

Chapter - I

Introduction

In India, tribal culture has to be understood in terms of its uniqueness. Warm hospitality, simple ways of living, and a high degree of respect for the elders and consideration for women are some of the traits that mark the tribal culture of India. “Their culture is a depiction of their belief in leading simple lives. Most of the Adivasi groups in India have their own gods and goddesses that reveal their close linkages with nature. Most of the tribes in India are friendly, outgoing, fun loving and are very close-knit units. Some of the tribes are patriarchal in nature, while others are matriarchal.”(D.C.Nanjundar, p, 29)

India is lands of rich cultural diversity, with people of different races, religious beliefs, languages, etc., living in almost total harmony. One can find tribals or aboriginals in almost all parts of India. The present overall tribal population of India is approximately 20 million. “Tribals constitute nearly 8.0% of the total population of India” (2011 Census). Each tribal group is a distinct community which either migrated from another place, or has been the original residents of the land. A unique feature common to all tribals is the manner in which they live in harmony with nature. Their living style brings out that they are constantly striving to maintain the ecological balance in the areas in which they live.

The tribal people are fiercely protective of their identity, despite the external influences that are impacting their way of life, both positively and negatively. For instance, Christianity has metamorphosed the tribal standard of living and attitude, in many of the North Eastern states of India.

‘A Religion is an organised assemblage of beliefs, cultural system and world views to an order of survival.’ Most religions have their own sacred books, narratives and symbols. The sacred books explain about their customs, traditions, culture and belief systems, etc. According to Taylor, Religion is a belief in supernatural beings and is common to most human societies. However, the manifestations can vary. There are certain elements of religion, such as myths, sacrifices, rites-de-passage and symbols, which can be found in most religions. Thus, the essential form of religion is “an organisation of tradition, beliefs, rituals and icons, which can vary from one belief to another” (J.J. Roy Burmon, p 6).

1.1 Definition of Tribe

“The English word Tribe, which has been derived from the Latin word ‘Tribus,’ stands for a certain type of familiar and supporting organisations, which are living in all these societies” (Ekka. p, 1). The term ‘tribe’ has been distinct in a number of conducts. “A Tribe identifies the people who live in a primitive stage or barbarous conditions under the authority of a headman or chief” (Chaudhuri.B.113-140). “Scheduled Tribes, or *Adivasis*, are the original inhabitants of the land” (Edgar Thurston, Vol, No, IV). According to Lucy Mair, a tribe is “an independent political division of a population with a common and distinctive culture”. According to Article 342 of the Constitution of India, Scheduled Tribes are: “the aboriginal tribal communities or groups living within the tribes, and these communities which have been confirmed as such by the President of India, through a public notification” (Sharma .S.P and Sharma, J.B., p 89).

D N Majumdar has given a very comprehensive definition of the term ‘tribe’: “A tribe is a collective group with territorial connection, endogamous, with no specialisation of

functions, ruled by tribal officers, hereditary or otherwise, united in language or dialect recognising communal distance with other tribes or castes, without any communal responsibility attached to them, as it does in the caste formation, following tribal ethnicity, beliefs and customs, intolerant of naturalisation of ideas from unfamiliar sources and, above all, a awareness of homogeneity of cultural and defensive integration” (D.N Majumdar, p 48).

The Constitution of India has taken cognisance of the fact that tribes constitute an integral element of the social fabric of the country. It has also recognised those Adivasi or ethnic groups have been subjected to centuries of discriminations and need to be rightfully empowered so that they are on the same level playing field as persons of the mainstream communities. It has, therefore, incorporated several safeguards for persons belonging to what has been termed as Scheduled Tribes.

