wealth!”*

It has been rightly said, “Educate a male and you will be educating only one person. Educate a female and you will be educating her entire family.” To continue this discussion further those Lambadas (or other Dalits) who have been fortunate to achieve a degree of socio-economic development, should not keep the ‘fruits’ to themselves. They should play the role of social entrepreneurs and spread their knowledge, etc., with their less fortunate community members. They should never forget their roots. A person, born to, say, agricultural labourers, who is able to achieve a high degree of upward social and economic mobility, should not start hating his parents for being old-fashioned, or lacking the graces of high society. He should always remember that it was their sacrifices that empowered him to reach his present status. In this context, it would be appropriate to recall the inscription at the World War II Memorial at Kohima, in Nagaland: “For your tomorrow, we gave our today!”

In this context, one may recall a tale of a person, hailing from a low background, who, by dint of his dedication and merit, became an important minister of a king. He would give very wise opinions to the ruler. The other courtiers, who became envious of this minister, spread the canard that this person was of a loose character and every night he was staying in a hut on the outskirts of the town. At first, the king refused to believe such idle talk. However, one evening, he decided to shadow the minister. The moment the ‘quarry’ entered the hut, the king too burst in and yelled, “Are you not embarrassed at what you are doing?”

The Minister coolly replied, “Your Majesty! I am not doing anything disgraceful. The truth is that I was born in this hut. Every night I come here to remind myself that if I do wrong things, I could return here!”

A slightly different tale concerns a village boy, who because of his brilliance, secured admission in a prestigious university in the United States. Five years later, he returned home and started speaking only in English. His father started wailing, “In five years, he has forgotten the Telugu which he learnt in 20 years. I am worried that he would soon forget the English, which he has learnt in only five years.”

The moral of both tales is that one should not become dismissive about one’s cultural origins.

4.2. Role of NGOs in Tribal Development:

It is being largely recognised that after the adoption of the LPG (Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation) model for economic development, the government is tending to invite the greater involvement of other players in its development programmes. NGOs have now emerged as important change and development agents. Some of the core developmental activities listed by(Alex Ekka, in his paper)

- **“Relief Work.** In the event of natural calamities like earthquakes, droughts, floods, epidemics, or human tragedies like communal riots and industrial accidents, humanitarian aid like food, clothing, shelter and medicines are provided to the victims by these NGOs.

- “**Charity Work.** This includes looking after the aged, infirm, sick and abandoned, or orphaned, children. Hospitals, health clinics, Sishu Bhavans, homes for the aged and orphanages are examples of the work of charity of the NGOs.
- “**Welfare Work.** This includes taking care of delinquents, or street children, and providing scholarships to the weaker sections
- “**Development Work.** This could include providing education, healthcare, agricultural extension, self-employment.
- “**Social Activism.** Working for ensuring justice, equality and human self-respect for the poor, subjugated, oppressed and marginalised sections of society.”

A very notable contribution of many NGOs has been their role in the formation of SHGs (Self-Help Groups). A remarkable feature of most of these is that their members are mostly women. Even more commendable is the fact that the SHGs provide micro-finance (at very low rates of interest) to the members. Two very significant achievements of these SHGs are:

- (a) Many women have been able to establish, or consolidate, their own self-employment ventures.
- (b) The loan repayment performance of the members has been generally exemplary.

Contrast this with some of our major commercial banks, which are facing issues like ‘non-performing assets’ and a large number of customers defaulting in loan repayments. Who can forget the case of a very famous Indian businessman (Dr. Vijay Mallya) who has since moved to another country and our Enforcement Directorate almost ‘powerless’ to recover the huge amounts that this person owes to our nationalised banks?

All this discussion leads one to the conclusion that westernisation and modernisation have radically transformed the social fabric (both positively and negatively) in many parts of India. Let us now explore the changes brought about in the study area. An attempt will be made whether these communities have created cultural imbalance on the culture and traditions of the Lambadas (Banjaras) and led to a cultural crisis in their community (Dr. Surya Dhanavat, Study, p,2).

4.3. Modernity Impact on Folk Tradition

Change in the Dance Forms

A very remarkable aspect of the Lambadas has been their native dance forms. These dances depict their enthusiasm, exuberance and spontaneity on joyous occasions like weddings and festivals. The dance movements, motions of the body, etc., convey particular meanings about their values and traditions. One can also discern a sense of pride in their cultural ethos. Age appears to be no bar and the participants, who may even be in the 50 to 70 years age group. Such persons show their confidence in their dance movements and directions of their body parts. The musical instruments, like Tabla, Dhol, peelu, janjar and tuglaq, used for the traditional dances, are mostly of local origin.