According to J Dreze and A Sen, “Scheduled Tribe groups have habitually lived in the more remote areas of the country and in closer proximity to forests and natural resources. The isolated and difficult environmental topography occupied by Scheduled Tribes has made it rather difficult for the mainstream of Indian society to access them. This has provided them a measure of cultural self-rule and economic freedom” (Dreze J & Sen A, p, 67). F. Paulo has carried this argument further, by positing, “Traditional Scheduled Tribe communities value their close alliance to nature and make best possible use of the natural resource-base for their daily sustenance However, modernisation and accumulative processes of production have resulted in massive encroachments into their natural habitats. This has, in turn, resulted in their displacement, poverty and heightened levels of exploitation through a system of bonded labour. The term ‘double disadvantage’

has been used to differentiate the socio-economic and spatial marginalisation of Scheduled Tribes in India” (Paulo F,p 48)

One common characteristic of all tribes is the belief in animism. The tribal religious belief system includes a natural way of worship, which give a lot of importance to animals, plants, trees, ponds, rivers, stones, hill, mountains, etc., which are all regarded as abodes of the spirits. And they believe in their dead as their soul exists after they die and sometimes they feel that their dead are reborn in the shape of offspring (L.P. Vidyarthi, p 239). The tribal religions have many common features, but slightly differ in their language, dress, food habits, etc.

1.2. Tribes of Telangana

There are 35 recognised tribes all over the state. Tribals account for 7 percent of the total population of the state and 5.7 percent of the national population of Scheduled Tribes (Census of India, 2011). “The major tribes living in the state are: Lambadi or Banjara, Chenchu, Gond, Jatapu, Gadaba, Kammara, Kolams, Konda Dora, Konda Reddy, Konda Kapu, Khond, Kotia, Koya, Konda Khammara, Kotia, Mali, Manne Dora, Nayak, Pardhan, Paroja, Savara, Valmiki, Yanadi and Yerukala. Some of the tribes, like Bodo, Gadaba, Gutob Gadaba, Bondo Poraja, Khond Poraja, Pringi Paroja, Chenchu, Dongaria Khonds, Kuttiya Khonds, Kolams, Konda Reddys, Konda Savaras and Thotis, have been recognised as Primitive Tribal Groups (PTG)” (Reddy M, Gopinath & K. Anil Kumar.p.9)

The tribes in Telangana are mostly found in hilly tract areas of Adilabad, Khammam, Warangal, Nalgonda, Mehboob Nagar and Medak etc. Among all the tribes in Telangana

state, the Lambadas are a non-Telugu speaking tribe. They have their own language, culture, tradition, customs and belief systems, etc.

All the tribes found in Telangana are marked for their unique and distinguishing cultures. They have their own living styles, beliefs, festivals, dances and folk customs. But one thing which is universal in all the tribal groups is that their cultures demonstrate a lot of authority, pleasure, liveliness and eagerness. Their festivals are exclusively marked for their generosity and a strong bond of love for each other.

1.3. Historical life of Lambada

The Lambadas occupy a prominent place among the Scheduled Tribes of India. According to folklore, the nomadic originally hailed from the North western part of India. In course of time, the Lambadas migrated to various parts of the country, in search of livelihood. They are known as the “aboriginals of Rajasthan.”(Baliram Heeraman Patil, p, 04). Those Lambadas who transport grains on the backs of animals from one place to another are known as “Gauras.” This activity is called “Ladeni Ladno” in Lambada parlance. Some Lambadas have been maintaining livestock. According to Russell and Hiralal, “The aboriginals of Rajasthan, known as “Gors” or “Charans,” got distinction in medieval India as the community of Banjaras. There were also the sections of the people amongst Banjaras who earned their livelihood in the form of artisans, skilled ones and livestock bearers; however, they prominently emerged on the scenario as “skilled grain carriers”. They were the people, by and large, responsible for carrying grains to different places in the country (Russel and Hiralal, Vol 1). Baliram Patil has brought out another

dimension about the Lambadas, who “used to bring grains from Nepal, Tibet, Myanmar, China, Iran and Kabul and supplied that to the affected areas during famine.”