The same cannot be said about the younger generation, who seem to be more inclined towards pre-recorded music. Also, the modern ways of dancing are faster, mixed with different movements compared to traditional ways of performing at the same time, there is greater use of digital musical instruments, due to the wider exposure of the younger participants to western culture. In short, it may be concluded that, due to lack of proper

guidance to the younger generation, the dances in the community are not fully conveying the ethnic Lambada values. Instead, these are degenerating into a means for enjoyment and a mere formality.

Migration

This is a major issue confronting large sections of the rural poor, including the Lambadas. The depleting sources of traditional employment, including forests, and almost unremunerative and unpredictable nature of income from agricultural income is leading to the distress migration of such persons to other areas in search of livelihood options. No wonder, Lambada settlements have sprung up all over the country. Due to their living in an alien culture, the Lambadas are not able to fully practice their culture, which was possible when they were living in their traditional Thandas. Also, they are now being exposed to different life styles.

With this, It is the risk of people forgetting their original roots and looking at their own culture and traditions with contempt.

Impact on clothes



The original dress of Banjara ladies dress includes: 'Phetya' (skirt), 'Kanchali' (blouse) is opened for four centimeters back in order to free flow of air, because nomadic tribe who migrated from Rajasthan and Gujarat were living in very hot areas of north part of the country and they adopted this system (as mentioned by Santhosh, a research scholar) and 'Tukri' (mantle). This is topped with ornaments made of silver, brass, some gold, cowries (snail shells). "Phetya is a skirt made of red, black and white cotton cloth, with patches of silk cloth, embellished with pieces of mirrored glass embroidered on it. The borders are embroidered in mustard and green thread. They use mostly red, yellow and green colored cotton cloth or rarely silk cloth, colored woolen and cotton threads, small mirrors, mercury, laaldi (lac beads), cowries (snail shells) and coins for carving the designs and decorating the dress with needle work. It is long enough to cover the legs up to ankles and right side of the waist, adjacent to the right thigh, there is one a hanging called 'Ghero' ornamented with cowries and beads which hang up to knees. Kachali is with a gap of 4 cm open back and typically made of cotton material. It is rich in embroidery work and generally red in colour, which is tied at the back with flat strips attached to both the ends. It is well suited for the hot climate. It is made in multiple pieces with the intention that it would be easily modified.

The cloth which covers their open back and head is known as 'Tukri'. It is also generally red in colour and is two and half to three yards long. It is also with rich embroidery and one end of which is tucked at the waist (patli) and the other end is thrown on the left side over the shoulders and on the head.

The uniqueness of the Banjara embroidery is that it is a fine needle work using variety of techniques. They do not make any seasonal changes in their dressing pattern but normally

embroider the images of flowers called as 'phoonda' on their dress. The patch work will have regional significance. The specific stitch designs are called ghero laman, jodero teko, bakya, baratkam, and sasyaar dant and und jali. There are so many stitch designs for which they have a specific name and most of the stitching patterns reflect the flowers, plants, animals and birds”(Surya Dhanavath,Study, p 2).

The traditional dress of the Lambadas is correlated with their culture, history and unique identity. Despite the strong onslaught of the forces of modernisation, even the 'modernised' Lambadas take pride in wearing their traditional attire on special occasions, including the festivals. This helps in projecting their traditional culture, heritage and identity.

In Devarkonda, there is a special market, known as Rangree Bazar, where items like ornaments, beads, mirrors, silver coins, etc., which are essential components of the traditional Lambada dress, can be bought. However, due to rapid changes in the tastes of people, as also the high cost of ornaments and jewellery, the market is losing its allure. Equally badly hit have been the goldsmiths who used to make Lambada ornaments such as Ghugari,Topali, rings, necklace chains, etc. One such craftsman, Kishan, informed the researcher that the saree has brought about many changes in the life of the Lambadas. This is leading to a huge loss of work for such persons.

It may not be totally wrong to surmise that the traditional Lambada dresses are tending to become mere show pieces, only to be displayed on special occasions. The allure of modern dresses has impacted the Lambadas, especially the youth in a big way. There is also the strong perception that the traditional dress and the ornaments are heavy, costly

and inconvenient to wear. At the same time, many youth feel embarrassed to wear their traditional dresses since this would help others identify their community and look down upon them. No wonder, there is an increase craze for adopting outfits, like Sari, kurta pyajama, jeans and t-shirts worn by the mainstream persons.