Around 400 BC, Lambadas used to live in small tents and provide their oxen on hire for the transportation of provisions, even to remote areas. Even though the Lambadas are an organised community in a number of ways, most of them do not own houses of their own. Also, they do not have any written history. Name of king Bhoja is very popular amongst the Lambadas and most of their proverbs make a mention of this king. “Thus, one might have moved out through the era of King Bhoja was in 400 B.C” (Dr. Ramesh, p 08). In this way, the beginning stage of Lambada history may be traced.

It has already been mentioned that the Lambadas used to transport provisions, as well as other goods, in bags on oxen from one region to another. In addition, they also used camels, donkeys and buffaloes to carry the items. As a number of Lambada households were associated with the transportation activity, all of them embarked on the trip in the form of a convoy. This provided them a measure of security. No wonder, the Lambadas came to be regarded as important players in the transportation scenario. They delivered provisions to the battlefield during the Mughal and British periods. According to Irwin W., “The change in policy also effected the occupation of Lambadas. They were coerced to deliver provisions to the belligerents British and Indian rulers. They had to transport provisions to the warring Rajputs, Marathas, Muslims, British and French. Either of warring groups commanded them to deliver provisions. They transported rations to both opponents in the battlefield”. (Irwin. W, p. 192).

It is also said that they transported goods from sea ports to another parts of the country. Sayyad Sirajul Hasan has mentioned that the Lambadas used to purchase rice, salt, horse grains, etc., from the markets of South India. These items were later transported from South to North India. (Sayyad Sirajul Hasan, p 18-19).Sirajul Hasan goes on to state, “Lambadas had got expertise to set the goods meant for loading one upon another well in order. And they tied their animals in a circle round the goods with strong bonds. They were always equipped with arsenals to deal with thieves, dacoits and aggressors. It was a major task to steal a Lambada hamlet even by a cruel dacoit”. (Sayed Sirajul Hasan. p. 10).

M.A. Shiring has made a mention of this activity of the Lambadas: “During the Mysore war (1781-1783), the Lambadas had carried provision to the allied forces of British, Marathas and Nizam (Hyderabad) who were fighting against Tipu Sultan”.(M.A.Shiring, p 299) Kumberleg has also stated: “British Viceroy Cornwallis had bestowed a certificate letter on a Lambada named Bhangi which, inter alia, directed Kings under the Peshwa to permit the Lambadas to buy grains in their territory, not to levy customs and deliver the provisions without interruption to them” (Kumberleg, p 184). They kept doing trade over there and delivering necessary goods to North and South India.

“With the passage of time, the British started laying Railway lines in India. With that, the transportation system being tackled by Lambadas, under the name of “Ladeni,” started becoming obsolete”. (Ramesh Arya, p .17).

The Lambadas have been forced to take up different professions and migrate to other parts of the country. In 1967, the Report of All India Banjara Study Team mentioned that

most of their Thandas are in hilly and isolated terrains far from townships and villages. The different names of Lambadas living in different regions and pockets are: 1) Gor, 2) Lambada, 3) Lambadi, 4) Lamani, 5) Sugali, 6) Banjara, 7) Dhadi and 8) Bhat. The above names suggest the different professions of the Lambadas. These also give an indication about the history of Lambadi tribes. The hierarchical dimension of their history is comprised of the deliberations related to their professions, castes, clans.

1.4. Social Life of the Lambadas

The Lambadas generally tend to follow strict social parameters and norms. They have an unparalleled sense of fraternity and mutual cooperation among themselves.

Like most other tribals, the Lambadas too have their own castes and sub castes. In this connection, Dr. Ramesh Arya has stated: “The Gor, Dhadi and Bhat trio enjoy prominent status among the Lambadas” (Ramesh Arya, p 15). Dr. Shri Ram Sharma has divided Banjaras into two main sections – “(1) Gor and (2) Other Banjara castes. Other castes of Banjara have been divided into three sections Dhadis, Bhattas and Nae and the Sonar”. (Shri Ram Sharma, p .11).

The Gors had been associated with the non-Lambadas people, residing in the Lambada Thandas for the sake of their livelihood since olden days. The clans of these people were different than those of the Lambadas, even though they speak in the Lambadi dialect. In course of time, their culture has been somewhat assimilated with the Lambada culture. Still, they continue to retain elements of their original culture. With the passage of time, such castes have become an integral part of the Lambada community. The Sonar, Dahlia, Bhatt, Dhadi and Nae are counted under this section of Lambadas. Thus, it may be

presumed that the people who were earlier associated with Lambadas for the sake of their livelihood later came to be regarded as Lambadas.

1.5. Clan system of Lambada's

One of the most prominent sections of the Lambadas is that of the Gors. This community is called Banjara in North India, Sugali in Andhra Pradesh and Lambada in Telangana and Lamani in Karnataka. In this connection, Dr. Shri Ram Sharma has noted, "Charan, Gor and Sugali these words are symbolic to livestock rearing and the term Labhani originated from the word "Lavan" (salt) – an important item of merchandise at that time. The term Gor is associated with for the cow and cow-related people. This term also denotes a particular geographical region. The Banjaras grazing animals in North India are known as Charans. The Banjaras rearing livestock in South India are called Sugalis. The Lambadas also have castes and sub castes like those of Hindus. Bali Ram Patil has divided Lambadas into following six castes and sub castes: "(1) Bhukyia, (2) Vadatiya, (3) Chavan, (4) Banot, (5) Pamar and (6) Tunvar."(Bali Ram Patil, p 11) These castes of Lambadas living anywhere are supposed to have marriage relations with one another.

Sub Castes of the Bhukiya Clan

This clan has 27 sub castes, viz., (1) Ramavat, (2) Khetavat, (3) Meghavat, (4) Khatrot, (5) Dhegavat, (6) Khimavat, (7) Sangavat, (8) Udhavat, (9) Alawat, (10) Khondavat, (11) Jamnavat, (12) Jainavat, (13) Mulavat, (14) Hapavat, (15) Pitavat, (16) Devsot, (17) Kunlot, (18) Jatrot, (19) Deglot, (20) Khola, (21) Modrecha, (22) Karamtot, (23) Dharamsot, (24) Patlot, (25) Ratla, (26) Kotlavat, (27) Bachavat.

Sub Castes of Vadatiyas

This clan is comprised of 57 sub castes. Of these, the prominent ones are: (1) Lunavat (2) Dharavat (3) Badavat (4) Bhagvandas (5) Kupavat (6) Tejavat (7) Barmavat (8) Malavat (9) Meravat (10) Navat (11) Halavat (12) Lakhavat (13) Makavat, (14) Pagulat (15) Boda (16) Boti (17) Ajmera (18) Ghuglot (19) Kunasi (20) Jasuvat (21) Jaitod (22) Tilavat (23) Barot (24) Shudavat (25) Vaidot (26) Hajavat (27) Mevlat (28) Durgavat (29) Jodhovat (30) Mevavat (31) Maruvat (32) Rupavat (33) Bamnavat (34) Malot (35) Lakavat (36)Harkavat (37)Munavat (38) Porika (39) Udavat (40) Topavat (41) Mohandas (42)Padia (43) Adtia and (44)Tuvar.

Sub Castes of the Chavan Clan:-

This clan is comprised of six sub castes. These are: Korra (2) Kailut (3) Mood (4) Sabavat (5) Lavdiya (6) Paltiya. The people of this Clan are called Chavans.

Sub Castes of the Banoth Clan:-

This clan has 12 sub castes. These are: (1) Danavat, (2) Dunavat, (3) Khanavat, (4) Pepavat, (5) Kumavat, (6) Khagavat, (7) Savasod, (8) Bundavat, (9) Arhed, (10) Pangad, (11) Rapavat, and (12) Dumavat

Sub Castes of the Pamar Clan

The 12 sub castes of this clan are: (1) Amgot (2) Jharpala (3) Noonsavat (4) Vislavat (5) Munjani (6) Taravani, (7) Ayaitchet, (8) Gohram, (9) Indravat, (10) Loka, (11) Vankrot and (12) Vani.