During the researcher's field visit, a Lambada youth, Ramavath Narender Naik, told her, "The younger generation is aware about the traditional culture. Today, we find that most of them give importance to wearing the traditional dress and ornaments on the occasion of festivals like Sevalal Jayanti and ghare-ghare re puja."

4.4. Impact on the social Institution

The joint family system has been the norm for most Lambadas. The concept of a small family has not taken root to the desired level among the Lambadas. The joint family system has been popular since that meant division of labour – the elders could look after the household and the children when the others went out for work. These implied a degree of respect for the elders in the family.

However, as in many other societies, nuclear families are increasingly supplanting joint families. The possible reasons for this phenomenon are: migration and urbanisation. Other reasons could be quarrels, especially among the women folk, mostly regarding sharing of agricultural work.

Impact on the Dowry system

A very dysfunctional impact of the process of modernisation has been on the marriage system of the Lambadas. From the earlier practice of paying a bride price, now the bridegrooms are demanding huge amounts of money as dowry. Very negative fallout of

this shift has been the high incidence in cases of female infanticide to avoid paying huge dowry amounts in the future. Just as in more 'modern' communities, there are increasing instances of domestic violence in the Lambada community due to 'insufficient dowry'. The researcher also learnt about some parents selling off their girl children to avoid paying dowry in the future (Gita Ramaswamy and Bhangya, article).

4.5. Increasing Trend towards Materialism

In the past, many Lambadas were salt traders and food gatherers who lived in the plain areas near the forests. They constructed their huts with forest wood and grass. But now, as a part of the schemes for improving the living conditions of the tribals, a large number of them have been rehabilitated under the house construction schemes of the central and state governments. Most of these houses are electrified and have modern amenities like T.V. radio and telephone. However, a few Lambadas still live in their traditional huts and houses. Destruction of forests has affected their traditional home construction patterns. Their traditional household articles are being replaced by steel, aluminum, and bronze, plastic, and fiber materials. In the past, earthen pots and bamboo were used for storing and cooking food. But today, earthen pots are hardly used. The market economy and consumerism have changed their life.

An increasing number of Lambadas are wearing stylish footwear when they go out. They are buying their dresses from the market. Many tribal women now use cosmetics, soaps and shampoos due to their contact with persons in urban centres. In the past, women used ornaments like bangles, earrings, finger rings, necklaces and nose rings and their men use to wear Kada,(bracelet) Kandhoru (waist belt), made of silver. Now traditional ornaments are used mostly by old women. The ornaments of the new

generation include bangles, ear-rings, finger rings, necklaces and nose rings of gold, silver, glass and jade which are brought from the towns and cities. This change is mainly due to the influence of market economy and lack of knowledge of the new generation about the technology of making the traditional cultural outfits.

Impact on food habits

The traditional food pattern of the Lambada tribe has also changed a lot. The modern food items have overpowered the indigenous food articles. Earlier, their staple food consisted of Jawar Roti, Bajra, Daliya and Mutton (boti). Saloi, prepared from the various body parts of the goat (including the blood) was a popular non-vegetarian food item of the Lambadas.

However, these days they prefer rice as their staple food. The change in the food habit of Lambada tribe from natural rich protein to a less nutritious one has reduced their resistance power and made them vulnerable to many diseases. They also become unaware of the traditional medicinal practices due to large scale dependency on modern English medicines. Consumption of tobacco products like cigarettes and ghutka has almost become the norm in many Lambada families.

4.6. Change in economy:

The Lambadas are facing the brunt of the cash economy. This type of economy has been largely triggered by the activities of the Girijan Co-operative Marketing Society, an organisation set up by the Government for the benefit of the tribals. The Society pays the tribals in cash for the forest products sold. With this cash, the tribals buy grain for their daily consumption. Urban commodities available in the markets have improved the life

style and these led to the greater demand for cash and putting pressure on the forest resource system, which has been badly hit by the large scale deforestation. Due to the frequent contact with the market and the non-tribals, their dependence on the forests has changed. In the past, tribal economy was mainly based on agriculture and the forests.

Due to the unauthorised alienation of tribal land and deprivation of tribal forestry rights, entry in to the market economy etc., the tribal economy has been seriously affected. The large-scale entry of non-tribal peasants and subsequent pressure over land has led to a complete transformation in the tribal economy. The tribal mode of production got even more impoverished and the shifting cultivation almost disappeared. At the same time, they are not aware of the modern agricultural practices. Roads and modern communication facilities also favoured the penetration of market economy. Their old exchange system, the barter system, has completely disappeared and Girijan Cooperative society acts as an agent of exchange through the market economy in the tribal areas.