Sub-Castes of the Tunvar Clan

This clan has four sub castes. These are: (1) Nasavat, (2) Tengavat, (3) Ragavat, and (4) Binjor. These sub-castes have been named as per their geographic conditions and professions.

Other Lambada Castes, Based on their Primary Occupation.

Sonars. They maintain only professional relations with the Gor Banjaras. Their customs, deities, clan, caste, etc., are quite different with those of the Gor Banjaras. Their prominent sub castes are: Jijore, Tungar, Mundavra, Mali and Adaniya. They mould ornaments with the alloys of silver and copper. These ornaments are worn by the Lambadas.

Dahlis. They entertain Gor Banjaras at the time of their festivals and functions by beating drums and small hand drums. These people quite often feed themselves on the charity given by the people. However, at present they have also become agriculturists like the Lambadas.

Dhadis: These people earn their livelihood through singing. During the medieval period, they used to entertain Lambadas at the time of their camping during Ladeni. They sing songs on the auspicious occasions of the Lambadas. They are active as messengers amongst the Banjaras and carry messages from one hamlet to another. The prominent sub-castes of the Dhadis are:

Dehavat, Dongi, Rotavan, Khuta, Kheravat, Sudiya, Narsi, Suknavat, Yanavat and Pitavat. They live in their exclusive hamlets. They enjoy close proximity to Lambadas.

A person of any sub caste of the Gor-Banjara clan may be declared a Naik with the consent of the inhabitants of the Thanda. A person of another sub caste in the Thanda is appointed as the Karbhari (Secretary). These officials are expected them to protect the interests of their community. It is mandatory for every person in the Thanda to obey their command and any disobedience of the decree issued by the Naik is considered a heinous offence, and would invite rigorous punishment for the offender. The issues related to the Thanda are brought before the Naik, who along with the Karbhari and other experienced people ponder over the matter minutely so as to resolve the issue. A guest commands a lot of respect in every Thanda. The arrangement of boarding and lodging are made in an appropriate without any derogatory remarks towards their guests being permitted.

1.6. Literature Review;

J.J. Roy Burman has written about the Laman Banjaras, their origin, culture and religious practices. The Banjaras, or Lambadas, who originally hailed from north India, settled in different parts of the country. According to Roy Burman, the Lambadas, a nomadic tribe, had been branded as a 'Criminal tribe' during the colonial period. The author has also stated that the religious culture and tradition of the Lambadas are quite different from those of the other tribes.

L.P. Vidyarthi and Binay Kumar Rai a famous social anthropologist, made a detailed examination of issues like caste structure leadership, religion, kinship and the socialation in tribal villages. The book has also explored the civilization and culture of the tribals, in terms of their economic conditions, political life, and religious practices of different tribes, folklore, art, craft and the cultural changes.

M.N. Srinivas has posited that the Lambada community has continued to follow its own religious beliefs, rituals, etc. Still, they in no way felt that they were outcastes from the mainstream, because they claim that they are from the Kshatriya clan of the Rajputs.

Christopher Von-Furer Haimendorf, an anthropologist, who worked with the tribes of Telangana, mainly focused on the living style, religion, culture and economic conditions of Koyas, Gonds, Lambadas, etc. His documentary film has very succinctly highlighted the manner in which the mainstream communities have harassed and exploited the tribals.

Edgar Thurston, an anthropologist, undertook an extensive study characteristic of various tribes in some of the southern states of India. According to him, the Lambadas are known by different names, like Banjaras, Vanjara, Sugalis, Sukalis, Lamans and Ghors. He has categorically brought out that the life and culture of the Lambadas are controlled by the mainstream society.

Dr. R.K. Sharma's book is based on Indian society, its social institutions and the contemporary Indian society and its culture. The book describes various religions and their culture, social systems and institutions and also about the recent trends in the Indian society like Industrialisation, Urbanisation, Labour problems, Secularisation, Tradition & Modernity, Sanskritisation, and Westernisation. The book highlights the need for promoting integration by developing all India languages and putting in place an all India educational policy.

G.A. Grierson worked on the Lambada Language. He says that the Lambadas are well known tribes of mercantile carriers' who are found all over Western and southern India.

The language spoken by Lambadas is known as "Gor Boli" or "Lambadi".

Syed Sirajul-Hassan, in his book, *Castes and Tribes of the Nizam's Dominions*, talks about the Lambada clans and from where these communities have moved. Hassan also talks about the criminal identity of the Lambadas.

In his book, *Hybrid Histories: Forest, Frontiers and wildness in Western India*, Ajay Skaria has spoken about the Moglai and Mandili tribes. According to him, “While the colonial masters tried to be in charge of and extinguish the ‘wildness’ of the tribes and required to replace it with civilization, the nationalist forces appropriated tribals by using their spontaneous, qualities in their struggle against the British (xi-x).”

In his *State, Society and Tribes: Issues in post-colonial India*, Viginus Xaxa gives an insight into the diverse policies of the Indian Government towards the indigenous people. He also offers a critique of the works of mainstream research scholars, social activists, politicians and administrators who freely and uncritically use terms such as Adivasis, aborigines or indigenous, Tribals, Jungle people and so on, with all the negative and meanings that these terms imply. He further makes the point that although the term Adivasi, or aboriginal, was forced upon the tribals by the outsiders,

Prathap's (1970) study of Banjara festivals in Andhra Pradesh is not only a valuable contribution to the ethnography of an important and populous tribe, but also brings out various facts about the development and modification of rational phenomena. It also gives a picture of regional variations in their performance, thus enriching the meager anthropological literature of Andhra Pradesh in general and Banjara in particular. He attributes Protoaustraloid characteristics to the community. Social structure of the tribe is also marked by bewildering regional and ethnic diversities.

Singh, K.S. (1985). Views that the roots of change lie in state formation, transfer of technology and cultural contact. Peasants and tribes interacted over a wide spectrum. He states that colonialism profoundly distributed the tribal society and explains that, with decolonization, tribal society changed rapidly.

Shyamala Devi Rathod's (1985) note on the Lambada tribe is important for particular reason. This is one among the few tribes which have a system of admitting outsiders into the tribe, characteristics which has, of late, generated a good deal of interest among the anthropologists. She also describes the land relationship of tribals.

Edger Thurston (1987) describes Lambadi as synonymous with Banjari, Vanchari Sugali or Sukali. He further describes women driving the cattle and says that they are most robust women ever seen in India, who perform very exhausting tasks. He has also described the ornaments worn by Lambadi women and the Lambada economy and society in some depth. He has highlighted that the 'Roll' community in Anantapur District includes a small group of priests to the Lambadas. Though they call themselves as Muslims, they cannot inter marry with others of the faith.

Siraj-Ul-Hasan (1990) clearly describes the Banjaras, starting with their different nomenclatures, their physique, Rajput caste of countenance, etc. He also describes in detail the appearance of men and women in their traditional dress. He further gives details of their names and their derivations, origin, internal structure, marriage, widow marriage, inheritance, religion, disposal of the dead, occupations as well as the distribution of the Banjaras under the Nizams dominion in 1911.

Deogaonkar, S.G., & Sailaja Deogaonkar (1992) have described the Banjara tribe as a nomadic tribe which presents a colourful culture, with an altogether different level of acculturation. They also analysed the conditions of Banjaras, how they got settled and gave up nomadism and developed politically and economically - and even socially. The Banjaras of Maharashtra were given the status of general category based on the population level as well as on their economic conditions. They also gave a clear picture of Banjaras, their changing culture and the story of development and of assimilation with exotic culture.

Cheenaya Naik (2000) has highlighted the rich traditions of the developmental programmes launched by the Government for the development of the society. However, the writer has not systematically discussed the customary law.