Due to the decline in the salt trading business, most Lambadas now depend on agriculture land, cattle grazing and collection of forest produce and selling this in the market. A pastoral society relies more upon animal wealth than on agriculture production.

Increased contact with non-tribals and the intensification of economic dependence on outsiders are undoubtedly leading to an erosion of the cohesion of the tribal communities. The dominance of non-tribal settlers has virtually destroyed the self-sufficiency and freedom of action of the tribals in their habitats and they no longer constitute a cohesive social entity. Now and then, they visit some weekly markets and exchange centres for selling the forest produces and buying commodities such as salt, oil, rice, beetle, beedi,

alcohol, etc. Gradually they have, to some extent, been sucked into the money economy. Cash earnings also enable them to adopt some of the customs of the non-tribal people. This economic change of traditional community economy is the basic factor that promotes cultural changes among the Lambadas of the state. In this way, we can describe this phenomenon as 'the process of disappearance of culture'.

SOCIAL MILIEU

The social structure of the Lambadas is also changing. A community is composed of a number of component parts integrated in it in a particular manner. Each set of components is usually based on particular principle and serves a particular need of the society. The culture of a tribe has a steel frame over which the cultural traits adhere and produce its distinctive character. This steel-frame of a social structure is the rock-basis of the tribal culture. Whenever its framework is weakened or destroyed by external or internal forces, the social structure of the tribes will be disintegrated.

The Lambada community in the past strictly followed social customs and traditions. But today, it is seen in a state of confusion and change. The Lambada tribe is divided into a number of clans or gotras, each of which is again sub divided into a number of families. The principle that integrates the different members of each of these groups is blood relationship. All the members of a clan trace their descent from a common ancestor family, which is one of the basic principles of tribalism. They believe in the blood relationship which is the base of the family and which regulates marriage and sexual relations among the Lambadas. . The influence of modern culture is affecting the system

of blood relationship and the clan system. In marriage customs, some changes have taken place due to the influence of the mainstream community.

Till very recently, the Lambadas were strict followers of endogamy. Due to the paucity of females, they had no choice in mate selection within their socially acceptable kin group. The aged people among these groups are complaining that the selection of life partner from outside is breaking the clan ties and regulations. The meager demographic profile of the tribal communities limits the scope of the mate selection within the clannish groups. Among these communities, multilateral cross-cousin marriages are preferred to such alliances with any other kin relations. Hamlet exogamy is rarely observed.

In the past, marriage by capture usually occurred without previous agreement and nowadays the capture of the bride is frequently staged as a mere formality, so as to avoid the expense of the wedding ceremonies. This change has occurred due to the increase of the self identity or tribal women. The present market economy enables tribal women to earn some amount by selling forest products and they become independent and more self-reliant.

4.7. Impact of Statutory Panchayats on the traditional system of self governance of the Lambadas

For a long time, the Lambadas had been following their own system of self governance through their traditional panchayats, comprising of the Naik, Karbhari, and Dhaddi, Bhatts and Navi and a few experienced elders. Such institutions had been able to exercise social control over the respective Thandas. The Naik is treated with respect by the entire community. His jurisdiction goes beyond maintaining law and order. He is an

important invitee in all social functions like weddings in the community. One of his strengths is that he knows all the persons in the Thanda and the problems being faced by them. The people of the community respect him for his qualities of honesty, truthfulness, integrity and valour. Such Panchayats have been very effectively settling disputes related to issues like adultery, elopement, divorce and theft.

The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments were conceived with the noble ideals of introducing democracy to the grassroots. Despite its very laudable objectives, the statutory panchayats have not been very effective. (Dr. Banoth Lal, in his paper, Vol. 3.) has mentioned the following reasons for the decline in the influence of the traditional Panchayat institutions: “Frequent interference by the non-Lambada leaders in the deliberations of the Panchayat.

- In dispute settlement with Lambadas of the Thanda, the caste leaders take the lead in solving disputes and most of the Lambadas visit the caste leaders, instead of approaching the traditional Panchayat. Hence the traditional Naiks have become nominal.
- Due to the increased individualistic attitude and manifested factionalism, the people have started defying the judgment given by the Panchayat.”