Shyamala, K, (2006) studied the culture and customary laws among the Sugalis in Anantapur district. She tried to present the changes caused by the external and internal factors in their customary laws.

Bhangya, B, (2010) tried to trace the historical transition and the political economy of the Lambada community of Hyderabad State under the Nizams during Colonial rule. The study spans nearly two centuries from the early eighteenth to about the middle of the twentieth century. He presented that once this community, originally caravan traders, confronted the colonial state power which had adversely transformed their lifestyles.

D.B.Naik has laid a firm foundation for understanding the community's traditions. In his study, he traces the ethnic culture of the Lambadas through their art and literature. He characterises the songs connected to specific occasions and developed especially among

women. He then presents the long narrative songs of the community. He has put in a lot of effort in bringing this rich, untouched, and noble folk tradition to the mainstream. He brings proverbs and the particularly rich tradition of riddling into order in accordance with academic convention. Certainly, his work will provide a wealth of knowledge about the Lambada community. Throughout his work one can see a laudable attempt to present the material, to arrange this rationally, and to shift towards intellectual engagement and cultural interpretation.

1.7. Methodology

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. The primary sources include: the researcher's personal interaction with a cross-section of the Lambada community. Her task was simplified to a large extent since she herself belongs to this community and could communicate with the persons in their lingo. She was also able to establish a degree of acceptability with the persons she interviewed. The secondary sources included books, newspaper and magazine articles, other research thesis and the relevant government reports regarding the community.

Aims and objectives of the study

The major change is absorbed in the lives of Lambada with many of them access to the outside community such as literacy among the community people, connectivity with mainstream society, and effect of modernity, etc. Many things are responsible for changes in the tribal community of Lambadas in Telangana.

Statement of Research Problem:

“Tribals in Telangana are “economically and socially very backward” (Socio Economic Profile -National Portal of India, Census, 20011). More than 3/4th of Scheduled Tribe women are illiterate. They have high dropout rates in education, resulting in extremely low representation in higher education. The proportion of Scheduled Tribes under the poverty line is higher than the national average. Usually the tribals are engaged in low-skilled, low-paying jobs”.

There are around fifty five million Lambada or Banjara gypsies in the world. A very large proportion of them can be found in south central India. Nearly five million live in the states of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra. The increasing interaction with the mainstream or neighboring communities and modernization is resulting effect on their culture, tradition, identity, language, food habits, dressing pattern and Folk culture etc. Even their religious practices are being adversely impacted due to the advent of modernity in their habitations.

The Lambadas are basically worshippers of Nature. They worship the Sun, Earth, Fire, Wind and Water as gods. Instances of Gor Lambadas first adopting Buddhism date back to the time of Gautama Buddha. This tribe seems to have remained unaffected by the class and caste system.

Research Questions

The study will seek to explore the following questions:

1. What is the reason behind the adaptation of the culture of the mainstream community?
2. Why is the Lambada community giving importance to the mainstream traditions?

3. Why the tribal community is neglecting its own culture and Language?
4. How has modernity affected the socio-cultural and living standards of the Lambadas?
5. What is the relationship of Lambadas to the mainstream societies?

The main objectives of the present study are:

- To examine the extent to which modernisation and westernisation are affecting the Lambada culture and language in Telangana.
- To identify the key differences between the religious customs and traditions of the indigenous Lambadas of Telangana.
- To study the differences in religious practices between the Christian and Hindu Lambadas of Telangana.

Research Questions

The research questions of the present study are:

- ❖ What is the impact of various religions on the customs and traditions of the Lambadas? What is the impact of the upper castes on the Lambada community in Telangana?
- ❖ What are the key differences between the religious customs and traditions of the indigenous community of Lambada (Banjara tribes) in Telangana region?
- ❖ What are the differences in religious practices between the Hindu, Christian and Sikh tribal groups of the Lambada community?
- ❖ What are the impacts (both positive and negative) of modernisation on the tribal community of Lambdas?

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