Dr Lal has also stated that while the Naik draws his authority from the moral sanction conferred on him by the community, the Sarpanch owes his authority to the legal sanction provided by the state. Also, due to the spread of literacy, the traditional leadership has lost the respect it commanded earlier. At the same time, the government officials visiting the Thandas feel more comfortable interacting with the educated youth, than the

community elders. “The introduction of Panchayat Raj System has brought many changes in the traditional structure of the Banjaras and their political participation has enormously increased. This system has affected existing social system of Banjaras, which was hitherto free from this kind of socio-political institutionalization. This also gave a new dimension to socio-political development of the. The Lambada the emergency of Panchayat Raj created a new political consciousness and caused the emergence of new leadership styles “(Dr. Banoth Lal, Vol. 3,)

4.8. Modern impact on Lambada language.

Lambada community is settled in all the states of the country from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. Presently, they are found interacting in concerned regional languages. They are interacting in Hindi in Delhi, Rajasthan, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. In Telangana, Andhra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra they are using Kannada, Telugu, Marathi and Tamil respectively for day-to-day interaction. The majority of the children, where these communities are existing, are getting education in the medium of regional languages. Still domestically, every Lambada family in India and western countries is using their ‘Lambada Language’ even today. This is the only language that ties them together irrespective of their regional settlements.

“Lambada language is the mother-tongue of the Lambada community and one of the main languages of the downtrodden groups in India. Many scholars have already confirmed that this language belongs to Indo-Aryan language group. Approximately, about three crore people speak the Lambada language in India. Considerable numbers of people speaking this language are living in western countries too. It is unfortunate that a

language with such a large group of native speakers at present has to struggle for its very existence” (Conference at Nagpur)

Even though Lambada Language or ‘Gaur Boli’ is facing the onslaught of other languages, it has retained the original form and nature that it had centuries ago. This language possesses an enormous amount of oral literature. This language, dating back to at least the beginning of current era, is enriched with the heritage experience of countless generations. It is laudable that a trading community like that of Lambada has enriched its language by moving to different parts of India and absorbing the good features of different languages of this country. Lambada language has incorporated words from different languages like Kannada, Telugu, Rajasthani, Marathi, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, etc., according to its need. As a result, rich oral literature could develop in Lambada language (Banjara Boli) various forms of literature like folk tales, folk songs, narrative poems, smaller epics, riddles, naming riddles, Sawal-jawab, etc., are enshrined in Lambada language. Experience of centuries is embedded in this language, as it openly received many vocabulary items from different languages. The thoughts of Lambada community over the centuries are documented in Lambada language in oral tradition.

Dr. Bholanath Tiwari has clarified on Linguistics that “Gypsy is a language used by the nomads which is also Habondi, Romani, Banjara and Banjari. Gypsy language originally belongs to the Indian family of languages. In the 5th century B.C., the ancestors of the Banjaras or gypsies speaking people spread to different lands. Some of the community members went to various provinces of India. Thus their language is connected with the Prakrit language”. (Bholnath Tiwari, 76)

In the Census Report of Telangana, conducted in 1961, it was noted that Lambani, Lambadi and Sugali are the people of the same community and the language (Banjari) spoken by them is also similar.

The Banjaras have accepted local languages, besides their own dialects, as mother-tongue. It proves that they are polyglots. Many words of almost all the dialects and languages wherever they settled are found in this language and they use those words as their own. This language is a symbol of composite culture and is essential for natural unity.

SCRIPT

At present, there is no script for Lambada language. Lambada writers have written and published books by using the script of local languages. Thus, the Lambada writers have been deprived of the advantages of a common script. In the absence of a common script, development of Lambada language has suffered a setback. Without a script of its own, the Lambada language is at a risk of falling into oblivion.

The Lambada tradition has been one of the torch-bearers of Indian culture and tradition for over two millennia. This tradition continues to be evergreen and vibrant in different regions of India. Lambada culture and tradition has survived the onslaught of time, modernisation and westernisation. It is the folklore through dance and music that has inspired them. Folk songs are indeed a boon for them to get over with their worries, problems and difficulties. The folklore has been the bearer of the Lambada culture and tradition. Therefore, the need of the hour is to collect, compile, edit and publish and preserve the invaluable folklore.

In the two Telugu-speaking states, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, the Lambadas are forced to speak in Telugu language so that they could have a better interaction with the others. Almost invariably, the medium of instruction in schools is either Telugu or English. Thus, there is the risk of their forgetting their 'Goar Boli'. If this happens, the Lambadas may lose their linguistic identity as well (**Dr. Surya Dhanavath, p. 4**).

Tribal Social and Economic System

In short, modernization has brought about a lot of changes, both positive and dysfunctional, in many ethnic communities, including the Lambadas. It is an established fact that change is the order of life and that one must 'move with the times'. True, but then, would it be prudent to fully jettison our tradition values, native wisdom (acquired due to thousands of years of experience of our ancestors) and customs and blindly acquire practices which are not fully suited to our social milieu.

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